



# OR DAILY

Day Three • Outdoor Retailer Summer Market • Sunday August 10, 2008



## Q&A Startup Brand END Outdoor Focuses on Green Processes

As END's co-founder, Ben Finklea works to develop the sales and marketing departments of his eco-friendly outdoor apparel company. Finklea and Andrew Estey founded END, which stands for Environmentally Neutral Design, in January 2007 in Portland, Oregon. END's product development process is unique, as team members question each material and manufacturing component of its products with the intention of reducing its products' environmental footprint. The company's aim is to eventually create and manufacture 100 percent environmentally neutral designs.

### Why did you start END?

We wanted to build a company from scratch that catered to athletes and those who cared about sustainability. In March 2008, we won the prestigious Angel Oregon event, which helped close out our founders' round of \$2.1 million. One of our original goals was to bridge the gap between creating sustainable products and making them affordable. We feel that too often sustainable products and services are financially beyond the reach of the average athlete. By keeping the costs of all of our products under \$100, we're able to provide an affordable, sustainable alternative to a larger market of athletes. Products will be available through specialty retailers in both the outdoor and running category.

### How big is the company?

END has seven employees at its headquarters in the historic John's Landing Water Tower building in south Portland. We started last fall by debuting a high-performance trail offering at Outdoor Retailer, and now are adding road and water product categories to bring us full circle as a true performance running brand. In addition to addressing these other categories, our commitment to female athletes will be easy to see through our new women's last and design aesthetics.

### Why did END choose Portland as the company's U.S. headquarters?

We looked at various locations throughout the United States, with our ultimate goal to bring sustainability and performance footwear together. We soon realized that there would be

no better place to achieve this than in our hometown, Portland. In general, Portland is recognized as a very environmentally conscious city, which is necessary to the success of our product. The combination of this environmental awareness with Portland's established creative workforce, led us to choose Portland as END's headquarters.

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### How does Portland reflect your commitment to sustainability?

The people in Portland lead active lives and appreciate the importance of sustainability and preserving the envi-



Ben Finklea

ronment. With every END product we are trying to do more with less from a design perspective. We are constantly looking to see where we can incorporate sustainable materials that will handle an athlete's demands. We then work to simplify the manufacturing process to achieve a greener end-result. Portland supports sustainability and encourages END's success as an eco-friendly business.

### Have other sportswear apparel companies located in Portland influenced you?

As a kid, I was like many, a Nike junkie, raised on hero worship through posters, cards and TV. Today we are proud to share the same town as Nike, Keen, Danner Boots, Adidas and Columbia Sportswear, to name a few. As a sustainable business, END realizes that we need to be extremely transparent in order to appeal to Portland's sophisticated market. As a startup, we of course draw influence from many places but are thrilled to be looked to as an innovative and sustainable leader so early in our existence.

END Outdoor is exhibiting here at Booth #BR603.