

# With Your Help, Web Watchmaker Makes the Time

**D**ANIEL MORF, Frédéric Polli and Jean-Loup Ribordy wanted to sell something online from their hometown, Martigny, at the foot of the Swiss Alps. "We were in Switzerland, where we have chocolate and watches," said Mr. Morf, 35. The answer wasn't chocolate.

Instead, it was a site called Factory 121 ([factory121.com](http://factory121.com)), which sold 3,500 watches in 2004. It offers four distinct men's and women's watch styles that can be customized on the computer screen. Customers can modify existing pieces or start from scratch — with a custom bezel, multiple band styles and materials, and mix-and-match faces and hands. Prices start at \$148.

Factory 121's watchmakers assemble the pieces, all with quartz movements. The company is introducing a spring line with tangerine and purple faces.

Mr. Morf and Mr. Polli left their jobs in 2001 to start the site, and Mr. Ribordy joined them after finishing a master's degree in business administration at the University of Lausanne. Developing a new watch brand was difficult, especially for a small company, Mr. Morf said. "If you're



**ORIGINAL** At Factory 121, a watch can be designed from a mix-and-match palette.

not distributed, you don't sell," he said. "But selling over the Internet opens you up to new people."

Other companies are also offering custom watches through the Web. Fossil has a new Watch Bar, at [www.fossil.com](http://www.fossil.com), and Blancier ([www.blancier.com](http://www.blancier.com)), a partnership between Till Lottermann, a German watchmaker, and Willem Kamerman, a Dutch entrepreneur, offers a Web workshop with more expensive components and hand-wound movements.

A customer in Denver, Brent Fedrizzi, 36, has seven custom watches from 121 and even ordered two — one for his best man and one for his brother — as gifts when he was married in October.

"The entire experience that 121 has created is what makes it unique," Mr. Fedrizzi said in an e-mail message. "You feel special."

*John Biggs*