

10 BUSINESSES FOR \$20K OR LESS

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# FRANCHISE 500®

This year's list offers plenty of affordable—and surprising—opportunities

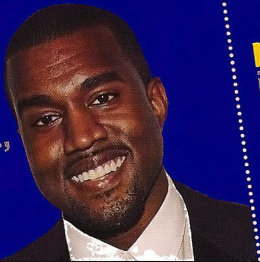
**PLUS**  
The top entrepreneurs of 2010

**Tony Hawk**  
on going vertical

**The art**  
of persistence

**Droid**  
goes pro

**Celebrity franchises**  
Kanye West, Fatburger proprietor



**New players**  
in the top 10

**Will your business**  
make money?



# technology

## Keyboards that don't hurt

Just about any PC or Mac can be retrofitted with a keyboard that has improved ergonomics that makes typing easier on your hands, arms and shoulders. Check out these options for less painful ways to work.

### MICROSOFT ARC (\$59.95)

Typing that doesn't cripple starts with proper keyboard placement. Hands should rest easily an inch or so above your lap, just above the keyboard, with wrists and elbows properly supported. Usually, that requires all sorts of pricey add-on technology (like drop-down keyboard holders), adjustable chairs and an office large enough to make all this possible. But Microsoft had a better idea: a light, inexpensive wireless keyboard that rests right on your lap and naturally provides the proper waist-level wrist and elbow position. The Microsoft Arc weighs less than half a pound and allows users stress-free typing on everything from a comfy chair to any desk. An included micro USB connector connects the keyboard to your computer. Although it lacks some functions for serious data entry—the single direction arrow key can be an enormous pain, for example—the Arc is hard not to like for basic typing.

### SMARTFISH ERGOMOTION (\$149.95)

It has come to this: a keyboard that thinks for you. In December, Englewood, N.J.-based Smartfish Technologies began shipping what it claims is the world's first intelligent keyboard, the ErgoMotion. It features a patented motion sensing system that—get ready for this—captures your typing habits and then gradually changes its keyboard angle to match your hand and wrist position. No kidding. This thing slowly spreads or narrows the distance between the groups of keys below the right or left hands until they match your personal typing style. For a reasonable price, you get a high-quality, comfortable keyboard with a smooth key feel, overall good looks and nice layout. Without question, the ErgoMotion is the most interesting idea in peripherals since the invention of the wireless keyboard.

### OPTIMUS MAXIMUS KEYBOARD (\$2,400)

Yes, that really does say \$2,400 for a keyboard. But for absolute, best-there-is typing, the Optimus is it. Not only is the keyboard, made by Art Lebedev Studio in Russia, probably the highest-quality one we have ever used, it also really is helpful for entering data by hand into a computer: Why? Every key is customizable. That means any stress problem—from your middle finger aching from hitting the "E" key too many times to your shoulder hurting from the sequences required for dropping too many photos into a blog—can be easily alleviated. Changing the position of the key is a simple but impressive solution. Plus, the keyboard is built with well-made parts that can be cleaned and replaced. For serious data entry or heavy design work, the Optimus Maximus handily makes an argument for its hefty price tag. —J.B.

