

SMALL BUSINESS BEAT

DEFINITION: EN-TRE-PRE-NEUR

“ENTREPRENEUR” IS A COMMON TERM IN TODAY’S FAST-PACED, INNOVATIVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT. IT EVOKES THE IMAGE OF A PERSON WITH IDEAS AND VISION—A GO-GETTER, A DOER, A BUSINESS OWNER. ALL TRUE. BUT WHAT REALLY *DEFINES* AN ENTREPRENEUR? WHAT ARE THE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND SKILL SETS INVOLVED? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT? DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

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The word “entrepreneur” derives from the French verb “entreprendre,” which has a principal translation of “to proceed” or more commonly “to undertake.” And that is indeed the entrepreneur’s central characteristic. There are a lot of people who think about building a better mousetrap; there are a lot of people who dream about going into business. The entrepreneur is the person who goes beyond the dreams. **To paraphrase Nike: They do it!**

Bryan MacKay has been coordinating the Entrepreneurship Program at Thunder Bay’s Confederation College (www.confederationc.on.ca) for 17 years. He defines an entrepreneur as one who sees the world in a unique way.

“Entrepreneurs can visualize opportunity. They look at an existing process and envisage how it can be improved upon, or they come up with an idea for a new product or service that could solve a particular problem,” he says. “But they don’t stop there. They talk to the right people, conduct feasibility studies, develop a plan, set up financing, and build all the resources necessary to put their idea in motion and follow it through.”

This takes a special type of person and most successful entrepreneurs have certain personality traits and skill sets in common. They are creative, optimistic and adaptable. They embody conviction, passion and drive. They are problem-solvers, decision-makers and achievers. Typically, they are highly independent and risk-tolerant.

And when their idea becomes a business, their management skills come into play. MacKay notes that while many entrepreneurs nurture and manage their business successfully, others choose to bring in partners once the enterprise is up and running and move on to the next profitable venture.

He also points out a clear distinction between being an entrepreneur and being entrepreneurial. “Business ownership is not for everyone,” MacKay says. “But being entrepreneurial *can* be. It’s a mindset that is highly valued by employers, and honing such skills as creative thinking, decision-making and leadership translates very well into the workplace and to a positive career path.” In fact, the term “intrapreneurial” has been coined to recognize that people can be entrepreneurial within a corporate environment, blending their skills with company resources to develop new products for their employer or to initiate improvements in such areas as quality, productivity or service delivery.

Can a person purchase or inherit a business and still be defined as an entrepreneur? An entrepreneurial frame of mind is clearly evident in making the leap to self-employment. And while the same level of innovation may not be required up front with an established business, entrepreneurial skills are required to operate a business successfully over time.

Another common definition of an entrepreneur is that of a small business owner. These two terms are often used interchangeably and while it is the usual association, many entrepreneurs do use their skills to build small, profitable and successful businesses into medium-sized and often large, global, firms.

To help measure entrepreneurial potential, self-assessment tests are widely available on-line including through the Business Development Bank of Canada at www.bdc.ca.

Minister’s Message



Entrepreneurs are the spark plug of Ontario’s economic engine. They are the innovators, creators and risk takers of the business world who pinpoint the gap between what the consumer needs and what the market provides; and use their considerable energy and motivation to develop products and services to fill that gap. Entrepreneurs challenge themselves and their competitors to continually come up with new and better ideas. Their successes lead to jobs, opportunity and prosperity in communities across the province. And anyone is eligible for membership!

What is the skill set required? If you are optimistic and future-oriented, creative and decisive, adaptable and persistent—you have the skills to be an entrepreneur. Many entrepreneurs use these skills to start their own business. Others become “intrapreneurial” employees, bringing their ideas to life with the assistance and resources of an employer. Our government is committed to nurturing and supporting the entrepreneurial spirit in every capacity. We recognize its unparalleled ability to strengthen our people, our economy and our province.

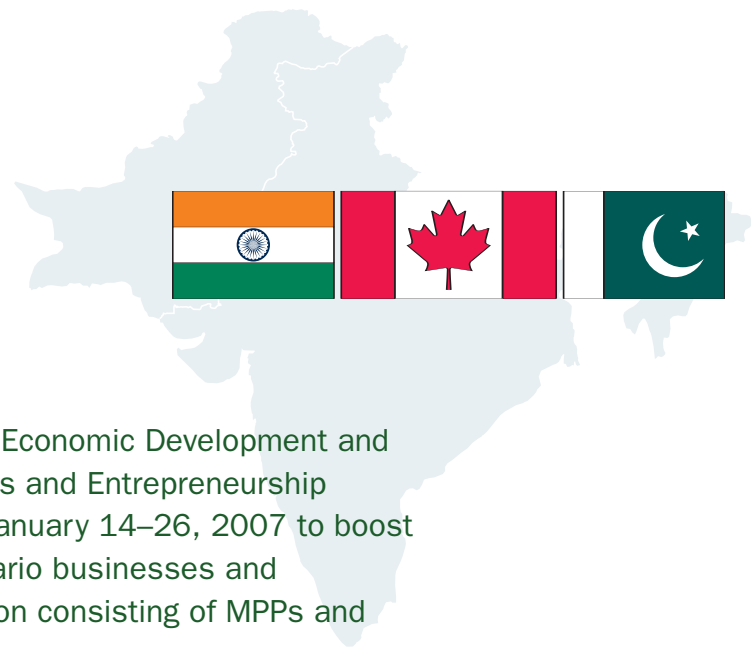
This issue of *Small Business Beat* focuses on entrepreneurship. It examines what it means to be an entrepreneur and what it takes to embark on this fulfilling journey. It looks at the ways in which our government is promoting an entrepreneurial mindset in Ontario, and the ways in which some colleges and universities are integrating entrepreneurship into their curricula as a means of teaching students valuable decision-making and leadership skills. It looks at entrepreneurship as a viable career option. We also meet some of the many successful entrepreneurs across our province who took a chance and realized their dream.

Our government’s commitment to entrepreneurship and our belief in its importance was highlighted when Premier Dalton McGuinty created our new ministry to focus specifically on small business and entrepreneurship. As its Minister and as a former entrepreneur, I am very familiar with the challenges, opportunities and satisfaction involved in traveling this unique path. Our government will continue to put the programs, services and business climate in place to support entrepreneurship and small business growth for the benefit of all.

Harinder S. Takhar

Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Trade Missions to Strengthen Ties with India and Pakistan



Premier Dalton McGuinty, accompanied by Minister of Economic Development and Trade Sandra Pupatello and Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship Harinder S. Takhar, will visit India and Pakistan from January 14–26, 2007 to boost trade and investment and build opportunities for Ontario businesses and organizations. They will be accompanied by a delegation consisting of MPPs and leaders in business, education and research.

The Business Mission to India, organized by the Government of Ontario, will visit New Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai and Chandigarh in India, after which the official Ontario delegation will join the Canada-Pakistan Business Council Mission to Pakistan. The official Ontario delegation will visit Lahore and Islamabad.

The missions will build on the strong relationships Ontario has already forged with these two growing nations whose combined population exceeds one billion people.

Over the past five years, Ontario's two-way goods trade with India and Pakistan increased by well over 50 per cent, reaching \$1.2 billion in 2005.

Key objectives for the missions include:

- raising Ontario's profile as a producer of innovative goods and services and a destination for investment
- introducing Ontario exporters to the potential of the Indian market and advocating on their behalf
- promoting collaboration between Ontario and India in the area of research and innovation
- advancing educational linkages and cooperation
- promoting Ontario's expertise in the information communications technology (ICT) sector in the Pakistan markets

The India component of the trip will concentrate on the infrastructure sectors including: transportation and environmental technologies; research and innovation collaborations, such as life sciences, including pharma; information communications technology (ICT); financial services; education; and cultural industries including new media.

The Pakistan portion of the trip, organized by the Canadian High Commission (CHC) and the Canada-Pakistan Business Council, will focus on the Information Communications Technology (ICT) sector.

The targeted sectors are areas in which Ontario businesses, industries and organizations excel. They are also ones that both India and Pakistan are now building and strengthening as they grow and modernize their economies. The mission is designed to give Ontario delegates optimal opportunity to build networks and partnerships that have the greatest potential to lead to tangible business contracts.

In recent years, market confidence has reached its highest level between Ontario, India and Pakistan, creating an ideal landscape for growth and investment for business. Those business, educational and research organizations participating in the 2007 trade missions will learn how the booming research and innovation, infrastructure, cultural industries and financial services sectors of India and Pakistan can benefit their business.

"To compete in a global economy, businesses must develop relationships, advance innovation and adjust to change to remain ahead of the competition," said Minister Harinder S. Takhar. "We are building on Ontario's strong bi-lateral trade relationship with India and Pakistan, to create important opportunities for Ontario's small, medium and large-scale business to expand and invest in a thriving market."

For additional information on the missions, please visit the missions' website at www.sbe.gov.on.ca/ontcan/indiapakistan/en/home_en.jsp.

In 2005, participants in Ontario's business mission to China met over 600 Chinese business leaders and signed over 30 agreements with Chinese partners.

Investing in **Young** Entrepreneurs

The spirit of entrepreneurship often appears at an early age. Whether it's a childhood lemonade stand or a lawn-cutting service, most successful entrepreneurs will tell you that they caught the bug at a young age. To ensure that Ontario taps the great potential of its young people, the government is investing in a variety of programs that encourage and nurture the young entrepreneur.

"An investment in our youth is an investment in Ontario's future," says Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship Harinder S. Takhar. "Our young people have the talent, the energy and the fresh ideas to make this province grow and prosper."

The government recently contributed \$1.723 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation (CYBF) to give 282 young people loans to start up new businesses. The partnership with CYBF will support these new businesses through seed financing and mentoring. CYBF estimates that the program will generate an estimated 3,500 jobs in Ontario and produce more than \$50 million in gross revenues.

"The government is demonstrating its commitment to our young aspiring entrepreneurs," says Vivian Prokop, CEO, Canadian Youth Business Foundation. "This makes a very tangible difference to the Ontario economy and the dreams of our most important resource—our youth."

Giving young people the knowledge they need to pursue those entrepreneurial dreams is the goal of Future Entrepreneurs, a Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (MSBE) program that introduces an entrepreneurial mind-set and skills to students in Grades 7 and 8. The interactive curriculum program raises awareness of entrepreneurship as a career option, and helps students develop the creative, planning and risk-taking skills they will need as entrepreneurs.

Two other MSBE youth programs attracted record numbers in 2006. The Summer Company program, which provides hands-on business training and awards of up to

\$3,000, helped 370 young entrepreneurs start and manage their own businesses. The Secondary School Business Plan Competition attracted over 850 entries. Students across Ontario competed for cash awards that can be used for educational and career pursuits.

In June 2006, the government announced funding of \$673,000 to support six projects across the province with Youth Entrepreneurship Partnerships grants. These funds go to not-for-profit organizations to help provide youth with educational and entrepreneurial opportunities and programs. Supported projects range from a house painting business that develops entrepreneurial skills in disadvantaged youth to an interactive web-based simulation that teaches business skills in the classroom.

"All of our youth programs have the same ultimate goal," says Takhar. "We want to show the government's confidence in Ontario's next generation of entrepreneurs and help them create new opportunities."

The Ontario government is making a series of targeted investments in young entrepreneurs that will pay off for many years to come.



The Summer Company 2007 Application Process Is Now Open!

There are a limited number of awards. Apply NOW at www.sbe.gov.on.ca/summercompany and be an entrepreneur next summer.

In 1997, Ruth Bastedo and four colleagues started Medium One, a web design firm in Toronto. By the time they sold it just four years later, it had 50 employees, a client list that included such big names as RBC, PBS, Cinar, Microsoft and Alias Wavefront, and a value of \$10 million.

Women

Entrepreneurs on the Rise

Bastedo took a few years off to start a family, but in 2005 she jumped into entrepreneurship again, founding another company, Continuum Media Inc., an E-learning company, this time on her own.

Bastedo is one of a fast-growing number of successful women entrepreneurs in Ontario, women who aren't afraid to take risks—and take charge.

Some, like Bastedo with her new venture, choose to establish their companies on their own. Others, like Janis Grantham, President and COO of Ottawa-based Eagle Professional Resources, with partners. Still others, like Linda Hasenfratz, President and CEO of Guelph-headquartered Linamar Corp, take over family businesses.

Whatever their route to entrepreneurship, women now own or co-own one out of every two small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario and head four out of five new businesses.

Why are more and more women choosing entrepreneurship? According to Kristina Depencier, National Manager, Small Business and Women's Markets for RBC Royal Bank, it's partly because women are more confident than ever before and partly because they're looking for a way to balance the demands of work and personal life.

"They also see that there can be more rewards in self-employment," she says.

Bastedo, who, in addition to heading her own company, is also President of Women Entrepreneurs of Canada (WEC), agrees. (WEC is a national organization that champions and facilitates women's entrepreneurship.)



"Research shows that women are also motivated to start their own business for the same reasons as men: a desire for independence and the opportunity to pursue more meaningful work," she says.

The number of women entrepreneurs has jumped a phenomenal 200 per cent in the last 20 years and according to Depencier—who notes that RBC has had a dedicated focus on women's markets for well over a decade—it shows no signs of slowing down. If anything, it's gathering momentum.

"There's definitely a wave afoot," she says. "At the local, provincial and national levels women entrepreneurs are connecting and networking, and as they see the opportunities that entrepreneurship presents—and that women can be just as successful at it as men—more and more are taking the plunge."

As Bastedo points out, research shows that, while many of today's women entrepreneurs are young women just starting their careers, there's a substantial contingent of highly educated, senior-level women with good jobs who've decided to strike out on their own in their late 30s and 40s.

Research is also revealing that women entrepreneurs differ from their male counterparts in a few important ways.

"Overwhelmingly, women tend to establish one-person businesses and they're less inclined than men to expand," says Bastedo. "Too many women entrepreneurs are not on a growth trajectory with their businesses and we need to do more research to determine why this is because it has important implications both for the economy and for the individual entrepreneurs themselves."

Adds Bastedo, "It will also help organizations such as ours better support their continued growth."



The Entrepreneurial Way

A look at entrepreneurship education at Canadore College in North Bay and the Richard Ivey School of Business in London reveals two different programs with the same overall goal: producing well-rounded graduates ready for success in a variety of entrepreneurial environments.

“Our program is aimed at anyone who wants to start a small business in the future,” says Bob Walpole, Business Professor at Canadore College in North Bay. “We find that one-third of our graduates go on to start a small business, one-third go into their family business, and the remainder go into management positions with existing organizations. In all cases, they are using the skills they learn here.”

Walpole notes that since many of the students are young, they often delay the start of their own business as they accumulate capital and experience. “We’re really planting the seed for entrepreneurship,” he says. “The planning skills that are required for a manager are very similar to those that are needed for an entrepreneur. The overlap is tremendous.”

Canadore (www.canadorec.on.ca) has 21 students enrolled in its Small Business Management Co-op program for the 2006 school year. The small number of students means that Walpole, who has run the program since 1989, knows all of his students personally. With its unique characteristics, Canadore attracts students from across Ontario. Along with start-ups and family businesses, many graduates have built careers as economic development officers in cities and towns across the province.

“We’d rather keep it small for all the advantages that offers,” he says. “We do a lot of things we otherwise couldn’t do. There’s a strong co-op component, where students spend two summer terms in a work placement. And in the last semester, all of the students start up and run their own small business for eight weeks. They do feasibility studies, develop a business plan, and make a presentation to ACE Canadore (an entrepreneurship club) for funding. In 15 years of running the program, we have never had a student business that failed to pay back its initial financing.”

The university approach is different, but aims to produce similar results. The Institute for Entrepreneurship at the Richard Ivey School of Business (www.ivey.ca/entrepreneurship) offers a Certificate in Entrepreneurship to Honours Business Administration (HBA) and Master of Business Administration (MBA) students. Business students receive the certificate after completing coursework, attending various seminar and networking events, and fulfilling a summer internship or equivalent

work experience. Executive Director Eric Morse says the program provides students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to succeed in any entrepreneurial environment.

“There’s great interest in the program, and we cap enrolment at 50 students,” says Morse. “The students are all high achievers in many areas, and they are motivated to succeed.”

Like the program at Canadore, Ivey’s entrepreneurship program strives to balance classroom and practical components, to produce well-rounded graduates who are ready for the real world of business. In addition to course work, students usually work on a new venture with the Ivey Client Field Project, write a business plan for the school’s competition, and join the entrepreneurship club. The school provides Entrepreneurs in Residence who serve as mentors.

“There are some fairly strong distinctions between our HBA and MBA students,” says Morse. “MBAs often come in with a fair bit of experience in either an industry or market, and they are often ready to venture out after graduation. We encourage the HBAs to get a grounding in an industry or market before going out in a new venture. We try to build a portfolio of knowledge and experiences while they are in the program, but just as importantly, we try to help them build a road map of what knowledge and experiences they need to gain before launching.”

Morse estimates that about 10 per cent of the Ivey entrepreneurship students launch their own business upon graduation, with about 25 per cent launching over the longer term. The school is now collecting data to track the number of new businesses it helps create.

“Developing entrepreneurial expertise takes a lot more than just classes,” says Morse. And entrepreneurship education is certainly not just learning how to write a business plan. You need a broad spectrum program to produce real entrepreneurs.”

Both Canadore and Ivey, and the many other colleges and universities across Ontario who offer similar programs, are doing just that, ensuring that Ontario’s future entrepreneurs are equipped with all of the tools and experience they need to succeed.

Robert Herjavec
Owner of the Herjavec
Group

Kevin O'Leary
Co-host of ROB TV's SqueezePlay
and High Profile Investor

Jim Treliving
Owner of Boston Pizza

Jennifer Wood
President and CEO of
Two Cattle Companies

Laurence Lewin
Co-founder and President
of La Senza.



Facing the Dragons for Venture Capital: CBC's New Reality Show

When Strathroy entrepreneur Jennifer MacDonald got an email from the London Small Business Enterprise Centre giving her a heads-up about a novel financing opportunity, she didn't have to think twice about it.

It was to audition for the Dragons' Den, a new CBC reality show where entrepreneurs get the chance to pitch their business ideas to five Canadian moguls, who, in turn, decide whether or not they want to invest.

For the first season, which has just ended, auditions were held in 17 cities across Canada, six of them in Ontario. More than 1,700 entrepreneurs applied and 800 were selected for auditions. In the end, 110 got to present their business idea to the Dragons, MacDonald among them.

Her company Cenabal (www.cenabal.com), which makes organic salad dressings and bread dipping oils, was at a critical point and MacDonald needed financing to take it to the next level.

"Going into 'The Dragons' Den,' I was very prepared," says MacDonald. I knew my business plan. I'd done my pitch to the CBC producers and refined it based on their feedback. Still, just before I walked in I was so nervous that I barely remembered my company name!"

It's hardly surprising, given that the Dragons are all successful entrepreneurs who've made millions building their businesses—and their endorsement can help make or break a start-up. They include: Laurence Lewin, co-founder and president of La Senza Corp; Jim Treliving, owner of Boston Pizza; Robert Herjavec, head of one of Canada's fastest growing computer companies; Kevin O'Leary, businessman turned investment superstar on ROB TV's "Squeeze Play;" and cattle executive Jennifer Wood.

Together they put at least \$1 million of their own money on the line.

In the first six episodes, the Dragons were pitched everything from Jennifer's salad dressing and oil to an electric tractor, a floating foam log, a portable hand sanitizer, a super powered binocular and a floor to ceiling body shower brush. The youngest entrepreneur was a 19-year-old business student from the University of Western Ontario; the oldest, a 77-year-old man from Brighton, Ontario.

"Invention, creation and inspiration are alive and well in Canada," says Lewin, who agreed to become a Dragon after seeing the U.K. version of the show. "There are a lot of people with good ideas, they're just not sure how to develop them. The Dragon's Den coaches them on preparing a business plan and a pitch."

Jennifer's pitch won out over five others on the first episode to get \$200,000 to invest in her business.

"I was ready to offer them 40 per cent if they said they'd invest," says Jennifer. "When Jim and Jennifer said they wanted 50 per cent, I had to make a quick decision—and I went with it. I still own 50 per cent of my company and I've raised much needed capital in the process."

Adds Jennifer, "It's a confidence booster to know that such successful entrepreneurs think my business is worth investing in."

If you've got a promising start-up—or the next great business idea—and need financing, check out the website <http://www.cbc.ca/dragonsden/> on how to apply and how to prepare your pitch.

Tomorrow's Entrepreneurs Today

A National Contest Celebrates Student Innovators



Foxy Originals
founders Jen Kluger
and Suzie Orol

Some people are born entrepreneurs—they just don't realize it. Take Jen Kluger, the co-founder of Foxy Originals, the Toronto company which now sells its "funky and affordable" jewellery throughout North America and counts Nelly Furtado, Sienna Miller and Paris Hilton among its customers. In 2001, when Jen and her partner, Suzie Orol, were selling their creations to family and fellow students at the University of Western Ontario, their business was mostly a hobby. Then, the two young women overcame tough competition to win the Advancing Canadian Entrepreneurship's (ACE) national Student Entrepreneur Award.

"Getting that award gave us the confidence to realize we had a viable business," says Kluger. "The credibility and positive feedback from winning allowed us to take our business to the next level."

The annual award is one of the core programs for ACE (www.acecanada.ca), a not-for-profit organization founded in 1997 to encourage the principles and values of entrepreneurship among university and college students. ACE donors are all from the private sector with Magna, John Dobson, HSBC, CIBC Small Business, TD Financial Group and Nortel as the lead supporters. In particular, CIBC Small Business has a primary focus on supporting the Student Entrepreneur Program.

To be eligible for the competition, the student entrepreneurs must be running their business while they are attending classes, full time, and the company has to be at least six months old. The program is now active on 48, or more than two-thirds, of the country's university campuses. College participation is not as strong, but growing.

The national winner must first succeed on the provincial and regional levels before the top two businesses in each of the three regions move on to the finals. "But it's not at all like Donald Trump's *The Apprentice*," says Kimberly Dickinson, director of the Student Entrepreneur Program. "No one's fired, and the judges (CEOs and past winners) are usually blown away by the quality of the presentations."

Competitors are assessed on five criteria:

- Determination and perseverance
- Ability to effectively communicate a vision
- Business fundamentals such as financial performance, ethical standards and evidence of innovation
- Lessons learned
- Growth and future plans

Last year's winner was University of Waterloo student Joseph Fung for his Web development company, Lewis Media, which allows website owners to easily update their sites without the ongoing cost of a Web master. Based in Waterloo, the company has grown into a 14-person operation that has received national media publicity.

Another recent Ontario winner to benefit from the award is Ben Barry Agency, a modelling agency that built a niche representing models of all ages, races and sizes. Since winning the competition in 2002, the former University of Toronto student's models have been featured on the covers of leading North American fashion as well as other magazines. Barry now employs 50 people in his Ottawa and Toronto offices.

For Dickinson, Fung and Barry are the perfect embodiment of an entrepreneur. "They think big—and don't see any limitations."

ACE also fosters entrepreneurship through a Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) program that encourages students to help disadvantaged groups such as prisoners and aboriginals learn entrepreneurial success skills and become financially savvy. SIFE is an integral part of ACE's mission to emphasize broader corporate social responsibility. Says Dickinson: "We want students to achieve full potential through helping others reach theirs."

Promoting entrepreneurship among students is seen as helping the students grow as individuals as well as strengthening Canadian society. "We believe the free enterprise system provides the best environment for individuals to realize their full potential," Dickinson says. "Entrepreneurial activity fuels economic and social progress."

Oz Optics Limited (www.ozoptics.com) is celebrating its 21st birthday this year, but despite its relative youth, Oz is one of the world's oldest companies in the revolutionary fiber optics industry. The recipient of three Ontario government Global Trader Awards in the spring, Oz Optics started in 1985 in the basement of Omur Sezerman's home.



Omur Sezerman of Oz Optics

Prepared to Sacrifice

An Award-Winning Global Trader Took a “Calculated Risk”

Today, it boasts thousands more leading-edge products than employees, more than 10,000 customers in 60 countries and occupies a 24-acre head office complex in Ottawa that includes tennis and basketball courts, an indoor pool with a fully-equipped gym, along with outdoor and indoor soccer fields.

One of Sezerman's latest innovations is a new product that uses fiber optics—the high-speed transmission of enormous amounts of digital information through strands of pure glass about the diameter of a hair—to remotely monitor transmission facilities such as pipelines and telecommunications lines. This remote sensor, which won a silver Global Trader Award for innovation, dramatically reduces maintenance costs and makes economical the measuring of heat and stress throughout the entire length of these lines.

Next year, Sezerman expects to package some of his products in value-added system designs for his blue-chip clients that range from the U.S. Homeland Security department to the world's top pharmaceutical firms. He expects that breakthrough alone could double or triple his current annual sales of \$25 million in two to three years.

“The competition is ourselves,” Sezerman says, noting that new products in the rapidly evolving fiber optics field last a decade, at most. “How fast can we make it—and how fast can we improve it.”

Sezerman arrived in Canada from his native Turkey in 1978 to do graduate work in physics. “Coming to Canada is the best thing I ever did,” says Sezerman.

While studying for his PhD, Sezerman developed an inexpensive coupling device to capture light and transmit it to a fiber. The coupling had been done before, but the challenge of doing it economically had defied engineers around the world. Sezerman knew that his life now faced a critical turning point.

“I could finish my PhD, but lose the window of opportunity because others would soon duplicate my work, or I could apply for patents and go into business.” He went for the patents, first in Canada and the United States, and then in Europe, Australia and Japan—and the rest, as they say, is history.

Sezerman made the gutsy move to abandon his studies and a lucrative job offer in California because of his entrepreneurial spirit. “You have to be prepared to take a calculated risk and you have to be prepared for sacrifice,” he says. In Sezerman's case, the sacrifice meant working alone in his Ottawa basement for three years supporting a wife and child at less pay than he could earn as a student.

“Entrepreneurs are no smarter than anyone else,” Sezerman says now. “In fact, they're usually of average intelligence. But they are prepared to seize an opportunity. If you believe in something, work hard and don't give up. If you're a skeptic, you can't be an entrepreneur.”

Successful Ottawa Firm Got Its Start

Thanks to the Entrepreneurship Centre

Stephen Daze, the Executive Director of the Entrepreneurship Centre in Ottawa, knows that over the years he and his staff have helped thousands of entrepreneurs succeed.



Brenda Adams and
Ron Jette

Not that many of them send thank-you letters—especially not a decade later.

But that's what Ron Jette did not long ago. Ron is a partner in Adams Jette, an Ottawa-based marketing and communications firm.

Eleven years ago, he found himself out of a job. He'd been doing public relations and advocacy work for a national health agency, which had let him go when their budget tightened.

Ron thought that perhaps he could do well as a freelance writer.

"I had some contacts, thanks to the work I'd done with the health agency, and it didn't take long before I was working steadily," he says. "I also discovered that I really enjoyed working on my own." A job interview for a full-time position convinced him it was time to be his own boss.

That's when he went down to the Entrepreneurship Centre in Ottawa, one of a network of 44 Small Business Enterprise Centres across the province.

"I knew the marketing end because of my previous work, but I needed help establishing my business and the Entrepreneurship Centre was the right place to go," he says. "I was assigned a counsellor and he walked me through the process, step by step."

The result was Tristan Creative Writing Inc., Ron's first company. He assembled a group of dependable sub-contractors and supplied writing services—everything

from speeches to articles to annual reports—for an ever-growing list of clients that came to include a number of government departments, Bell Canada, The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Canadian Plastics Sector Council.

"Tristan developed into a very successful company," says Ron.

Then, a year ago, over lunch with Brenda Adams, a client who was working for a local design firm, it became apparent to both of them that, as a team, they could have more impact. He and Brenda formed a partnership and in August 2006 they launched Adams Jette, a full-service marketing and communications company.

"There are all sorts of decisions to be made when you're starting a new business," he says. "I realized that I was applying the principles I'd learned a decade ago at the Entrepreneurship Centre when I started my first company. That's why I wrote to thank them."

The new company combines Ron's writing and marketing skills with Brenda's client service and design abilities and it's a combination the partners are convinced will set them apart from the competition. They've also got a team of 14 editors, translators, graphic designers, researchers and photographers they can call on.

"It's all about selling and moving people to action," says Ron, "and that's something we excel at."

Five years ago Richard Derham was making a good living as a management consultant to Fortune 500 companies. But he felt something was missing. He wanted to run his own business—and he wanted it to be meaningful.

“When I walked home from work at night I used to pass by a lot of homeless teenagers and young adults,” says Derham. “Many of them struck me as being smart and articulate. I couldn’t help but wonder if all they needed was an opportunity they weren’t getting.”

Derham decided that giving them that opportunity was what he wanted to do. In October 2002, he started TurnAround Couriers, a “social enterprise” that employs at-risk youth as bike couriers in downtown Toronto.

Like most social enterprises, it operates like a typical business, but its focus is as much on social change as it is on the bottom line.

“A business can have a social agenda and still make a profit,” says Derham. “The two ideas are not mutually exclusive. We’re a successful business and over the past four years we’ve helped 76 young people change their lives.”

John Saunders is one of them. Just 23, he was living at Covenant House when he was referred to TurnAround. He was hired in July 2005 as a courier. Two months later he became the office manager.

“This job has given me a future,” says Saunders. “After six years of living on the streets, I’ve got an apartment and a family of my own. I’m taking accounting and business management courses in my spare time and I’ve got a goal. I want to open my own social enterprise.”

According to Derham, Saunders is typical of the majority of TurnAround employees whom he recruits from social agencies that work with youth. “They go on to other jobs in the economic mainstream.”

TurnAround is obviously working for at-risk young people, but what about the company’s clients?

There are more than 350 of them, including the Royal Bank and George Weston/Loblaws. And they clearly

feel they’re getting good value for their money, while supporting something worthwhile.

“We were among the first to sign with TurnAround,” says Domenic Porfido, Office Services Supervisor for George Weston/Loblaws. “We needed a courier company with expertise in delivering in downtown Toronto and Richard assured me his firm could deliver. I also thought it would be great if we could help the community while we fulfilled our own needs.”

Adds Porfido, “Richard’s couriers are great young people. They’re quick, reliable and polite. I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend TurnAround.”

Derham is quick to point out that his enterprise is a business, not a charity. He doesn’t take public money.

“We have great rates and excellent service, so when you hire us, you get your packages delivered and you support an innovative company with a social conscience. Oh, yes, and we donate 50 per cent of our profits to charity.”



TurnAround Couriers: “Delivering More than Packages”

Open Door Designs:

When a friend asked her to design a puppet theatre that could be taken to schools and libraries, Joanne Bigham agreed. An accomplished painter, sculptor and printmaker, she never imagined doing that favour would lead to a successful small business.

Turning

Doorways

into

Theatres



It's called Open Door Designs and its flagship product is the portable puppet theatre Bigham originally designed. Ingenious in its simplicity, it consists of a simple fabric panel the width of a doorway that's held in place by a tension rod, making it adjustable to any height. The puppeteer stands behind the panel, pulls on a cord and a roman-style blind rises to reveal the stage.

"I thought my idea was unique," laughs Bigham. "But I later learned that the concept of putting a theatre in a doorway has been around for centuries."

While Bigham does have competition, mostly from mass-producers, her business has been growing steadily since she launched it in 2001, in part, she thinks, because she's about the only custom-made puppet theatre on the market.

All her puppet theatres are limited editions. They range from \$80 for whimsically printed cotton to \$150 for the deluxe models, made from rich velvets, brocades and silks and trimmed with tassels, baubles and beads. Open Door Designs also makes custom theatres for pass-throughs and double doors.

And because there's no such thing as a puppet theatre without puppets, Bigham offers a full range of cute and quirky puppet characters, designed to spark children's imaginations. They range in price from \$10 to \$50 and, like the theatres, they're washable.

In addition to parents and grandparents, her market includes educators and therapists.

"Puppets have a way of removing a child's inhibitions," says the Toronto-based entrepreneur, "which is why my theatres are so popular with professional educators and therapists."

Bigham's latest product—the result of a commission from Toronto's Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts—is a freestanding, portable theatre suitable for child or adult performers. It can be assembled in less than 10 minutes and fits in a wheeled carrier bag big enough to fit all the puppets as well.

"I think this is going to be a major part of my future business," she says.

What's been Bigham's biggest challenge in growing the business?

"Communicating the concept," she says. "It's not easy for people to visualize the doorway theatre."

Bigham seems to be rising to that challenge, though, as escalating orders and sales show. And now she's ready to take the business to the next level by expanding her markets and generating new products.

"Open Door Designs allows me to do what I enjoy most, which is designing for children," says Bigham, who spent six years on the road with children's entertainers Sharon, Lois and Bram as a designer and props person before starting her business.

"Knowing my customers and finding out what they want has helped me stay creative—and build my business."

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SMALLBUSINESSBEAT

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The focus of this newsletter is on business—successes, news, trends, opportunities, challenges and issues affecting Ontario's small and medium-sized business climate. Information is drawn from ministries and agencies across government and from other public sources believed to be reliable. All efforts are made to ensure timeliness and accuracy.

La version française du *Ontario Small Business Beat* est disponible sous le titre *Coin des petites entreprises de l'Ontario*.

We want to hear from you.

Comments and contributions are welcomed. Please write us by mail, fax or e-mail.

