

BUSINESSEDGE

NEWS MAGAZINE

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 1

Former Dentons partner launches Canadian construction law practice

BY ROB DRISCOLL

Business Edge Media

Achieving partnership at the largest law firm on the planet is something that many strive for and very few achieve. Once that goal is accomplished, the golden handcuffs keep you in that position for the rest of your career.

Except for Kevin Burron.

The Winnipeg structural engineer turned Calgary-based construction lawyer served his last day with Dentons on Jan. 31, having resigned to work under his own name.

I caught up with Mr. Burron earlier this month and fired 20 Questions at him in an effort to find out why on earth he would make such a move.

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Banks roll in foreign exchange dough

By Brett Undershute



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Weed prescribing practice out of whack

By Ian Burron



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Tech stories to watch in 2019

By Dr. Tom Keenan

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Military historian and business writer Norman Leach opines on Canada's declining economic relationship with our big brother to the south.

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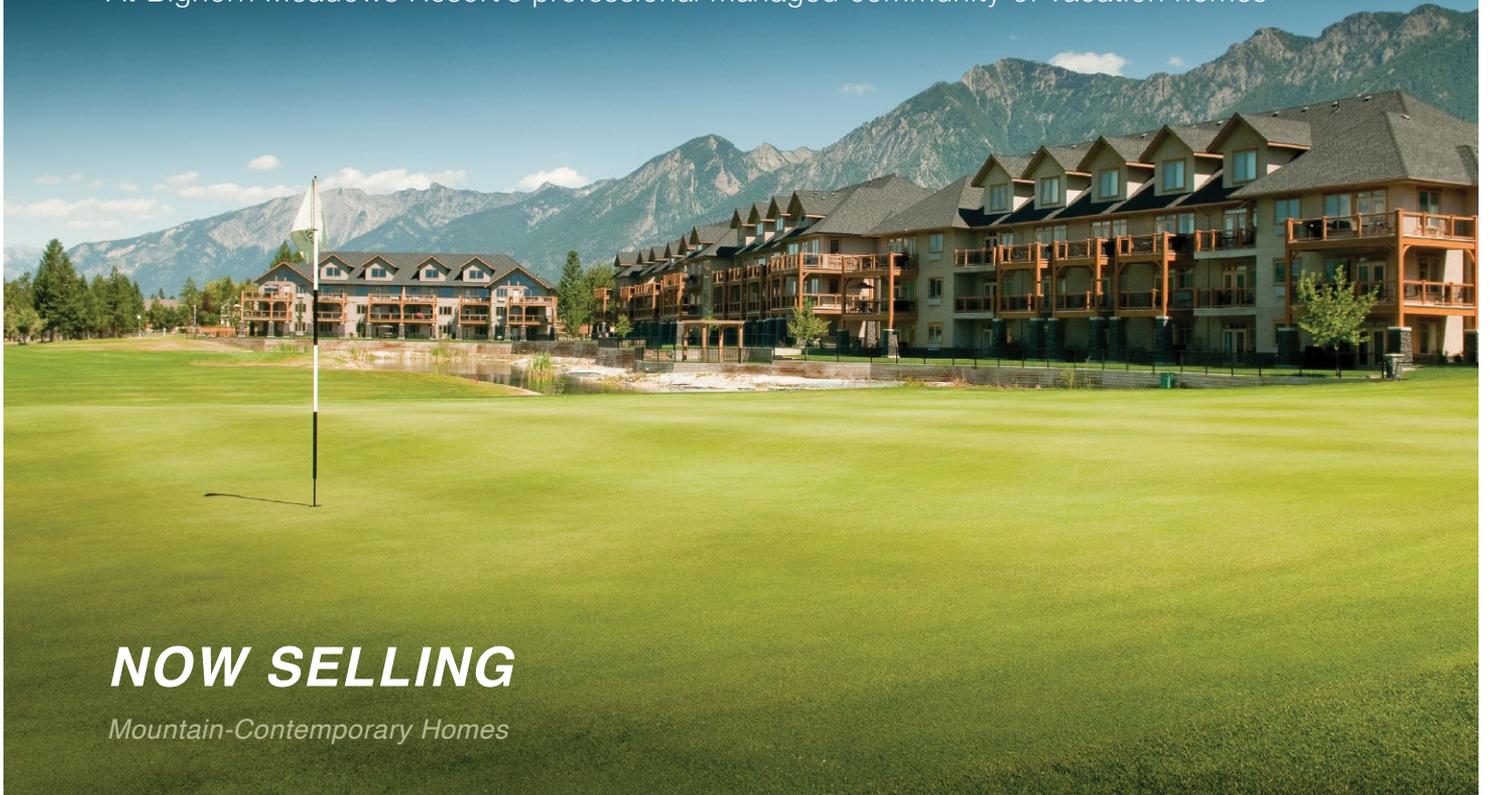
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OUT OF THE NORM

Canada is failing to earn its stars and stripes



NORMAN LEACH
Business Edge Media

Canada's relationship with the United States has always been one built on give and take, but it has never been easy.

In 1920, the Canadian military finally agreed that an invasion of Canada from the south was not our biggest threat and stopped practising defence against a U.S. attack.

In 1944, mostly based on wartime production, Great Britain fell to second place and the U.S. became our biggest trading partner. From the Auto-Pact to NAFTA, both Canada and the United States have looked for ways to work together, not always for mutual benefit but certainly out of self-interest.

Many in Canada feel the U.S. is somehow acting against Canada. They cite numerous "anti-Canada" actions as proof. The reality is that the U.S. is not against Canada. They just don't care. Canada has become, for the most part, irrelevant to the future of our big brother to the south.

Before anyone shouts it is all about Trump, it is not! This decline in the relationship happened way before Trump. When President George Bush did not thank Canada for its role after the 9:11 attacks, we should have seen it as the canary in the coalmine. Bush did not "forget" to thank Canada; he chose not to.

We are now at a place in which decisions are being made with no consultation whatsoever. GM closes its plants and the Government in Ottawa is caught off guard. At one point, the U.S. needed our energy. Not anymore. Canada has very little that the U.S. needs – including markets.

The response from Ottawa is that we can simply "sell to someone else". Here lies the challenge. There is no one else to sell to, at least not in the short term. Anyone who has ever run a business – and sadly few of our politicians have – knows that there is no market just waiting for Canada.

Europe? They are currently getting what they need elsewhere. The same thing goes for Asia, Africa, Central America, South America – the list goes on and on.

“

Many in Canada feel the U.S. is somehow acting against Canada. They cite numerous 'anti-Canada' actions as proof. The reality is that the U.S. is not against Canada. They just don't care. Canada has become, for the most part, irrelevant to the future of our big brother to the south.

”

To open these markets to Canadian business, we need solid relations at both the government and business levels, and we need time. Sadly, Canada has neither. We have spent very little time building business relations in potential client countries, and as the U.S. declines as a market for our commerce, we have less and less time.

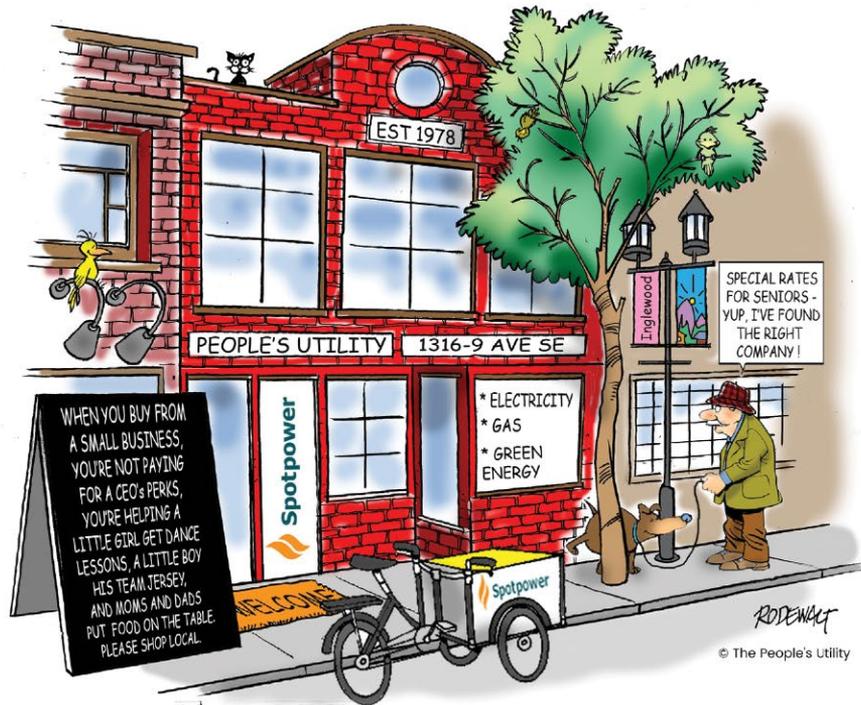
Where does that leave us? Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney once said, "If

you do not believe personal relationships impact on international relations, you understand neither."

Let's hope whoever is elected in October understands both. ■

Norman Leach is an Edmonton-based international business consultant, author and historian who is interested in the intersections of government, business and citizens. He can be reached at nsleach@telusplanet.net.

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Porter drives Digitex to well-documented success



ROB DRISCOLL
Business Edge Media

Entrepreneur Hugh Porter has helped guide Digitex Canada from an ambitious little photocopier/printer company launched more than 20 years ago in Red Deer, Alta., to a technology powerhouse with offices in nine cities throughout Western Canada.

In a recent interview, Mr. Porter brought us up to speed on the industry in which Digitex continues to thrive by providing top-level technology solutions to Canadian businesses.

Q: How has your industry changed since you joined Digitex in 2008?

A: Print volumes are declining at a slow rate year over year. However, the importance of printing devices has never been greater. There has been a continual shift from simply using the copier as an output device (print, fax) toward a workflow device. It is now responsible for key inputs (scan to email, convert to pdf, direct network folder connections) in order to help customers with their digital workflow needs. The recent addition of multiple managed

services to our offering has been well received by our customers and will allow us to grow our market share in a mature industry.

Q: Does having nine offices across Western Canada give you an advantage over the competition?

A: Yes, having the ability to service our customers directly across three provinces gives us a clear competitive advantage. We have a great dealer network, and the ability to be nimble in solving any problems that may arise directly is a value-add to our customers and allows us to take on national contracts. Furthermore, we have access to more stock, technical resources and staff.

Q: What are the most tangible ways in which Digitex helps business operators grow?

A: Our core focus has been and always will be customer service. We want to provide business operators peace of mind, knowing that their print, supplies, IT and now mobility office functions are taken care of so business owners can focus their efforts on their businesses. The more time owners can invest to work on their business instead of in their business, the more growth opportunities will arise and the more successful they will become.

Q: Are you seeing particularly strong growth in certain areas of your business?



Hugh Porter, Digitex Canada

A: Our e-commerce and supplies platform has gained significant momentum this past year, growing 56%. We made a significant investment in this area to provide our customers with the ability to place toner orders in a simple and efficient manner at any time. Many clients do not run a typical 8-5 operation, so this has become a nice value-add to businesses that require flexibility.

Q: How important is it to have good people behind your varied IT and document services?

A: Our faithful staff drive our business and success. I truly believe we have the best technical team in the industry. Customers are looking for unique solutions, especially on the document management/workflow side. Our team has the technical expertise and creativity to

understand the request, provide alternative options, map out project timelines, engage key contacts and ultimately develop an effective solution for end users. A live local response on the other end of the line that knows your service history cannot be underestimated.

Q: Are there more expansion plans in store for Digitex?

A: Our primary focus is gaining market share within our existing geographical footprint throughout Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. That said, Digitex is always seeking new opportunities to grow our business geographically both organically and by acquisition. ■

For information on how Digitex can help your business grow, visit digitex.ca or drop a line to contact@digitex.ca.

Peake performance is just a call away



Stan Peake is passionate about helping values-based leaders live their dreams – while improving their bottom lines.

It's no coincidence that for InSite Performance Coaching Ltd. the "LTD" stands for Living the Dream as the company offers its clients services in business coaching, leadership development for the next wave of movers and shakers, and motivational speaking.

Peake, the Company's founder and owner, says that InSite specializes in leadership, culture, strategy and differentiation at the corporate level. In one-on-one coaching and speaking engagements, InSite tackles goal setting, strategic planning, time management and organization and personal success strategies and tools.

"I differentiate by going way deeper," says Peake. "My purpose, the reason I'm here, is to make the world a better place by igniting the human spirit. So if I don't get to your soul, I probably haven't gone deep enough.

"The work goes deep to get to your purpose . . . and make sure it's your calling. And the second way I would differentiate is that I hold people more accountable. After we walk through process and do a lot of the same fundamentals that other coaches will do, I hold people very accountable and I follow up consistently, if not relentlessly, to not just support their goals but to make sure they achieve them."

InSite, which was founded in 2015 out of Calgary, has clients from Victoria to Montreal and has done work with owners and business leaders and executives in the United States, Mexico as well as globally.

Peake works with entrepreneurs and executives in a variety of industries. He considers himself a catalyst – the kind of guy people call when they want to get things done.

"I work with mission-driven leaders or values-based leaders. People that see more than one bottom line. It is those people who are passionate, want to make a difference, and they want to make money. It's a triple bottom line – profit, people and planet."

Peake says he helps people maximize their profits while helping them maximize their impact in the world. He wants to develop great leaders who understand that they can't achieve their missions alone and so they invest in their team.

"We really help people improve their teams by investing in them through education," says Peake. "InSite makes sure that people are making their communities a better place through volunteerism, philanthropy, or it could be through recycling or improving their carbon footprint – whatever makes a positive impact."

Want more information?
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REVSquared: the solution to your B2B sales challenges

Is your business among the many that are stuck in a rut, continually underperforming without making meaningful changes?

Perhaps you believe that you cannot afford to bring in a sales manager with the expertise and technical capability required to fix the problems and help drive your business to great profits.

I would argue that you can't afford NOT to bring in that sales expertise.

The good news is, thanks to an innovative concept provided by Ruth van Vierzen of REVSquared Business Growth Agency, it will not cost you an arm, leg and a kidney to make it happen.

van Vierzen is an Outsourced Sales Manager™ who provides solutions to your revenue challenges on a fractional basis. Fractional means you get a first-class sales leader at a fraction of the cost of bringing on a top-tier sales professional full time.

"SMB owners tend to wear too many hats," says van Vierzen. "If they are also trying to be the sales manager, they generally don't have the time or expertise to do it effectively. This leads to frustration with and among the sales team, missed opportunities and a reduced competitive edge."

At some point, leadership needs to step back and recognize when it is time to call in outside expertise. The moment they start working with an Outsourced Sales Manager such as van Vierzen, the business operators see an immediate drop in stress as operational efficiency improves and revenue climbs.

"My role is as a boots-on-the-ground, tackle-the-priorities B2B sales specialist," says van Vierzen. "Think action, process improvements, visible results. I know that if I'm being called in, there are usually sales problems that need to be fixed right away."



The benefits of working with REVSquared are many and compelling. van Vierzen brings more than two decades of business development experience to her clients. She has an extensive background in marketing and operations, which enables her to understand how the pieces of a business fit and work together.

"As an outsourced specialist, clients expect me to get onboarded quickly," she says. "Having provided outsourced business services for many years, I am used to getting up to speed quickly on how a company operates, its culture, strategic vision, etc."

"I see the big picture while being detail oriented enough to know exactly what needs to be done to achieve company goals."

A common mistake among business owners is thinking that industry-specific technical experience is essential in a prospective sales leader.

"Yes, there are unique aspects to each industry and each company," says van Vierzen. "But when I am building out a sales process, effective sales practices and techniques apply across industries."

Ironically, van Vierzen is a sales trainer who believes that most companies spend too much time and resources on sales training.

"I think companies tend to rely on sales training as a quick-fix solution," she says. "But group sales training is shown to have a low adoption rate. As soon as sales reps are back at their desks, they implement little to none of the training they have received. And without real-world application, the training content is soon forgotten."

Van Vierzen says the data shows that ROI on sales training investment is historically very low. That's why she prefers to deliver half- or full-day training sessions that allow participants to get a lot of the work done during the workshop training. They apply the learning during the training, so it is absorbed and becomes part of their new sales habits.

van Vierzen provides services on a fractional, month-to-month, non-contract basis. For more information on how to achieve dynamic sales growth, contact Ruth at info@revsquared.ca, call/text 705-772-2443 or visit revsquared.ca.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT COVER

Structural engineering stint built bridge to legal field



Kevin Burron's technical background and litigation skills give his construction clients critical advantages.

PHOTO BY JILLIAN BURRON

1. How would you describe your years as a structural engineer?

Those years were enjoyable and valuable. I had the good fortune to be able to gain a lot of experience both in engineering design and in the actual process of construction of both buildings and major civil structures. I started out working for PCL Construction and completed my engineering career at Stantec Consulting, both major international firms that were founded in Canada and headquartered in Alberta. At PCL, I had hands-on experience working on construction sites as a field engineer, and I learned how a wide variety of different types of structures are built, from bridges to schools to hotels. It was fun work, although it took me to some pretty remote places in northern Manitoba at times. That experience was invaluable to my later years as a structural engineer at Stantec, where I primarily designed highway and railway bridges. The design process needs to take construction considerations into account—it is possible to design an un-buildable bridge. Over all, I found engineering rewarding in the sense that at the end of the design process there was a concrete result to show for it, so to speak.

2. What prompted the switch from such a concrete career to becoming a lawyer?

As an engineering consultant, I had begun to be quite involved with preparing tender documents for various projects. That combined with a continuing education course that I took on law for engineers got me interested in the law. I began to read more and more about law in general, to the point where I decided that I wanted to get a law degree and make a career out of it.

3. What attracted you to litigation?

When I started law school I wasn't interested in litigation at all. I didn't like public speaking. But the more I was exposed to litigation in law school, the more I liked it. I was fascinated with just about all areas of law, and litigation presented an opportunity to work regularly with a variety of different types of legal issues. Litigation continually presents different and challenging legal problems, and the lawyer has to quickly become well versed with whatever the legal issues of the case are. I find the process of learning the facts of a case and developing legal strategies and arguments to help solve clients' legal problems quite rewarding. And I quickly got over my hang-up with public speaking. Trials and hearings are the best part of the process for me. Making a good argument in court is like seeing the bridge built after the long design process.



We are fortunate in this country to have an independent judiciary that in my opinion has not become politicized as it has elsewhere. Judges are human and sometimes make mistakes, but our system allows the opportunity for correction of errors through the appellate courts.



4. *Do you feel that most judges give your clients a fair shake?*

Yes I do. Judges have a very difficult job, and I believe that all of them strive to reach a just outcome based on correct legal principles in every case. We are fortunate in this country to have an independent judiciary that in my opinion has not become politicized as it has elsewhere. Judges are human and sometimes make mistakes, but our system allows the opportunity for correction of errors through the appellate courts. Of course, the party who loses a case is often understandably upset about it, but that doesn't make the result unfair. A lot often depends on how the case is presented and argued by the lawyers involved. Judges can only decide cases based on the evidence and legal arguments presented to them. If the case isn't developed properly, the client may lose even though in a perfect world they should have won. That isn't the judge's fault.

5. *Is there such thing as a typical day in your chosen field of expertise, construction law?*

I suppose there is a typical day as far as the daily routine goes, but when it comes to the actual work I am doing, there is something new all the time. Construction projects are full of uncertainties and risk, and I sometimes find it surprising after 12 years of practising in this field how often I get a call from a client with a legal issue relating to a construction project that is just a bit different from something I've seen before. That keeps things interesting for me as I work with the client to try to best protect their interests and try to solve the problem with minimal disruption to the ongoing construction process and the working relationship between the parties.

6. *Does your engineering background give you an advantage in construction-related litigation?*

I believe that it does. The learning curve on any given issue is far less steep because even if it is an issue that is outside of my field of structural engineering, I still speak the language of engineering and construction and have an understanding of how the design and construction processes work. Having done this type of work myself for many years allows me to very quickly understand the situation presented and identify the key issues of a given case. Clients can describe a construction issue and have confidence that I know what they are talking about. It also helps me to come up with suggestions for resolving the problem before it becomes a major dispute and thereby help clients to avoid litigation.

7. *Have you ever pretended to drop a microphone, done a fist pump, or danced a jig after a particularly good closing argument?*

No. Although I have wanted to . . . well, maybe not the dance-a-jig thing.

8. *You just did something very unconventional, resigning from being a partner at Dentons, the largest law firm on the planet. What the heck are you thinking?*

I am thinking about how I can better deliver legal services to clients. Dentons is a great firm and they are doing a lot of innovative things in the legal world. But, ultimately, I believe that clients are less concerned about what firm their lawyer works for than their relationship with the individual lawyer with whom they are working. I decided to leave the firm because I wanted to have the freedom to tailor legal solutions to best suit any particular client's needs. I think that, like most other services, clients should be able to understand at the outset what the cost will be for various deliverables provided by the lawyer. So I'm trying to do things a bit differently that way; to bring more clarity to the process for clients. I want clients to be able to make strategy decisions based on the merit of taking a particular step in the process, not based on how much more it might cost. Finally I think that I will be able to devote more time to working on clients' legal issues and thereby provide them with a higher level of service.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

Wife and four daughters complete hockey fan's lineup



PHOTO BY JILLIAN BURRON

9. *In the court of public opinion and in my personal experience (except when represented by you), lawyers are often more interested in maximizing billable hours than providing good service. Are the provincial law society bodies doing enough to protect the integrity of the industry?*

There are unethical people in every line of work and, unfortunately, there are some bad apples in the legal realm. I have no doubt that this is the exception rather than the rule. Lawyers are disciplined or disbarred for unacceptable behaviour, and I believe that the law societies in each province are doing their best to hold those in our profession accountable. Actually, billings in general are not a law society regulatory issue. It is true that lawyers sometimes get focused on billable hours, but at the same time clients are beginning to ask for alternative fee arrangements. The more clients begin to do this, the more the profession is having to respond and ensure that clients perceive that they are receiving the appropriate level of value for money.

10. *What more could be done to ensure that lawyers live up to the code of conduct for which they all take an oath?*

As is the case with the medical world, I think a second opinion is often a good idea. If you believe that your lawyer is acting unprofessionally or not representing you appropriately, seek another lawyer's opinion. I have a lot of respect for my peers, and I think that most would be glad to offer a second opinion without having to throw anyone under a bus.

11/12. *Do you like the TV series Suits? Is the show a decent portrayal of the legal world?*

Suits is one of my favorite shows, but it has no basis in reality. That's what makes it good of course. I would love to be able to file a lawsuit for a client and then be in court for a trial the next day. I would also like to be as perpetually well-dressed as Harvey Specter. It can't happen in real life.

13. *I have met your lovely family – wife Jenn and four daughters Jillian, 19, twins Brooke and Jordan, 16, and Lauren, 14. Lawyers have a tendency toward workaholicism. How is your work/life balance these days?*

Life is always a balancing act, and it is important to make time for family otherwise I find everything suffers, including the level of service my clients receive. Representing my clients to the best of my abilities is a top priority, but I am also good about putting away the laptop and the phone when I am with my family in the evenings and weekends. To me, the key is good communication — both with family and with clients. I think it is important to be upfront with clients about realistic timelines. As long as everyone is clear about expectations, things tend to go fairly smoothly.

14. *As a big Winnipeg Jets fan and season ticket holder, what has it been like to see the team disappear from the NHL in 1996, then, after returning to the league in 2011, quickly become a Stanley Cup contender?*

Having been without an NHL team in my hometown for 10 years, it was actually nice to move to Calgary in 2006 and finally have an NHL team to cheer for. Calgary is my home now, and the Flames were my adopted team. But it was really exciting to see the Jets return. I now have two home teams to support. When I was in Winnipeg over Christmas, I went to see the Flames play the Jets. Of course I was cheering for Winnipeg, but when Calgary beat them I couldn't be too disappointed. It's kind of a win-win situation. Winnipeg's playoff run last season was really exciting, and this season is shaping up to be fantastic, with both teams currently topping their divisions.

“

I would love to be able to file a lawsuit for a client and then be in court for a trial the next day. I would also like to be as perpetually well-dressed as Harvey Specter. It can't happen in real life.

”

15. *I have seen you play the organ and piano at your Lutheran church in southeast Calgary. What do the church and music mean to you?*

It is my way of contributing something to the community. Music is a talent that I am fortunate to have, and I know it is much appreciated by those in attendance. To the extent I can make a difference that way I am happy to do it.

16. *You are involved with my company CourtWizard in which we offer affordable, high-level legal support to self-litigating individuals and entrepreneurs who are not in position to retain a high-priced lawyer. Besides cost savings, how do people benefit from working with CourtWizard?*

Access to justice is a serious concern these days. Many people who want to work with lawyers either can't afford to, or have been working with a lawyer but have exhausted their resources and are forced to continue on their own. CourtWizard is a concept that I am really excited about. I like the thought of providing support to people who would otherwise not be able to afford strong legal representation. The legal system is very complex, and I enjoy helping people navigate the system without directing an undue portion of their assets toward legal costs.

17. *What is the most challenging aspect of being a lawyer?*

Having to have an intimate grasp of all of the facts and nuances of a situation that I had nothing to do with when it happened.

18. *What is the most gratifying aspect of your legal career?*

When I am able to help a client achieve a resolution to their legal problem that they are satisfied with. Often the result is a compromise to some extent, but getting the problem to a resolution the client can be happy with, rather than having litigation drag on indefinitely, is a big part of a lawyer's job in my opinion.

19. *What is your upcoming "Inside the Legal Mind" speaking tour all about?*

Most Canadians do not have time to do the research required to understand the nuances of our justice system. I will be partnering with local lawyers in various Canadian cities to hold events that help people understand important subtleties in the legal world. You will definitely want to attend an event if you are self-represented but there will also be helpful information for those who are working with other lawyers or are simply curious about the inner workings of the legal system.

20. *What are a few tips that self-litigants should keep in mind as they navigate the justice system?*

Take the emotion out of your legal documents, offer your opposition a respectful exit that is fair to both sides before going to trial, which is usually very expensive for both sides, and do your homework on etiquette and prepare a game plan before entering the courtroom. And take notes! ■

Kevin Burron can be reached at 403 608 1768 or kevin@burron.law.

Scale Up to Sell – an important read for any business owner



ROB DRISCOLL
Business Edge Media

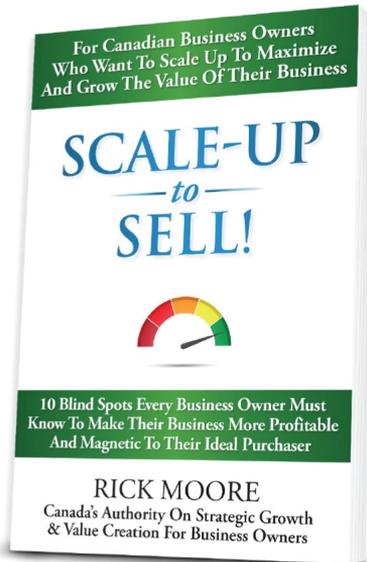
Driving along the highway, if you fail to check your blind spot, you can get smashed by another vehicle.

Similarly, as a business owner, if you fail to observe your blind spots, there is a good chance that you will be crushed, or at least bumped off the road to ultimate success.

In his book *Scale Up to Sell*, Rick Moore outlines “10 blind spots every business owner must know to make their business more profitable and magnetic to their ideal purchaser.”

In a business scene increasingly cluttered with literature by so-called experts, *Scale-Up to Sell* is refreshingly insightful and relevant. In fact, the book resonated so deeply with me, I immediately started re-writing my business plan.

It is important to note that Moore is not in the “so-called expert” category; he is the real deal.



Moore was a founding director of five-star success story Western Investment Company of Canada. Senator Scott Tannas, one of Western Canada’s most celebrated entrepreneurs and CEO of WICC, had this to say of his former interim CFO:

“I have known Rick Moore for more than 22 years, stemming back to his being the lead broker in financing my first public company Western Financial Group. In the early years, Rick was a vital part of our team of external advisors as I built the company. . . . Today Western is a \$1.5-billion enterprise, serving almost one million customers and employing 1,500 people across Western Canada. . . . Without his help in those early years, we would have struggled to grow.”

Scale Up to Sell is an essential read for business operators seeking to maximize the rewards for their hard work. Moore’s Top 10 Blind Spots to follow are supported with compelling case studies, anecdotes, and alarming statistics backed by reliable research.

1. I’m so involved in the day-to-day operations of my business I don’t even have time for a vacation. It’s hard to imagine taking time away from my daily work to focus on my scale-up plan.

2. We have sales coming in, but often we’re short of cash to invest in the growth of the business.

3. Our competitors continue to lower their prices, which puts pressure on us to do the same, reducing our margins and free cash.

4. After I pay everyone and our taxes, I’m very limited as to what I can take out of the business.

5. I’ve got a good team, but I’m constantly juggling hiring new talent and retaining existing talent.

6. Our marketing is effective to a certain extent, but it’s not enough to scale up the business.

7. We have systems and processes in place, but they have clear “holes” in them, preventing us from taking the business to the next level.

8. I’ve considered the idea of selling my business at some point, but I don’t know how to determine its true value.

9. I’m not aware of exit strategies other than selling to an outside acquirer.

10. I know my business inside and out. I don’t need outside help to take my business to the next level.

Scale Up to Sell identifies shortcomings that virtually all entrepreneurs face. His straight-forward, research-backed style drives home critical messages that will inspire many of us to take action.

The bottom line – business owners must observe their blind spots in order to avoid becoming road kill on the road to a highly profitable outcome. ■

In order to receive your own FREE hard copy of Scale Up to Sell, contact Rick at (403) 612-0232, rmoore@groupofone.ca, or visit ScaleUpToSell.ca. Rick will even cover the cost of postage.

Lawyer Bacal leverages life lessons in leadership role



ROB DRISCOLL
Business Edge Media

If you and your business could use high-level guidance as you navigate stormy seas, you may want to seize the three Cs.

Entrepreneur, best-selling author and keynote speaker Norman Bacal came up with the three Cs to help put businesses on a clear path toward success.

“CULTURE should be a central part of an organization’s strategy,” Bacal says. “Establishing a healthy corporate culture provides the foundation from which the pillars of success will rise.”

“COMMUNICATION is another element that is critical to success. Your corporate story and vision should be communicated clearly to your team. Colleagues should also be steadily informed of developments and constantly reminded of the vision as the story unfolds.”

“CONSISTENCY is also crucial, particularly in the



Entrepreneur, best-selling author and keynote speaker Norman Bacal

day-to-day actions of a company’s leaders. Behaviour of the leadership team must mirror the corporate culture and stated values.”

Bacal’s unique background has prepared him well to advise on effective leadership. He has experienced remarkable success – as managing partner of Heenan Blaikie, Bacal guided the company to massive growth as it rose to become one of Canada’s premier national law firms.

He has also been exposed to failure – in February 2014, one year after Bacal relinquished his leadership position with Heenan Blaikie, the firm boasting 1,100 employees, including two former prime ministers, experienced a stunning collapse.

“I have always faced adversity head-on,” says Bacal, who chronicled the Heenan Blaikie debacle in his best-selling book Breakdown. “Managing huge growth with offices on multiple continents came with its own challenges.”

“When the law firm that I had worked so hard to build imploded a year after I stepped down as managing partner, there were a lot of learning opportunities, to say the least.”

“I have learned that organization building is about carefully inserting building blocks step by step, with patience and determination. Leadership is best practised from behind the front lines.”

Bacal’s legal career also included advising every major Canadian film and television studio along with large international players such as MGM, Sony, Warner Bros. and Lionsgate.

International tax planning with the largest law firm on the planet (Dentons) and advising Smart & Biggar’s leadership on IP strategy in recent years round out a resumé that gives Bacal’s clients and speaking audiences unique insights on effective leadership and managing conflict and turmoil.

“I have been fortunate to have navigated some remarkably difficult challenges,” he says. “It is a privilege to be in a position to help other leaders benefit from those experiences.”

Bacal took on another major challenge recently, choosing to embark on a sideline career of fiction writing.

“After four years, working from a basic story idea and literally hundreds of revisions, I am about to publish my first novel; a murder-mystery called, “Odell’s Fall,” he explains. “It is a modernization of Shakespeare’s Othello.”

“It was back to school for me, learning all kinds of new skills, obsessively and relentlessly learning how to write fiction. It has been painstakingly difficult but also a source of great joy to complete this book.”

Odell’s Fall will be released October 2. Four critical reviews can be seen at normanbacal.com.

You can reach Norm at normbacal@gmail.com, phone 416.432.4493 or by connecting on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/normanbacal).

Is the Smith Manoeuvre right for you?



MIKLOS NAGY
Fee-Only Financial
Planner & Blogger
Business Edge Media

The Smith Manoeuvre is a financial strategy which was first coined by Fraser Smith, a BC-based financial planner. He wrote a book on the subject with the title: "The Smith Manoeuvre" in the early 2000s.

The Smith Manoeuvre is a relatively simple idea, that is to convert a mortgage to an investment loan over time and in so doing transform your non-tax deductible mortgage interest payments to tax-deductible investment loan interest payments.

To implement this strategy, you need a re-advanceable mortgage, consisting of your regular traditional mortgage and a Home Equity Line of Credit ("HELOC"). At any one point of time the sum of the remaining balance of your mortgage and the limit of your HELOC is constant, typically 60% or 65% of your home's value at the start. In other words, this type of arrangement allows your HELOC's limit to be a certain percentage of your home's value, in the beginning, less the current mortgage balance on your property. As you make your mortgage payments, your principal is paid down on your mortgage. Your HELOC's limit will be increased by the same



amount of principal you are paying off at each mortgage payment. The strategy is to invest these increases in your HELOC in dividend and/or interest-earning investments and so doing making the interest payments on your HELOC tax-deductible.

By doing this repeatedly until your mortgage is paid off, you will eventually fully convert your non-tax-deductible mortgage interest payments to tax-deductible interest payments on your HELOC. For this strategy to work, you need to invest in investments which have a reasonable expectation of earning interest or dividend income. If you invest to make capital gains and no interest or dividends, your interest payments will not be tax-deductible. The investments can be managed portfolios invested in stocks that will pay you a dividend, dividend mutual funds, income-producing rental properties or private first, second (or third) mortgages.

With the Smith Manoeuvre, you will be able to pay off your mortgage much sooner and could build a substantial net equity, in addition to the value of your initially mortgaged property, at the point of time of your mortgage original end of

its amortization period (most of the mortgages are for either 25 or 30 years long at the start).

For the strategy to work to your favour, you need to realize a minimum of 2% annual average growth rate on your investment, provided that your dividend yield will be around the historical average of around 3% per annum and the average interest rate on your HELOC not to exceed 5.5%. According to Statistics Canada, the S&P/TSX had an average annualized rate of return of close to 6.00%, excluding dividend yield, between January, 1960 and May, 2019.

Equity mutual funds' annual management fees are at around 2.50%. If you invest your investment loan in Canadian dividend earning equity mutual funds and will average no better than the market before management fees, in the long term, you will likely average 3.50% or less after management fees and excluding dividends. It is also important to note that most mutual fund managers have historically been underperforming their respective benchmarks.

On the other hand, if history

is indicative of the future and having your portfolio managed by a portfolio manager, your annual fees can be around 1.50% and hence your net annualized growth could be about 4.50% plus an average of 3.00% dividend yield.

Interest on your HELOC is tied to the Prime Rate (currently 3.95%) and depending on your creditworthiness can range between P+0.00% to P+2.00%. At present, you could obtain a 5 year fixed closed mortgage at the rate of 2.75% and HELOC with 3.95% interest rates.

There are several variations on the Smith Manoeuvre. The main, and in my opinion, the best, strategy to follow is to use the tax refunds and dividend payments to reduce your mortgage principal. Then reborrow, using your HELOC, the total of these principal reductions. These principal reductions will reduce your mortgage balance in excess to your regular monthly mortgage principal reductions attributed to your regular mortgage payments. If the tax refunds turn into tax payables, due to crystallization on capital gains and dividend taxes, use your dividend payments to the extent that your cash flow will not increase beyond the original monthly mortgage payments calculated on the length of the amortization period (either 25 or 30 years). Following this strategy, the effect of the Smith Manoeuvre on your net worth can be very substantial as the table above on the following page demonstrates.

As per the table on the following top page, employing the Smith Manoeuvre could make you over \$700,000 richer over a 25 years period, assuming

SELECTED SMITH MANOEUVRE CASES

ASSUMPTIONS:	OPTIMISTIC:	REALISTIC:	PESSIMISTIC:
Initial House Price:	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Initial Mortgage Balance:	\$975,000	\$975,000	\$975,000
Mortgage Rate:	2.75%	2.75%	2.75%
Amortization in years:	25,00	25,00	25,00
Number of Payments per Year:	12	12	12
Mortgage Payment per Period:	\$4,489.99	\$4,489.99	\$4,489.99
Assumed Marginal Income Tax Rate on Income:	47,97%	47,97%	47,97%
Assumed Marginal Income Tax Rate on Eligible Dividends:	31,67%	31,67%	31,67%
Assumed Marginal Income Tax Rate on Capital Gain:	23,99%	23,99%	23,99%
Share of Capital Gain Crystallization per Year:	50,00%	50,00%	50,00%
Initial HELOC Balance:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Initial Investment Size:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Interest Rate of HELOC:	4,00%	4,50%	5,00%
Assumed Rate of Return House Prices:	4,00%	4,00%	4,00%
Assumed Rate of Return excluding dividends on Investments:	5,00%	4,50%	2,50%
Assumed dividend rate:	3,00%	3,00%	3,00%
RESULTS:			
For the Period Until Mortgage is Fully Paid Off:			
Number of Years to Pay Off Mortgage:	19,00	18,83	18,58
Total Cash Flow (Mortgage, HELOC, Investment, Tax):	\$1,023.717	\$1,014.737	\$1,001.267
Total Mortgage Payments:	\$1,022.598	\$1,010.723	\$999.603
House Value:	\$3,160.274	\$3,139.683	\$3,109.048
Investment Value, Before Capital Gain Tax:	\$1,068.134	\$972.742	\$767.185
HELOC Balance:	\$975.000	\$975.000	\$975.000
Investment Value Net of HELOC:	\$93.134	-\$2.258	-\$207.815
Uncrystallized Capital Gains:	\$194.116	\$162.253	\$75.912
Investment Value Net of Investment Loan After Tax on Capital Gain Crystallization:	\$41.179	-\$45.685	-\$228.133
For the Original Length of the Mortgage:			
Original Number of Years to Pay Off Mortgage:	25,00	25,00	25,00
Total Cash Flow (Mortgage, HELOC, Investment, Tax):	\$1,346.996	\$1,346.996	\$1,346.996
Total Mortgage Payments:	\$1,346.996	\$1,346.996	\$1,346.996
House Value:	\$3,998.754	\$3,998.754	\$3,998.754
Investment Value, Before Capital Gain Tax:	\$1,817.375	\$1,640.442	\$1,214.008
HELOC Balance:	\$975.000	\$975.000	\$975.000
Investment Value Net of HELOC:	\$842.375	\$865.442	\$239.008
Uncrystallized Capital Gains:	\$401.401	\$336.459	\$153.364
Investment Value Net of Investment Loan After Tax on Capital Gain Crystallization:	\$734.940	\$575.389	\$197.961

Note: Taxes on capital gains are assumed to be crystallized 50% annually.

that you convert, over time, your initial mortgage of 65% (\$975,000) of the current house value (\$1.5 million) to a tax-deductible interest HELOC. The exact amount of how much you will benefit from this strategy is dependent on several factors. Keep in mind, your benefit could be significantly less should interest rates substantially rise or stocks perform considerably poorer than that in the past. Also, your benefit could be more. For a full set of the assumptions related to the above table, please contact Fin-Plan.

The above table shows figures based on investing in dividend earning Canadian equities. You could also invest in dividend

earning US equities or in 1st, 2nd and 3rd private mortgages instead of equities or a combination of all these mentioned. In the long term, US equities outperformed Canadian equities by a large enough margin to consider them as potential investments implementing your Smith Manoeuvre. This is despite the less favourable tax treatment on US dividends and the foreign exchange risk these investments would entail.

Currently, investing in 1st, 2nd and 3rd mortgages could give you a yield of between 6.00% and 14.00%. These yields are high enough that, despite interest income being taxed at the highest rate and without any ability to defer taxes on any portion of them, they

should also be considered as options. I will analyze the Smith Manoeuvre's performance assuming investment in US dividend earning equities and/or Canadian mortgages instead of Canadian dividend earning equities in one or more of my future blogs.

Your gain (or loss) from the Smith Manoeuvre is dependent on your mortgage rate, HELOC interest rate, rate of return on your investments, excluding dividends, and dividend yield. Given that the long term performance of the S&P TSX was around 6.00%, excluding dividends, the dividend yields have been on average approximately 3.00% and assuming you deal with a portfolio manager charging

1.50% annual management fee, the assumed growth rate, excluding dividends, of 4.50% seems to be a realistic growth target. Interest rates on HELOCs will likely be low for the foreseeable future as any significant rise in interest rates will likely impact the Canadian economy too harshly. In my opinion, for the next 20 – 25 years your HELOC rates will average between 4.00% and 6.00%.

The drawback of this strategy is that your overall debt level will stay the same and therefore, you will generally carry a higher level of risk. This increased risk is mitigated by the fact that instead of relying on real estate prices to increase, your portfolio will be diversified into a mix of real estate and equity investments. Keep in mind that regardless of the Canadian real estate price boom in the past 25 years, especially in the GTA and Vancouver, there is a risk of significantly lower growth rates in real estate for the next decades. Toronto and Vancouver have been consistently in the 10 most expensive cities in the world.

Determining whether the Smith Manoeuvre is the right strategy for you needs careful analysis and planning. Fin-Plan can help you in this regard. To ask any question about this article or to book an appointment to look at your particular case, please contact Miklos at nagy@fin-plan.ca. Miklos is a fee-only financial planner, best selling author, finance-related educational course writer, statistician and former Chair of the Canadian Institute of Financial Planners with over 25 years of experience in financial planning for high net-worth and middle-class Canadians. His Fee-Only financial planning website is at www.fin-plan.ca and his [Linkedin](https://www.linkedin.com/in/miklos-nagy-fee-only-financial-planner/) page is at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/miklos-nagy-fee-only-financial-planner/>.

The productivity myth and how it's killing your brain



DR. JOANNY LIE
BBusiness Edge Media

These are the signs of a harassed brain.

There never seems to be enough time. There are too many top priorities. There are too many meetings. Many unnecessary and a complete waste of time.

Are you making a dent in that to-do list? Why does it seem to get longer? Why aren't you making headway?

Are you having trouble falling asleep? Are you waking up in the middle of the night? Both? Or are you not sleeping at all? Is your mind filled with monkey chatter? Or is it numbed out but still won't shut down even when dead tired?

Are you having headaches? Lousy love life? Feeling guilty about it? Depressed? Feeling fat? Underweight? Unattractive?

Are you having difficulty making decisions? Are you confused and foggy-brained?

Did you answer, "Yes" to any of these questions?

If so, it's time to re-examine the way you are doing things. If you keep going down this

road, your brain is going to suffer. In fact, it is already suffering.

Burnout is at hand. The good news is, you are not alone! And I have several solutions for you. Some of them will surprise you.

No One Truly Thrives Under Pressure

The biggest lie about the productivity myth is that people love pressure. So they do the things which INCREASE pressure instead of increasing efficiency and efficacy. These include writing to-do lists, hunkering down, and the worst of all, multi-tasking.

You are bogged down in details that do not matter. You are bogged down in meetings you do not need to attend. You are at the mercy of someone else's agenda. Your attention is divided in so many directions. It is no wonder that you cannot identify what's important anymore.

You have lost sight of the original objective. You forget why you are doing what you are doing. This is the formula for mass confusion. It affects you everywhere in your life.

Ineffectiveness and helplessness are contagious. You may turn into a whiner or a stoic statue, totally numbed by the experience of the same type of situations occurring over and over again. Don't you see a pattern?

Believe me, I've been there. The day I discovered the solutions to these things was the day I finally found the road to freedom – and clarity.

This is you on stress

There are millions of biochemical reactions going on inside you. Even as you sit and read this article, millions of reactions have just finished, are starting, or are taking place now. You don't know they are happening.

Well, that's not entirely true. There are certain things that happen and you definitely know it. It has to do with the mind-body connection.

This mind-body connection is neither hard to explain nor to prove. Modern science has proven it, but they don't call it the mind-body connection; they call it the Stress Response.

You have many physical reactions when you are afraid, angry or upset. For example, what happens when you get scared? Your heart beats faster. Your blood pressure rises. Your breathing gets quicker and more shallow. Your skin might flush or you go pale. But the reactions aren't just physical. Your emotional state is also affected. It was triggered first. You've turned on the Sympathetic Nervous System.

On the other hand, your body has fantastic recovery mechanisms to calm you down quickly. Normally this

happens within minutes. As you calm down, everything relaxes. You've now tuned in on the Parasympathetic Nervous System.

Both mechanisms – that of a strong emotion and that of calming down – have biochemical components behind them. These biochemical responses are normal. What's not normal is when the responses during stressful times begin to dominate. They harm you more than you may think, and they are a big factor in any chronic physical and mental issues you may be experiencing.

Researchers have found that 50% of people who have suffered heart attacks don't have clogged arteries. So what is going on here? Studies have discovered that other factors may cause heart disease. Notably, they have found evidence that anger is a factor in many of those who suffer from heart attacks. They are aching and slowly validating what Chinese medicine identified as key factors – the emotions – in all manner of disease, injury and pain. Worse yet, they don't know how to use the information except in very general terms when they tell you to keep your stress levels down without an actual guidance system to assist you with the things that are stressing you out now.

The stress response and you

Let's look at the brain for a minute. The two most important parts of the brain, when it comes to the stress response are the hypothalamus and the hippocampus.

The hypothalamus is responsible for all the biochemical messengers of the entire body such as neurotransmitters including dopamine and some of the hormones such as oxytocin. The brain uses neurotransmitters to tell your heart to beat, your lungs to breathe, and your stomach to digest. They can also affect mood, sleep, concentration and your body, including weight.

The hippocampus deals with memories, learning, and emotions. It is also where most new brain cells are created well into old age because, hopefully, you are still creating new memories. Make a note of this: the type and quality of the memory counts.

Your body's stress response kicks off as soon as you perceive a threat or danger, whether REAL or IMAGINED. The brain doesn't know the difference. Neither does your body. Chronic stress depletes or causes an imbalance in the level of neurotransmitters, which leads to the adverse effects of stress.

Here's what happens during a stressful bout. The hypothalamus automatically sends signals down your spinal cord to the adrenal glands, which sit on top of your kidneys, which will secrete the stress hormone, adrenaline.

It also sends signals to your pituitary gland at the bottom of your brain and tells it to release factors to stimulate your adrenal cortex (in the adrenal glands) to produce a stress hormone called cortisol.

At the same time, the hypothalamus and the hippocampus are "monitoring" and communicating with each other. If the hippocampus is healthy, it will tell the hypothalamus to stop releasing cortisol when it reaches a certain level. But if you are often unhappy or stressed out or numbed out, then too much stress hormones damage the hippocampus. A damaged hippocampus can't tell the hypothalamus to stop, so more stress hormones are released, which causes a vicious cycle.

That's why you might find that it takes you a long time to calm down!

Here's what you should be concerned about – too much cortisol excites the neurons so much that they start firing too often. This starts killing off neurons in the hippocampus, which you know governs memory and learning and where most of your new neurons are created. The result? Existing brain cells die off and new ones don't get created.

Your brain actually shrinks. It atrophies. Stress makes you stupid. Sure, everyone is handles life in a unique way, but if you are not fired up every day, then you have lost something very important.

Control.

When you are in a chronic negative mental state, you

are reinforcing certain neural networks. The cells in your body and brain start craving stress hormones. That's why you can get into so many terrible patterns that look familiar. You wonder why life doesn't change.

You have to make the conscious decision to change your life.

Stress kills brain cells, optimism heals them

You CAN reverse the bad things that are happening inside your brain! It takes work. You've got to think, be and do differently in order to revitalize your brain and your body.

So, in order to become well again and stay well, the following medical trend is VERY important.

Optimism overcomes obstacles

Here are the traits of emotionally strong (optimistic) people:

- Grateful
- Generous of themselves with others
- Hang out with upbeat people
- Ignore naysayers
- More successful
- Persevere
- Enjoy better health

When you feel good, you are patching into certain hormones and neurotransmitters. You've got plenty of dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin. When you have an abundance of each of one of these, you will feel very positive about your life.

In order to take back control of your brain, you have to choose to think differently and to feel differently. Remember,

it's all about which nervous system you are turning on. You have control over this.

Dopamine flows when:

- You take a step toward a goal
- You expect to be rewarded
- Your efforts are rewarded
- You achieve your goal

Serotonin flows when you feel you are important, that you matter. That's self-confidence. Not narcissism.

Oxytocin flows from:

- Human touch
- Thinking and feeling fondly about someone you love or care about (and that better include yourself!)

When you're optimistic:

- You set goals
- You feel motivated
- You take action
- You are enthusiastic
- You are confident
- You can think straight
- You are more resilient
- Your memory is great

Let's face it; whenever you have achieved anything, you believed you could. You were enthusiastic. You were optimistic. You ignored the doubts, from yourself and others. You just went and did it, even when it was hard.

In order to improve, you have to make a conscious decision that you are going to change for the better. You have control over what you do and nothing else, but you must make the decision that YOU are in control. ■

Dr. Joanny Liu is an award-winning author and founder and chief human potential officer of Extraordinary Sports Medicine and Concussion Answers.

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Business Edge has delivered excellent results every time I have used them for advertising various real estate developments as well as delivering high-quality leads for investment fund-raising. Publisher Rob Driscoll is a very creative writer with an excellent understanding of creative branding and campaign execution.

RANDALL WHITE
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Business leaders can now LEAPE ahead of rivals

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ROB DRISCOLL
Business Edge Media

Nothing inspires innovation quite like sipping on a piña colada beneath a palm tree while watching waves crash on a tropical island shore.

While enjoying such a moment at Maui's Fairmont Kea Lani, I came up with a business model that I believe is an ideal fit for ambitious business leaders.

Leading Edge Association of Professionals & Executives (LEAPE) offers its members a range of marketing services including:

- Marketing hotline that offers rapid-response strategic input and review/editing of any marketing material
- Positioning you as a thought leader in your industry via high-calibre content and guaranteed coverage in Business Edge News Magazine, which reaches an unrivalled 157,000+ businesses per issue in print/digital editions and social media



- Networking meetings with your peers
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Some companies hire a PR firm to generate press releases and send them to media outlets, hoping that the news will get picked up. Often there are no takers. With LEAPE, we can help you produce a top-notch release. We can also guarantee that your newsworthy events and milestones will be covered in a major national publication.

Some businesses spend tens of thousands of dollars advertising in media that have a tiny fraction of the reach that my LEAPE clients experience through Business Edge News Magazine as part of their monthly membership fee.

Some companies spend many thousands of dollars to belong to a group that sets up peer networking sessions and guest speakers for senior executives. LEAPE members also see those benefits. Our conferences will present amazing speakers on the most important topics. Oh, and did we mention that the conferences and small group sessions take place at one of the nicest hotels in Hawaii?

LEAPE also provides content development and editing services that ensure you are viewed widely as a thought leader in your industry. We also provide high-level design services from a Canadian designer of the year.

LEAPE gives you all of these critical marketing services in one basket. There is no business like this on the planet, and the value is tremendous for all members.

Some companies will think that this offer is too good to be true. Those folks better hope that their competitors feel the same way. ■

Contact me on LinkedIn, at driscoll@businessedge.ca or call/text 403 968 7638 for more information.

People don't want what you are selling; they want to improve the quality of their lives!



RANDALL WHITE

Business Edge News Magazine

Storytelling has been the foundation of understanding the world around us since the earliest days of mankind. Storytelling has been used to educate, entertain and shift human emotion throughout history and is still an integral part of our societies today, whether the format is verbal around the fire, hard copy or the latest in digital and social media.

Purchasing decisions are based on many things, but among the least important are the obvious “features and benefits” of products, especially regarding lifestyle products. When you see someone driving a convertible in Edmonton, you know that this decision was not based on practicality but on satisfying important emotional drivers (pun intended).

Watching an advertisement for a high-end convertible, it is obvious that they are working emotional needs. Viewing the overall marketing of the companies illuminates the



relationships they build with the customer, and fulfilment of their needs extends that relationship.

The resort real estate industry has a preponderance of buyers from the legal, medical and business worlds – the so called “hard facts” buyers – yet based on hard numbers, these are not considered “good investments”. Once again, it is the emotional drivers that shift consumers from interested to sold!

Does your marketing have magic? Are you building relationships that significantly improve your clients’ perceived satisfaction of life? Or are you selling features and benefits?

Do you have a story that engages clients on a short, medium and long-term basis? Are you selling houses or dream homes? Cars or dream machines? Suits or status?

Developing your story and that of your product and then utilizing the magic of storytelling to engage, excite, educate and finalize a sale while building a relationship that elicits gratitude from your clients will lead to deep and enduring success for your business. Simply creating advertising that shouts out features and benefits and “Buy Now!” may lead to some sales, but that approach leaves you well short of what could be achieved.

Evocative language used effectively in storytelling creates a relationship that is the foundation of your business’s success.

Storytelling, creatively and articulately told, is the magic that moves your suspects to prospects to clients, and moves you to a brighter bottom line.

That is the tale to the sale! ■

Randall White, founder and CEO of Wise Guys Sales & Marketing Strategies, has achieved record-setting success in project sales, resort development and senior executive level work in various industries. He can be reached at mobile (236) 868-6868.

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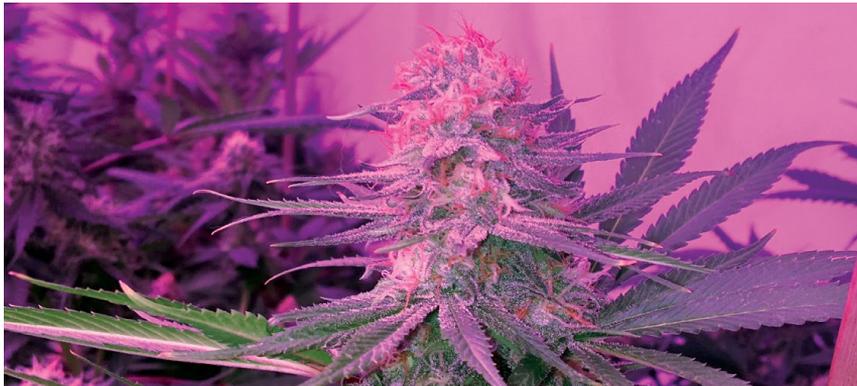
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Greenfields Premium Brands Inc. poised to become leader in cannabis industry



On a tour of Greenfields' impressive development park on Calgary's southern outskirts, it was easy to see why principals Jay Croteau and Lance Larsen are so enthusiastic about the boutique cannabis company's prospects for growth.

Decades of experience in the science of growing combined with strong backgrounds in the financial industry give the Greenfields management team a leg up on most of the competition in the burgeoning cannabis sector.

"We understand the business at the deepest level," explains Larsen. "We have worked extremely hard in testing and monitoring countless aspects of lighting and temperature controls. We have superior moisture control so there is zero mildew, zero mold on our plants.

"We are keenly aware of the genetics and the science of cannabis plant growth in general. We know how to maximize quality while ensuring a very high output per plant."

Greenfields' mission is to lead high-growth investment in the Canadian cannabis sector, leveraging strategic land development, plant yield optimization, and management expertise.

Croteau and Larsen have high integrity, and they know how to run a rock-solid, profitable business.

"Coming from the financial sector gives us an important advantage," adds Croteau, who ran his own financial advisory business profitably for many years. That success was tied to his ability to help businesses operate tax efficiently and with a healthy balance sheet.

The opportunity to invest in an early-stage cannabis company with solid roots and a great business plan is appealing to say the least.

Buoyed by the legalization of cannabis use in Canada, the industry is expected to see 700,000 registered patients (Mackie Research – April 8, 2016) and an ACMPR market of \$2.1 billion (Health Canada report) by 2020.

Another Health Canada study indicated 89 licensed producers in the country with market potential of \$22 billion annually for cannabis and ancillary market (Deloitte Report 2016 – Recreational Marijuana: Insights and Opportunities).

Greenfields is rolling out an effective plan to carve a lucrative slice of the enormous cannabis pie.

Greenfields has acquired a 14-acre medical cannabis business development park with a pending ACMPR application to become a licensed producer in Alberta.

This 20,000-sq-ft facility is projected to produce about 6,000 kg per year of cured medical cannabis, as well as 600 kg per year of high-grade cannabis oil.

The company's existing test facility just south of Calgary serves as a laboratory for examining baseline design controls, automation, and standard operating procedures. Ongoing testing of lighting systems, security controls, environmental controls, and automation gives Greenfields the proven processes that will maximize plant yield as the company scales up.

Greenfields is expanding into retail cannabis by opening as many as 5 retail locations to start, with as many as 15 retail locations available in Western Canada. These retail locations will be a key element in executing the distribution model and generating brand awareness.

In Canada, Greenfields' focus is to complete the design, build, and license of medical cannabis facilities. This growing technology company is developing purpose-built, automated, vertical production facilities designed to maximize production and minimize consumption cost.

Greenfields is positioned to be a leader in the global cannabis revolution. If you are interested in joining the green movement, contact Jay Croteau in Canada at 403-922-2912, the U.S. at 702-710-8909 or email jayc@greenfieldssupply.com.

Disclaimer: This feature is for informational purposes and is not an offer for sale. Anyone considering investing in Greenfields Premium Brands Inc. is advised to first consult an independent financial adviser.

What's a Canadian manufacturer to do?

Tough times call for big change

By Tony Fisher

Wesure Metal Manufacturing



“

Sacrificing quality was never a consideration because, simply, our customers rely on Wesure for quality. Instead, Wesure has doubled down on quality assurance.

”

Wesure has done what most businesses in Alberta have done; cut the fat and control expenses. But then what? What does a 42-year-old Alberta manufacturer with a reputation for high-quality manufacturing do? Wesure's choice was to reinvigorate itself by upping its game and taking the opportunity to do business in a different way.

Wesure started this process by looking outward at the changing Alberta business landscape to try to understand how to best serve our current customers and, potentially, our future customers. It was pretty clear that doing business the same old way was not a real option. Wesure has chosen to focus on its strengths and to build on those to provide even more value to the Western Canadian marketplace.

Sacrificing quality was never a consideration because, simply, our customers rely on Wesure for quality. Instead, Wesure has doubled down on quality assurance by making a strategic investment in having an ISO management specialist on staff to further strengthen our ISO certification and reinforce our commitment to quality manufacturing. On the column side of Wesure's business, customers have always been viewed as valued trade partners. The strategy going forward is to enhance those relationships further by providing additional structural services like steel beams, heavy duty hangers and connection engineering by adding an in-house engineer to our staff. To complete the picture, a key

investment to enhance its capabilities is to re-equip by moving to more robotic welding and ensuring its production floor is capable of more.

Another forward business tactic is actively looking for strategic alliances in the marketplace. Wesure believes that with the right strategic alliances, we can all be stronger together and far more capable of helping each other prosper and grow. For Wesure, it is really about thinking about doing business in a different way from what we have done it in the past and reaching for continued success in the future.

For more information on Wesure Metal Manufacturing, call 403 279 2440, email tony@wesure.com or visit www.wesure.com.



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For information on where to find SMAAK products, email Mert Tiryakigil at sebucom2@telus.net

TECH STYLE

Publishers and readers hunt for the elusive print/online balance



DR. TOM KEENAN
Business Edge Media

My morning ritual is about to change. After putting on the coffeepot, the dog and I would normally take a short walk to the Star Metro Calgary newspaper box for a copy of their commuter tabloid. It provided the perfect mix of local reporting plus a crossword puzzle that wasn't too challenging for my just-out-of-bed brain.

About one time out of three, the box would be empty, either because the person who fills it didn't get out of bed, or the handful of copies had been grabbed already. Now it will always be empty, or probably gone completely, as the money-losing parent company Torstar has cancelled its free city dailies in Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, and Halifax.



Yes, the company announced it will open new Star bureaus in all of those cities except for Toronto, where they already have a substantial operation. Current journalists can apply for those jobs, and whatever they produce will be available online, though I haven't figured out how to do the crossword digitally.

To add to the list of disappearing print publications, 115-year old Redbook magazine ended its print edition in 2019 and The Western Sentinel, a monthly that served Canadian Forces members in Western Canada, is stopping the presses.

I am certainly no Luddite when it comes to online consumption of media. I've read thousands of books and articles that way, and since I am affiliated with both the University of Calgary and Columbia University libraries, I have copious online access.

Indeed, I can read today's Toronto Star in digital form for free right now.

You may be able to do this, too, through Pressreader.com. That site features "more than 5,000 full-content publications from 100+ countries in 60+ languages" and is available at libraries, hotels, cafes, airport lounges and even hospitals. As a

bonus, some libraries, such as the Calgary Public Library, extend the free access to patrons with library cards no matter where they are located.

So, what about the publication you are currently holding, or reading online? Twenty years ago, Business Edge started out in the world of print, with a plan to be on the reception room tables of firms across Canada. It has always had an online presence and is back in both forms.

Publisher Rob Driscoll says Business Edge will be publishing in print each month in 2020, as well as "overhauling our website in order to better showcase our

fantastic content as well as the most pertinent business news and features from around the globe.” He will also make great use of their LinkedIn network of 27,000+ professionals, “the vast majority of which are handpicked local and international business leaders.”

Rather than hire a bunch of newspaper delivery boys with bicycles (remember them?), Driscoll will rely on Canada Post unaddressed mail to reach 157,000 business addresses with every issue.

He adds that “The digital marketing space is extremely crowded. For many companies, advertising on the Internet and in social media works well, and that continues to be their focus. Other companies are not seeing a satisfactory return on their marketing investment and are returning to traditional media.”

Linda Thomas Brooks, president and CEO at the Association of Magazine Media certain agrees with him. In a recent article, she wrote “The old trope that print is dead is just lazy thinking.” “Several publishers

who are successful in the print media are focusing on niche audiences who are willing to pay more for a higher-grade product. They are creating higher-quality products for them, and some are also cutting down on the frequency.”

Brooks cites the example of the prestigious Harvard Business Review, which in 2017 went from 10 to six even higher-quality issues per year and saw a 10% increase in subscribers. Likewise, good old Popular Science cut back from monthly to quarterly and subscriptions went up 30%.

I am living proof that people will pay for great content, well delivered. Every month I gladly fork over US\$10 to scribd.com for access to online books and magazines. I could probably hunt them down in some library, but my time is worth something. I even give Wired Magazine an annual digital subscription fee because I like reading their publication as it’s laid out, not in a sterile digital format or at a library. Being eyeball friendly is worth a lot to me, as well as bonus content.

“

The digital marketing space is extremely crowded. For many companies, advertising on the Internet and in social media works well, and that continues to be their focus. Other companies are not seeing a satisfactory return on their marketing investment and are returning to traditional media.

”

I love walking into the Air Canada lounge in Toronto’s Pearson airport and scooping up a handful of great magazines and newspapers. Sadly, their new lounge at LaGuardia airport in New York is paper free, and I’m not happy about that. Someone should tell them that the printing industry is going greener, and that too much screen time can be bad for us.

We’ll all have to adjust to a world with less paper. It will drive publishers to work even harder to earn our eyeballs

and subscription fees. I just need to explain that new reality to our two cats, who up until recently had been really enjoying their Star Metro litterbox liners. ■

Dr. Tom Keenan is an award-winning journalist, public speaker, professor in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at the University of Calgary, and author of the best-selling book, *Technocreep: The Surrender of Privacy and the Capitalization of Intimacy*.



WEB WATCH

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THE LIGHTER SIDE

Coffice politics threaten laptop nation

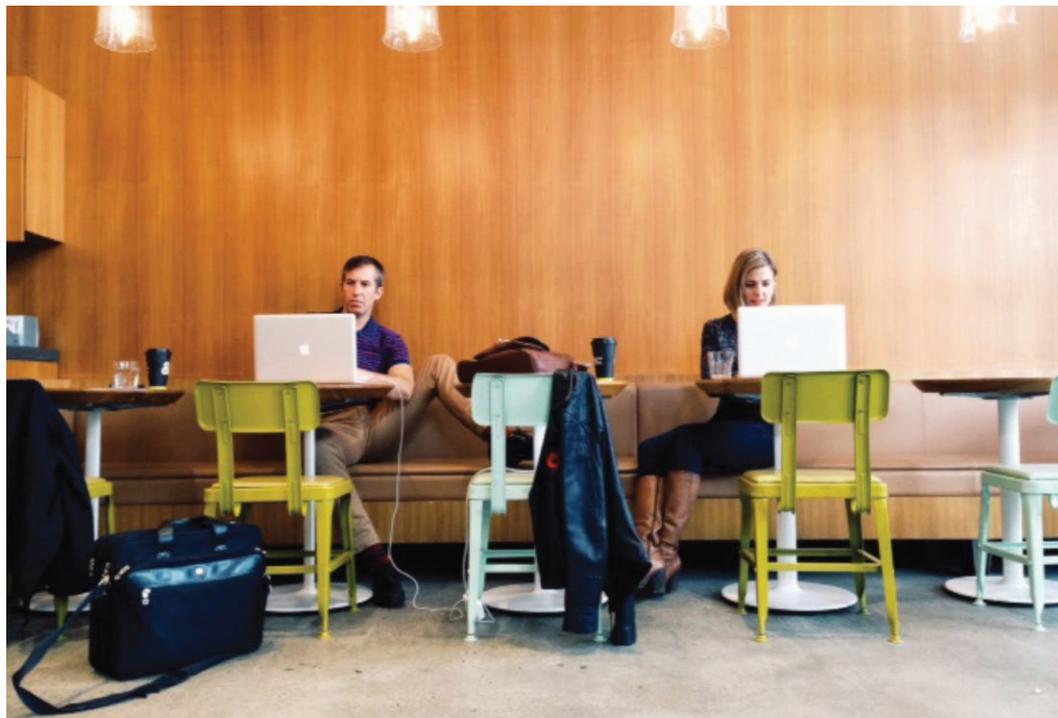


ROB DRISCOLL
Business Edge Media

I have embraced in recent years what I consider to be the ideal headquarters of the small business operator: the coffee-shop office . . . or, as I call it in order to save three syllables and therefore countless milliseconds per year, the coffice.

I use the coffice for almost all of my meetings with customers, prospects and colleagues. I do my administrative work and digital communication on my Mac laptop at the coffice. I do my best writing at the coffice. In fact, I am at one of my favourite coffices now; Be Fresh Market in Vancouver's trendy Kitsilano community.

I actually work more efficiently at the coffice as the ambient activity and moderate noise level curiously translate to a higher degree of focus. And, unless you are right beside me, you cannot even hear the grinding of the gears between my ears, which, being true to my penchant for "wordinations" (my term for a word combination), I like to call . . . gears.



The coffice is also an excellent spot for networking. On numerous occasions, I have bumped in to a face from the past who ended up doing business with me, all thanks to chance meetings at my national head coffice.

When it comes to the coffee-shop crowd, I am no ordinary joe drinker. But I am by no means alone in my reliance on coffee shops for day-to-day business operations. At this moment (3:20 p.m.), there are six other folks working on their laptops in this establishment. My quick survey reveals that two are doing their jobs remotely, two are working at their own small businesses, and two are students.

Coffices save entrepreneurs buckets of money that they would otherwise be spending in office leasing. They even provide coffice managers who clean our desks and keep things running smoothly. Their labour is free to us!

However, there is trouble brewing in Laptop Nation. Our cosy coffices could soon go the way of the dodo. And it's all because many of us are acting like complete dodos, showing little or no respect to the coffee shop owners who have been so kind to us.

The first sign that the coffice worker was on the endangered-species list came when I walked in to Kawa Espresso Bar on 8th Street in Calgary's Beltline district.

I was impressed with the renovations at this jumping' java joint.

The place was brighter, better lit and certainly gained a more modern vibe.

As I sat down at the high-top counter that typically seats four people, I went to plug in my laptop charger in the usual spot . . . but it was gone. So I moved to the long wall of tables along the windows but found no outlet for my charger nor for my frustration. Kawa had cleared out all electrical outlets that would be accessible to Laptop Nation with the exception of a power bar in the back corner intended for use by musicians.

Other popular coffee bars including Analog and Phil

“
 We can be better than this. We, the Laptop Nation, must unite and push each other to be more conscientious consumers at the coffee.
 ”

& Sebastian in Calgary and Caffé Artigiano in Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary provide few electrical outlets. In fact, the Marda Loop P&S in Calgary forces us to do a full downward dog to find the outlets beneath the bench and along the floor boards. Starbucks can't be far behind. I am pretty sure these moves are intended to socket to laptop-toting workers who spend plenty of time but little cash at coffee shops. We are wearing out our welcome. The prime perpetrators who have put our coffee perks in peril:

The Double-Double – Two people sitting side by side and taking up two tables so they can enjoy equally the people-watching component of the coffee shop. I frequently counter this conundrum in a cramped coffee by asking if it is OK to sit across from one of these generally sociable folks. The response has always been along the lines of “Oh, we are together – I guess we could sit together at the same table,” . . . to which I typically reply, “Oh, that would be so nice, thank you!” pretending to be surprised and content that my mission is complete.

Big Spill – One person with belongings strewn across a table designed to accommodate four people. At a typical busy, big-city coffee

shop, this person is, in a sense, stealing money from the business owner. Particularly at peak-revenue lunch period, BS is preventing larger groups from purchasing lunch at an average of \$10-\$20 per person. Coffee-shop owners should be able to drop a bill in front of the Big Spiller for \$60-\$80 if he/she takes up an entire table for four over the lunch hour.

The Dime and Dash – The perpetrator of this particular paradigm spends the minimum amount on a tea or coffee, takes up a table all morning and then spends their lunch money elsewhere. If you are a dime-and-dasher, please consider purchasing your lunch from the establishment that gave you free rent all morning . . . and bring friends if you are at a table intended

for serving multiple people, or at the very least make it obvious that there is space for others to join.

Stick-in-the-Mud – This person is glued to his seat for countless hours and has no interest in interacting with humans other than the four or five words uttered to the barista in ordering a coffee in a to-go cup so that \$3 coffee can stay hot for all those hours dominating what would otherwise be a revenue-producing table.

Battery Acid – This freeloader charges up his laptop to 100% so he can put in an entire 9-to-5 shift without having to move, regardless of whether customers are being turned away because of full capacity.

You might say “all the power to you,” but the truth is, BA is slowly being pushed out of the coffee shop culture.

We can be better than this. We, the Laptop Nation, must unite and push each other to be more conscientious consumers at the coffee. If it's -20C and you need to put in a few hours on a project, go ahead and stay at your coffee, but spend money . . . or you will end up in solitary confinement (home office) or doling out a lot more dough in office space.

If you are neither hungry nor thirsty, buy something for the homeless dude on the corner or for the student in line behind you. Whatever you do, spend money to earn your office space. It's better latté than never! ■

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