

BUSINESS

In memory of Napoleon

New software helps mid-sized companies keep track of details

BY PATRICK CASEY
STAFF WRITER

Mike Pun and Arnold Augustin want to help York Region business owners avoid meeting their Waterloo. Borrowing the name of the famous French general Napoleon, who was the emperor of France from 1804 to 1815, the pair have created a software package that gives mid-size companies the ability to gain a sophisticated understanding of their marketing and sales efforts.

Whether it's information from the administration, accounting or sales departments, the Napoleon Intelligent Management Software pulls together an extensive array of data from within the organization, generating up to 150 reports on the quality and performance of customer relations, sales staff and marketing campaigns.

PORTFOLIO

Strategic Connections is a private software company founded in 1992 by Mike Pun, a former general manager of information operations and director of systems at Canadian Tire.

Pun later teamed up with Arnold Augustin, who brought extensive knowledge in executive management, marketing and information technology, gained through software development and consulting from Canadian Tire and a major distribution company in the United Kingdom.

The company has now grown to nine employees while fine tuning its latest endeavour — Napoleon software — since January.

At a cost ranging from \$25,000 to \$45,000, Napoleon can be installed and running within two months.

The software is written for Windows-based systems.

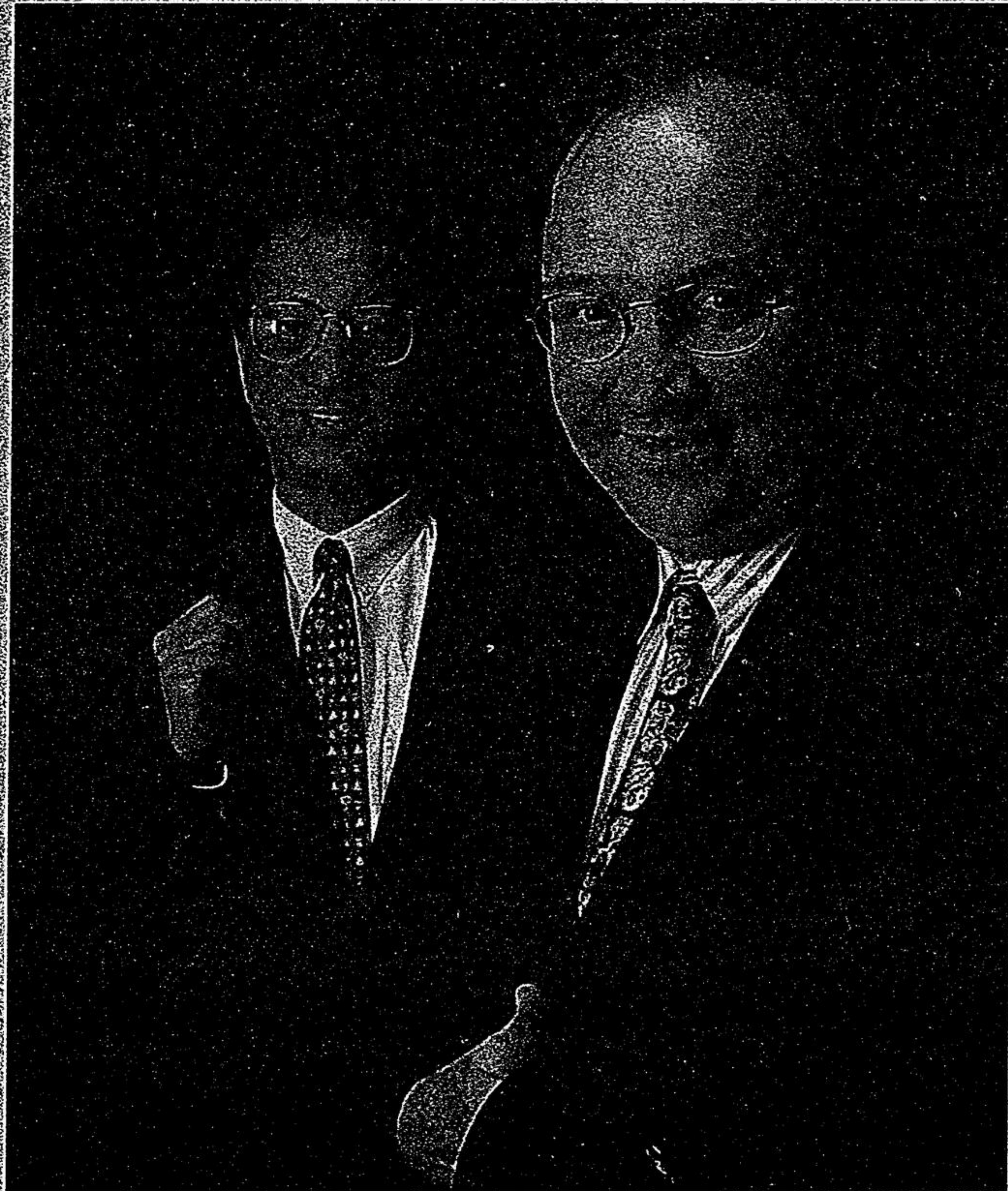
It then allows marketing executives to build on that knowledge to create new initiatives.

"Napoleon was probably the most fantastic general there ever was since his detail toward strategy was unmatched throughout the world," said Augustin.

He was also a tyrant who was on the verge of conquering the world. But like all successful people, they pay less attention to the fundamentals and begin worrying about less serious matters.

According to Augustin, a contributing factor in Napoleon's downfall at the hands of British general Wellington in the battle of Waterloo was the breakdown of his reporting process.

That led to several important decisions based on inaccurate information — a sce-



STAFF PHOTO MIKE BARRETT
Mike Pun and Arnold Augustin teamed up to form Strategic Connections, a private software company based in Richmond Hill. Their new program promises to help mid-size businesses manage information.

nario Augustin predicts would not be duplicated by companies using Napoleon software since analysis and timely presentation of critical data is assured.

"Where Wellington learned Napoleon's techniques and used that against him, our software will tell a company what is and isn't working for them," Augustin said.

"That's the secret of the big Fortune 500 companies since they have the systems that pull this stuff together. It's the little guys who get swamped.

With this, you don't need five consultants, 14 programmers and two years of development to put this to work at your

company."

The pair are the foundation of Richmond Hill's Strategic Connections, a private software development company they formed in 1992 after leaving executive management positions at Canadian Tire.

Geared toward businesses with annual sales of less than \$100 million, the Windows-based Napoleon can be installed and operational within two months at a cost of \$25,000 to \$45,000.

That's a fraction of the \$600,000 price tag for the Epiphany software package most top-

PROFILE: Company carves itself new niche

Foray into plastics pays off for firm

BY PATRICK CASEY
STAFF WRITER

The folks at Flexmaster Canada certainly have all their ducts in a row.

With 20 years worth of experience producing flexible coiled heating, venting and air-conditioning duct products, the Richmond Hill company has lined up a successful new plastic division that is exceeding initial expectations.

An industry standard throughout the 1990s, the ducts can withstand heat in excess of 300 F.

Sold in various arrays of colors and sizes, the thermo-plastic rubber ducts are commonplace in commercial and industrial buildings.

And after Flexmaster created its U-Nova Plastics operation in January, it has shipped more than 36,000 metres of extruded ducts in the first six months. Company officials expect that number to surpass 150,000 metres before the end of the year.

Melinda Donnelly, the company's marketing director, projects more than \$2 million in sales will be added this year to the \$30-million business.

"I guess you can say we work with a bunch of different ducts," Donnelly quipped last week during an interview alongside plant manager Anwar Ahmad. "But we even have been surprised how much we have been manufacturing."

"We had watched our market shares get eaten away by our competitors so we made the decision two years ago to get into the plastic division. We thought we could be a force and we have gained that foothold for the future."

"This is one of the fastest new products we have ever seen developed in the marketplace," she added.

Raw material pellets are shipped to the plant in bulk and placed in a

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See U-NOVA, page 13.



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