

York Region dominates Profit 100

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

York Region businesses continue to dominate an annual survey of Canada's fastest-growing companies.

Fifteen regional firms made the grade in *Profit* magazine's list of 100 successful companies, a ranking of the top 100 enterprises based on a five-year growth rate between 1994 and 1999.

Markham's DataMirror Corp. landed in the No. 3 position, registering sales last year of \$42.2 million for its software that allows otherwise incompatible corporate databases to communicate with each other instantaneously.

Founded in 1993 by Nigel Stokes and two partners, DataMirror experienced growth of 35,946 per cent after sales in 1994 were a meagre \$117,000.

Today, the firm has 230 employees, 50,000 square feet of office space, high-powered clients such as Harley-Davidson and U.S. book-seller Barnes & Noble, and exports 95 per cent of its products.

"As much as everyone is confident about their work and even though we had put a fair amount of money into development and seed money, there was always doubt," admitted Stokes in an interview yesterday. "The concept of whether or not you clear the trees on takeoff is there."

"But you have to have confidence, and risk the farm. My view is if you have a good idea that keeps you awake at night and you can't

sleep, then it is something you should give a full-time commitment to. But even with success today, you can't be complacent.

"Software changes so quickly, you have to do your research and development and invest in new technology," he said. "We can feel good about our accomplishments, but there are U.S. software companies doing even better. They are the best in the world."

With revenue this year expected to reach \$60 million, Stokes celebrated his firm's success by whisking away DataMirror's key management and sales team for a four-day Bermuda excursion last weekend.

"Canadians tend to belittle their accomplishments and don't talk about it," said Stokes. "We have lots to celebrate and we have to enjoy it."

Boardwalk Equities Inc. of Calgary, Canada's largest residential landlord, was *Profit's* No. 1 company, posting an incredible growth rate of 45,437 per cent, the highest percentage ever in the 12-year history of the survey.

The Calgary firm squeaked by Oshawa-based Cygnal Technologies Corp., a broadband network developer that enjoyed a 41,847-per-cent growth rate.

Thornhill's Genesis Microchip Inc. increased its revenues by 10,078 per cent through the sale of flat-screen computer displays and digital TVs, and finished in 8th spot, while Platform Computing Corp. of Markham, with software that co-ordinates multiple computers to perform complex tasks, was 17th



NIGEL STOKES: DataMirror president and CEO not resting on company's laurels.

with a growth rate of 4,945 per cent.

And publishing newsletters on subjects ranging from tax shelters to lotteries has proved beneficial for Lombardi Media Corp., a Woodbridge publisher that rang up more than \$9 million in sales in 1999 and expects to double revenue this year.

Founded in 1986, Michael Lombardi left the real estate industry in 1993 to dedicate his time to the fledgling company, and today produces 24 monthly newsletters, including six popular publications that offer hot and cold lottery numbers and detailed strategies for lotto and sports wagering.

"The boom for us has been the Internet, and we are one of the few publications that are actually making money through it. A lot of people are raising money, but not many

making it," said Lombardi, whose subscriptions range between \$40 and \$900 a year.

"Almost 70 per cent of our sales are from customers through the Internet. People on the Net are trying to get access to customers, but we are already there. We have also found a pretty big newsletter market for people who want to start a business."

Meanwhile, the 2000 *Profit* list tops all previous records with an average growth rate of 4,271 per cent over five years.

From software that links medical computers or science education that grabs the attention of kids, the *Profit* 100 companies demonstrate the incredible payoff that comes from combining risk and innovation.

"If there's one message contained in this list of our stellar business performers, it's innovate or die," points out Rick Spence, publisher and editor of *Profit*. "In today's can't-stand-still economy, success belongs to companies that actively seek out opportunity and don't stick with the tried and true."

Between the 100 leading firms, a total of 19,447 jobs was created between 1994 and 1999, including 4,301 new jobs last year alone, and another 8,550 projected in 2000.

And with 78 of the 100 companies exporting their goods and services, revenue worth \$3.5 billion was generated just through exports.

Companies within the GTA will be honoured at an awards ceremony June 13 at Richmond Hill's Sheraton Parkway Hotel.

REGIONAL News Digest



WHAT'S HAPPENING

Pond Clean-up
Saturday, 10 a.m.
Lehman's Pond

Millard Street, Stouffville

Stouffville Rotary Club president Ian Mackenzie (left) and Harry Bowes, chairperson of the Rotary environmental committee, put on hipwaders to get a head start on Saturday's pond clean-up. Helpers are welcome.

Feds kill info database

Weeks after criticism from privacy advocates, Oak Ridges MP Bryon Wilfert says the government's information database will be no more.

Hours after an announcement in the House of Commons Monday, Wilfert told The Liberal the federal government will disband its Longitudinal Labour Force File.

The database contains up to 2,000 details of information on each of Canada's 30 million residents. Officials will kill the file under supervision from Canada's privacy commissioner.

Wilfert, who serves as chairperson of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, said he could not support the fact the information was in one database. He said officials are to:

- Review how they share information with Canada's territories and provinces;
- Look at protocols that govern analysis of privacy issues;
- Develop penalties for misuse of information.

Officials had said they needed personal information to develop social programs.

Wilfert said the information will remain in various files, rather than one database, so the government can continue to form social policy. Any gathering of encrypted information will not involve Canadians' names, he added.

WHO MADE THE GRADE

The top York Region companies that landed in *Profit* 100 Magazine's annual ranking of Canada's fastest-growing firms.

Rank	Company	Location	5-year revenue growth
#3	DataMirror Corp.	Markham	35,946%
Software allows incompatible databases to communicate with each other.			
#8	Genesis Microchip Inc.	Thornhill	10,078%
Manufactures microchips for flat-screen computer displays and digital TVs.			
#17	Platform Computing Corp.	Markham	4,945%
Software co-ordinates multiple computers to perform complex tasks.			
#25	Lombardi Media Corp.	Woodbridge	3,492%
Publishes newsletters on subjects from tax shelters to lotteries.			
#34	Yogen Fruz World-Wide Inc.	Markham	2,578%
With 5,000 retail franchises, 60 per cent of the firm's sales are from frozen desserts.			
#41	Macrodyne Technologies Inc.	Woodbridge	2,234%
Its hydraulic presses are used to form anything from automotive parts to rubber mats.			
#43	Image Processing Systems Inc.	Markham	2,069%
Makes technology that detects product flaws on production lines.			

#62	InSystems Technologies Inc.	Markham	1,509%
Its software is used by 300 insurers in 24 countries to manage client/broker relationships.			
#71	Forsys Software Corp.	Markham	1,402%
Provides point-of-sale hardware and software to restaurants, cafeterias and nightclubs.			
#73	Triple G Systems Group Inc.	Markham	1,302%
Its software is used to manage specimen testing, reporting and billing for medical labs.			
#80	Transatlantic Marketing Group Inc.	Richmond Hill	1,211%
Works with retailers to develop photo frames and mirrors to match stores' client bases.			
#86	Summer Fresh Salads Inc.	Woodbridge	1,103%
Clients range from small restaurants to Loblaw's, while the firm spends 10 per cent of revenue on R&D every year.			
#90	Applanix Corp.	Richmond Hill	1,068%
Makes products for airborne, marine and land surveying, plus vehicle positioning.			
#93	EPS Wholesale	Markham	1,029%
A supplier of promotional products that opened a St. Louis office to tap the U.S. market.			
#95	The Promotional Specialists Ltd.	Markham	1,015%
A supplier of promotional products, with products ranging from 5-cent temporary tattoos to branded leather jackets.			

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