

Upside Software Inc.

- Edmonton, Alberta ■ Ashif Mawji, CEO
- Founded company at age 28 (2000) ■ Employees: 48
- Exporting since 2001 ■ Export sales: 80%
- Export market: United States

When it comes to new business ideas, necessity is often the mother of invention. And then, if you're Ashif Mawji, your invention spawns a company that becomes one of the leading global players in its field. For Mawji, the necessity was to find a viable solution to the contract management problems of his first IT company, Information Systems Consulting Group Corp. (ISC Group). The invention was software that solved the company's problems. And the spawned company – created to commercialize the innovative software – is Upside Software Inc. Through its ingenious export strategy, Upside has rapidly grown to become one of the top suppliers in the global market for contract management solutions.

From Kenya to Canada

Born in Kenya, Mawji began honing his entrepreneurial skills from the age of 12, first selling watches at local trade shows and then moving on to computers, musical instruments and motorbikes – all to earn pocket money. Coming to Canada in the late 1980s, Mawji graduated from the

North Alberta Institute of Technology in 1992 and dove straight into consulting. In 1995, he formed ISC Group Corp., an IT company that a year later formed a lucrative partnership with IBM. Upside Software was created to commercialize the contract management software developed by ISC Group.

tive – is to target a particular industry vertical and approach the top players in that vertical. Upside then negotiates joint marketing agreements, so the customer can help Upside sell to other companies in the vertical. "This strategy works better than if we went to the individual companies ourselves. Everyone wants to do what the leaders are doing. So if they're using our products, they're essentially selling for us."

As a stellar example, the major North American railway corporation Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF) – which was Upside's first U.S. customer – spoke so highly of Upside to other tier 1 North American railway companies that those companies asked BNSF to hold a one-day conference dedicated to sharing its success with Upside's products. As a result of

Upside Software Inc. is ... an

Edmonton-based company that develops and markets e-business software for the business-to-business market. Designed to help streamline financial and business operations for companies of any size,

the conference, held in June 2002 and attended by Mawji, Upside is now engaged with three other railway companies.

"Being an entrepreneur, you have to leave your ego at the door. You have to look at what you're building as something for everyone around you, not just you. It's about being on a team."

Upside's products include billing, contract management, expense claim management and booking/reservation software. Forming strong partnerships with major companies such as Microsoft and Hewlett Packard, Upside has become one of the world's top suppliers in a market predicted by Gartner Group to be worth \$20 billion by 2007.

Target the Top

Mawji knows how to make the most out of a business contract. His strategy – simple but effective

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Ashif accepting Kids Kottage Award from Colleen Klein. L to R: Zainul Mawji, Premier Ralph Klein, Colleen Klein, and Ashif.

Financial Finesse

Mawji admits he's learned some hard lessons with respect to financial management. "It's about making sure you have sufficient cash flow. Our spending is tightly controlled. We only add staff when we're closing a deal or close to closing, so there's not a lot of pre-spending. Every month we do a detailed review of our expenses to make sure every area is spending within their means. And we share our financial status with our staff, so everyone knows where we stand and what needs to be done and is committed to doing it."

Leveraging Technology Keeps Costs Down

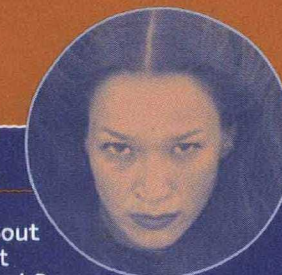
Mawji keeps costs down by optimizing use of technologies such as the Internet and video- and tele-conferencing. "You can provide successful presentations without leaving your office. We also realized we didn't have to open sales offices in other countries because, using the Web, we can sell anywhere in the world."

South of the Border with Team Canada

In November 2001, Upside joined the Prime Minister, western premiers, territorial leaders and 190 other participants on the inaugural Team Canada West Trade Mission to Dallas, Texas and Los Angeles, California. "The mission was excellent. The U.S. is our primary target market, and we got a lot of leads. I would definitely participate in other missions and recommend them to other young exporters. The political leaders can put you in contact with executive staff from top-notch companies, something that would ordinarily take a long time."

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Lucie Idlout



- Iqaluit, Nunavut ■ Singer/songwriter

It's a long – and expensive – road from Iqaluit to just about anywhere, but singer/songwriter Lucie Idlout is making it happen. Billed as an Inuk singer in her National Aboriginal Day debut at Ottawa's Museum of Civilization in 1998, Idlout, in her mid-twenties, is now serving up "pretty straight-ahead rock" to enthusiastic audiences in Canada, the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States and Greenland.

Through an agent "well connected to the world music scene," and with the assistance of the Canada Council and the Nunavut Arts Council, Idlout is expanding her international presence.

Performances in England and Italy came from industry contacts made at the World Music EXpo (WOMEX) in 2000 in Berlin, where Idlout did a showcase as part of a Canadian delegation sponsored by the Canada Council. The Council also sponsored her attendance at the North by NorthWest Music and New Media Conference in Oregon in fall 2000. "Without the Council's assistance, it would have been a lot more difficult to get to the stage I'm at as quickly as I have," says Idlout.

As for travelling from Nunavut, Idlout admits the airfares would "bankrupt anyone trying to work from there on a permanent basis." So while her business is officially based in Iqaluit, Idlout divides her time between north and south; she moved to Toronto in fall 2002 to collaborate with other musicians. A second CD will no doubt follow the first, E5-770, My Mother's Name, which is available through her Web site. Forty percent of Idlout's revenues are generated through international performances and CD sales – 30% from Europe alone, where she is very popular.

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silverorange, inc.

- Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
- Dan James, President and CEO



There's no question that Web development is the province of young entrepreneurs. However, you might not expect the province of young Web developers to be Prince Edward Island. But it's from the Island that the smart team of eight programmers, designers and content developers at silverorange, inc. is building custom-made Web systems for clients in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. "It doesn't matter where we're located; people from outside Canada don't know Mississauga from P.E.I.," says president and CEO Dan James, who started silverorange in 1999 when he was 20. Exports account for 25% of business.

When it comes to export strategy, the Web developer recommends old-fashioned technology: "Pick up the phone." But not indiscriminately. At silverorange, calls are preceded by intense research to target companies that fit an identified set of criteria. It was such research that led silverorange to its first U.S. customer, Horton Brasses of Connecticut, in 2001. "We had built a successful e-commerce system for a large P.E.I. seed distributor, so we were looking for other companies that fit the same mold – a stable company with a catalogue and a solid sales process."

silverorange also offered Horton enticing terms. "We don't operate by sale of contract; we go by a percentage of the business the client generates over the Web site we've developed for them. We increased the P.E.I. seed company's on-line sales by 400% in one year."

With that strategy and track record – and new export markets in the works – it's no wonder the Charlottetown-based company's own revenues are doubling every year.

In September 2002, silverorange will launch a Canadian government Common Look and Feel Standards and Guidelines compliant version of its award-winning Intranet.

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