

Timeless Technologies

- Charlottetown and Belfast, Prince Edward Island ■ Justin MacLeod, President
- Founded company at age 20 (1994) ■ Employees: 11 ■ Exporting since 1995
- Export sales: 10-20% ■ Export Markets: United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, and countries in South America, Europe, Africa and Asia (40 countries in all)

There's no doubt about the innovation of **Timeless Technologies'** flagship product, *Schedule Wizard*. Some time after company founder Justin MacLeod developed the software – a computer program that creates round-robin schedules for sports leagues – he came across a Smithsonian Magazine article concluding that it would take supercomputers hundreds of years to solve the mathematical problem for such a program. MacLeod is glad he didn't see the article first. If he had, he might never have attempted to develop the program that launched a company that now has 3,500 customers in 40 countries around the world.



Premier Pat Binns presents Justin MacLeod with the Premier's Award for Information Technology 2001

Timeless Technologies is ...

a Web content development, international marketing, technology consulting, implementation, training and software engineering firm. The family-owned and-run company develops and integrates Web and software products and designs Windows-based software, including *Schedule Wizard*, *Fast Forward* and *Sedule System*. Timeless Technologies also provides professional services to clients in both the public and private sectors and acts as a technology partner for other local companies. While the percentage of sales from exports has decreased over the last few years, actual revenues from

Services Centre where he worked. MacLeod, then in his third year of a Computer Science degree at the University of New Brunswick, took on the challenge as a thesis project, and *Schedule Wizard* was born. Realizing there was a North America-wide market for the unique product, MacLeod and Kinnee launched Timeless.

Export Strategy: Canada Calling

MacLeod did his homework before diving into business.

we got sales penetration in every state."

With the increasing popularity of the Internet since then, Timeless now uses its Web site rather than telemarketing as its main means of sales.

Co-opting the Co-ops

MacLeod is a great supporter of university and college co-op programs. He has compelling evidence of their value: founding the company during his final undergraduate year, as he did, he was his own company's first

"We thought other recreation departments might like our product too, so we started calling municipalities across North America."

exports have increased by a healthy margin.

Where there's a Need there's a Niche

Timeless Technologies was conceived on Christmas Day 1993, when MacLeod's father-in-law, Jim Kinnee, voiced a wish for a computer program to assist the many sports leagues that requested help with their scheduling from the P.E.I. Regional

Armed with an atlas and a computer program with phone numbers of every municipality in North America, he called 200 recreation departments across the continent. "We got 40% interest. We thought that was a good percentage, so we hired a sales person to do the product launch, and we called one U.S. state after another. That's how

co-op student. In the last eight years, MacLeod has hired eight co-op and on-the-job-training students, four of whom are now full-time employees. "Hiring people just out of university gives us an edge because they're on the cutting edge of new technology developments."

The Island Exporting Challenge

For software product sales, it doesn't matter where Timeless Technologies is based, and revenues have been growing by leaps and bounds from its P.E.I. location. But MacLeod would like to increase the market for services, and that's another story. "We'd like to sell our services in larger markets – Boston, New York and so on – but it's difficult when we don't have a sales presence in those locations. We're currently evaluating the opportunities for establishing such a presence."

Timeless knows it can turn to DFAIT's trade commissioners abroad to verify the credentials of potential sales reps and sub-contractors. "We had the commercial officers at the Embassy in Kyiv do some back-checking on a Ukraine IT company we wanted to do work with. They were extremely helpful."

Timeless Advice

"Make sure the product you're developing meets the market you're targeting. Find a niche. It's tough to export a product that has broad or general appeal unless you've got a really big marketing budget. We're doing things that are manageable for a company our size."

"Try to be profitable as a small company. There are a lot of advantages to starting a business by your boot straps. Because I started out running the company in my spare time it meant we didn't have any costs, so the revenues from *Schedule Wizard* allowed us to hire other programmers and develop other products. As those products developed, our revenues continued to grow."

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Les collections Mariouche Inc. (Harricana par Mariouche)

- Montréal, Quebec ■ Mariouche Gagné, President

Mariouche Gagné exudes the enthusiasm, energy and fun of a woman who has pioneered a very warm and eco-friendly fashion trend: recycled furs. In need of money to complete her Master in Design Management at the Domus Academy in Milan, Italy, Gagné entered a design contest in 1993 sponsored by the Fur Council of Canada. Short of material to complete her entry, she recycled her mother's fur coat. She came away with the \$12,000 second prize, a topic for her Master thesis, and an original business idea that has turned the controversy and glamour of fur into non-controversial recycled – but no less glamorous – fur ski wear and sports accessories.

Gagné began working on her business concept in 1994 when she was just 23. In 1997 she incorporated Montréal-based **Les collections Mariouche Inc.** (known as **Harricana par Mariouche**). Working with a small team of designers, Gagné focuses on recycling and design, and contracts out the manufacturing. In the 2001 season, **Harricana** recycled 6,000 coats.

Gagné's approach to exports – constituting 15-20% of sales, and growing – is informal but highly successful. It was well-deserved magazine coverage of the innovative young entrepreneur that brought initial international interest. The **Harricana** line is now selling at luxury ski resorts in Switzerland, France and Italy, through sales agents who are personal friends and connections. From exhibiting at trade shows, **Harricana** is also exporting to the United States. But Europe – where unique Canadian products are hugely popular – is the more natural market for both **Harricana** and Gagné, who has an understanding of the culture from her years living in Paris and Milan. The Canadian Embassy is assisting **Harricana** to get more exposure in Paris.

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Pure Design Ltd.

- Edmonton, Alberta
- Geoffrey Lilge, Director of Product Development

The freedom to pursue their passion was the reason Geoffrey Lilge and fellow University of Alberta industrial design graduates Daniel Hlus and Randy McCoy created **Pure Design Ltd.** in 1994. The three partners thought they were going to be industrial designers when they graduated. Instead, the three, in their mid-twenties, set up a manufacturing shop, began producing CD racks and wine racks, and approached the International Trade Centre in Edmonton for Program for Export Market Development (PEMD) assistance to exhibit at the San Francisco International Gift Fair in 1995. Writing its first orders to U.S. companies, the Edmonton-based manufacturer of contemporary residential furniture that's "a little more out there" had found itself a niche.

Today, **Pure Design**, which uses a roster of international freelance designers, as well as employing a staff of 30, exports 80% of its diverse and unique furniture collection. Exhibiting at trade shows is its main export strategy; the company attends about five a year, looking for sales representatives.

"Go out and give it a shot" is Lilge's advice to other would-be entrepreneurs. "If you're good at what you do, you'll find a way to do it for a living." With its furniture gracing residences in Japan, the United Kingdom, Europe, Canada and, especially, the United States, there's no question that **Pure Design** is providing a satisfying living – and a creative outlet – for Lilge and his partners.

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