

## SPONSOR CONTENT



## PRIVATE BUSINESS GROWTH AWARD

## ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

THE 2017 WINNER

# 'Life-changing experiences' bring success aboard

Luxury train service credits innovation and passionate work force for achieving milestone of more than two million guests

Standing on an arrivals platform and watching his guests get off the train is one of the things Steve Sammut loves most about his job.

The president of Rocky Mountaineer feels a sense of satisfaction when he sees the smiles on their faces as they say goodbye to his staff and exchange contact information with the new friends they met on board. It means his luxury tourist train service is

creating happy memories.

"It's a real magic that happens on board," Mr. Sammut says. "People get on from different countries maybe only knowing the person they boarded with, and by the time they get off, everyone has come together. It's really impactful."

It's the kind of guest experience the Vancouver-based, family owned travel company has strived to create since its launch in 1990. Peter Armstrong,

founder and CEO of Armstrong Group, and the owner and operator of Rocky Mountaineer, brought together a select group of former railroad executives and tourism experts to build what is now one of the largest privately owned luxury tourism train companies in the world.

Today, Rocky Mountaineer travels across four routes through the Pacific Northwest and into the heart of the

Canadian Rockies. Its GoldLeaf Service, launched in 1995, features bi-level, custom-built glass dome railcars with stunning panoramic views on the upper level, and a galley, dining room and observation decks on the lower level.

Mr. Sammut says the company is also constantly updating its fleet with new, state-of-the-art cars with a high level of comfort and greater efficiencies. "It's about the ride comfort and the technology. Every way we offer our services is about how we make it an incredible experience for the guests."

Rocky Mountaineer has welcomed more than two million guests from around the world. Its top five markets are the United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand. Mr. Sammut says the company is aiming to lure more guests from other parts of the world, including China, to experience its world-class, authentic Canadian experience.

While guests come for the scenery — including majestic mountains, stunning rivers and wandering wildlife — they're also treated to world-class cuisine and rich storytelling about the region's history.

"Our purpose is to be creators of

life-changing experiences for both our guests and each other," Mr. Sammut says. "That sounds lofty, I know, but within our company, it's something that everyone is passionate about."

Rocky Mountaineer has 290 full-time employees and up to 750 staff in total from mid-April to mid-October, when its trains are operating. The focus for every employee, whether they work on board, in sales or on maintenance, is to provide a memorable guest experience. Mr. Sammut says this is key to the company's success, including 2.5 times more revenue than five years ago.

While new technology, market development and offering a great customer experience are all behind the company's growth to date, Mr. Sammut says employee engagement is critical to sustaining its success longer term.

"We realize you can't provide that amazing guest experience if you don't have people who are passionate about what you do. That's how we can exceed expectations, because of how great our people are. We can't grow the business if we don't have every team member believing and doing their part."



The 2017 Top 10 finalists and winner of the Private Business Growth Award. IMAGE COMMISSION

## Canada Pump and Power Corp.

Ardrossan, Alta.

Jeremy Leonard operates his marine industrial services company according to his personal motto:

"We say what we are going to do, we do what we said we would do, and we check to make sure that we did it."

Unlike the dredging and pumping options that existed previously, Canada Pump and Power designs turnkey solutions that can operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in some of the most difficult conditions on earth.

"It works in the winter when it's minus-45 outside," Mr. Leonard explains. "That's what we brought to the industry and that's what's enabled us to grow."

Other keys to his company's success, he adds, include paying his employees above industry average, having one of the best safety records in the business, building environmentally sustainable solutions, and giving back to the communities he operates in.

Canada Pump and Power's products are used to safely dredge and pump toxic waste, swamp water and other hazardous liquids from Fort McMurray, Alta., to Minas Gerais, Brazil.

## Clarion Medical Technologies Inc.

Cambridge, Ont.

Samson Ling, president and CEO of Clarion, says a forecast 16.9-per cent increase in revenue and 640-per cent growth in income for 2017 is the result of a laser-sharp focus on innovation, customer centricity and encouraging entrepreneurial spirit.

The company built a nation-wide client base by identifying the most cutting-edge medical technologies being developed around the world and introducing them to the Canadian market.

Clarion sets aside a significant portion of its operating profit each year to share with staff, "which creates ownership for each person to improve effectiveness and efficiency," Mr. Ling says.

Clarion's staff grew by 10 per cent, to 120 employees this year.

The company's motto, "customers for life," has been the guiding principle for its growth. "Our staff provides our clients with products and services that are uniquely suited for each stage of growth in their practices," Mr. Ling explains.

## DME Group

Charlottetown, PEI

If you're raising a glass of craft beer, no matter where you are in the world, there's a good chance the equipment that made it was produced by DME Group.

The company's DME Brewing Solutions and Newlands Systems divisions have successfully installed more than 1600 craft-brewing facilities in 67 countries. "My attitude has always been 'there's no reason why we couldn't produce world-class products from Prince Edward Island,'" says Peter Toombs, president and CEO, who founded the company in 1991.

DME Group makes vessels and support equipment, including pumps, instrumentation and control gear, and it can ship anywhere in the world.

"We do all the engineering, and manufacture and deliver equipment for the client," says Mr. Toombs. DME Group, with a work force numbering more than 350, has seen growth approaching 40 per cent a year for the past three years.

There is relatively easy access to the airport and seaport of Halifax, and Canadian labour costs are competitive.

## Hibar Systems Ltd.

Richmond Hill, Ont.

Rapid growth is certainly rewarding, but it can also be accompanied by significant challenges, says Iain McColl, president and CEO of Hibar, which has experienced a compound annual growth rate of more than 19 per cent for the past four years in a row.

The company's sales have expanded by cultivating a worldwide market and aggressively innovating in the technology space.

Most of the world's leading consumer battery makers use Hibar's precision pumps for electrolyte dispensing and also incorporate Hibar's automated assembly systems for their battery production.

Hibar recently expanded its footprint in Richmond Hill, in addition to its 6 acre, 130,000-square-foot headquarters campus. It has also established a subsidiary and branch office in China, a European operation in Germany, and it has a representative office in North Carolina.

"The most successful marketing tool is our reputation throughout the industry for exceeding customer expectations," Mr. McColl says.

**'We are honoured to be recognized for our team's entrepreneurial spirit, constant drive for success, and the contributions that we make to our communities'**

**Steve Sammut,**  
president, Rocky Mountaineer

## Orion Plastics Inc.

Edmonton, Alta.

The white panels around an NHL hockey rink may be called boards, but in reality they are made out of

plastic sheets produced at the Orion Plastics plant in Edmonton, Alberta.

That's not all. The company has become a major supplier of sheet to the thermoforming industry, producing parts used in the automotive, recreational vehicle, marine, and transportation industries.

Orion Plastics started in 2000 as a local supplier to the western Canadian sheet market.

The customer base quickly expanded throughout Canada and into the United States. Orion has developed a reputation for quality, consistency and great customer service and its ability to deliver thermo-formable sheets in any size.

"One of the biggest keys to our success has been because of our incredible team at Orion Plastics. Their hardwork, dedication, and passion to exceed our customers' expectations have been key to our company's growth"

## Protocase Inc.

Sydney, N.S.

In 2001, the founding partners of Protocase developed a unique, ultra-lean manufacturing process that could deliver custom, professional-quality metal enclosures for electronic equipment in days, rather than weeks.

The market was global, but the company was located in Sydney, so it harnessed the emerging power of online marketing to build a customer base.

"Here we are, 16 years later, with 140 employees and more than 12,000 customers internationally," says Steve Lilley, Protocase's co-founder and president.

Not only has the company been successful promoting itself online, it's created an easily used program engineers can download for free.

"We are set up to place our customers' interests first and we live and die on that motto... helping customers through design to find work-arounds that are more practical and affordable."

## REDspace

Bedford, N.S.

When he moved back to his Maritime home province with his high-school sweetheart, following the dot-com crash that swallowed his health-care IT startup, Mike Johnston worried that he wouldn't be able to find the talent he needed to start his next technology venture.

"What I thought would be a liability turned out to be an asset," says Mr. Johnston, president and CEO of REDspace. "It takes a while to build the talent pool, but they're also very loyal, very collaborative, very Maritime Canadian in their approach."

REDspace was founded in the summer of 2000, as a corporate learning platform for high-calibre global brands such as IBM, but it has since evolved into a high-tech media company innovating on digital platforms. Its research and development into new media allows the company to provide high-tech learning experiences to major global brands as well as digital-media solutions to the entertainment industry.

## Vendasta

Saskatoon, SK

Most technology companies have trouble attracting and retaining top talent. That challenge is even greater when you're a startup in a small city.

It's a challenge Saskatoon-based Vendasta Technologies has been meeting head on as it scales its "business in a box" for small to medium-sized companies looking to market their products and services online.

"We've worked really hard on culture and have been able to attract people from Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa and other places," says Brendan King, co-founder and CEO of Vendasta. "However in order to meet our demand we grow talent internally and work with the local community and university."

Mr. King says the company's culture is shaped by four core values: drive, innovation, respect and agility. "You aren't going to get the people unless you have the culture. That then flows through to your customers."

The company's success is also measured by revenue and the number of businesses it brings on board.

## Wilson Fuel Co. Ltd.

Halifax, N.S.

To survive and thrive for eight generations requires that an organization be willing to change with the times.

Wilson Fuel, founded in Nova Scotia in the early 1800s, has evolved from a construction company to a coal delivery company to a fuel delivery service, propane supplier, retail-gas vendor, service-centre operator and home-security provider.

Today its primary business line is retail gas stations and convenience stores, but the company also provides home comfort and heating solutions as well as residential and commercial security products.

"It's certainly important to be willing to change, and the pace of change is increasing all the time," says Ian Wilson, the latest member of his lineage to take the reins as company president.

While Wilsons has evolved numerous times over the decades, a number of things have remained consistent: a commitment to customer service, an employee-centric approach and the name above the front door.