



STRICKLANDS' NOBEL  
PRIZE IMPACTING UW,  
CAMPUS-WIDE

KAREN REDMAN:  
LISTENS  
KEN SEILING: LEAVES



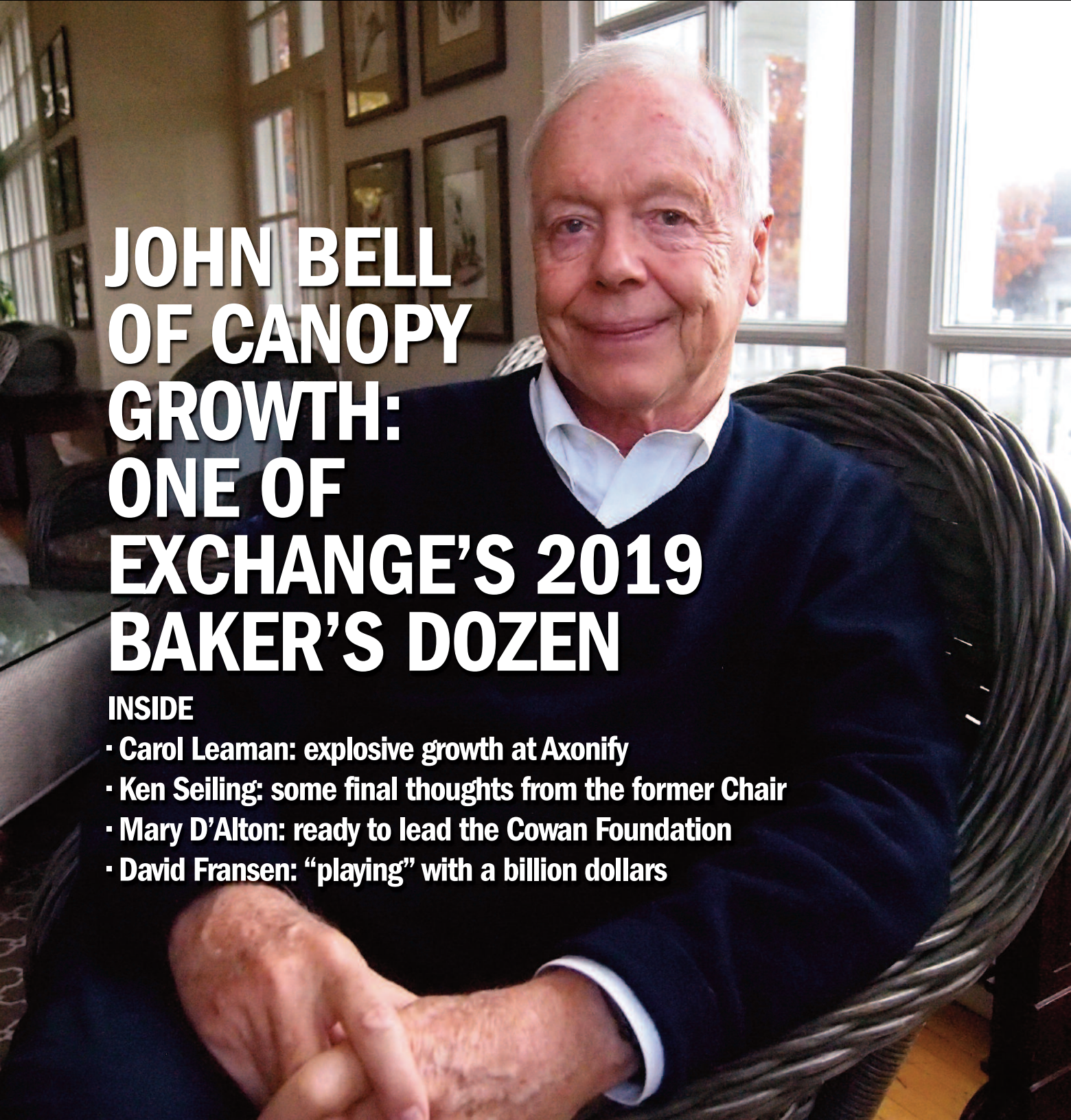
MELISSA DURREL  
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# EXCHANGE

quarterly

MAGAZINE FOR BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION & ENTREPRENEURS

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## JOHN BELL OF CANOPY GROWTH: ONE OF EXCHANGE'S 2019 BAKER'S DOZEN

### INSIDE

- Carol Leaman: explosive growth at Axonify
- Ken Seiling: some final thoughts from the former Chair
- Mary D'Alton: ready to lead the Cowan Foundation
- David Fransen: "playing" with a billion dollars



# CASH IS KING...SO CONSERVE IT

**Not everybody can barter; for starters you need a product and a belief in good trade**

We are a currency-driven society, with liquidity in the form of cash as the most nimble form of trade. For that reason alone... cash is king. As business operators, we know that any form of trade is king. The more we trade, the more we can position our businesses for growth and keeping market share.

Alternatives to cash come in the form of credit, which comes with a percentage as a cost. Having a healthy cashflow permits the payment of goods and services on time, so having that cash on hand is very important. So how do you save for that big expansion, equipment purchase or launch of product, at the right time, in the right market, and at a scale that makes everything worth while? That growth will most likely take cash, so it's important to conserve it and have it for growth.

Options to dealing in cash have been around since the dawn of time. The financial markets are heavily disrupted by technology. Options for the trade of good and services are coming back, using technology to blockchain investors' value. Barter is one of those options. A "you give me this, and I'll give you that" model that, when based on an agreed value system, allows you to achieve fair trade.

It's not for everyone. Barter of some goods across international borders becomes very complicated, although governments have bartered since governments have been around.

Barter does not allow you to avoid paying taxes. Taxes are an integral part of trade and without taxes, many community services would be unavailable, such as a transportation system or health care system. In barter calculations for product, price is already there. It's just the method of how you get the ROI and where your return is used that's unique. This makes moving to a barter system easy, as it makes sense to barter with the focus of making your business or life better. Not everybody can barter. For starters, you need a product or service somebody needs. It's the fundamental function of trade, and why barter between businesses works so well. A main challenge of barter is finding a buyer, let alone someone who is willing to barter. Enter BarterPay, a network of barter friendly companies, willing and able to trade.

With a network of members, BarterPay has over 275 businesses locally participating and has grown in popularity as technology has permitted the tracking and accounting of trades with a high degree of integrity and certainty. Trades are tracked and reports and statement are provided monthly. Accounting departments have no issues, and recording of monthly transactions becomes quite seamless.

It's easy to keep track of your trades, and to decide to bank trades with trade or barter dollars, to be used another day. When members accumulate enough trade dollars, they can find products offered by other members and acquire them.

Barterpay also hosts silent auctions, online auctions and members' events. The best way to get started is to prepare a product list of what you're willing to barter, and what value you will put on your product or service. The standard practice is to use the same value or incentive as you would with a regular customer.

This is great if you're a wholesaler and have some excess inventory to put it up for trade. Members on the network are looking for products and services, so you have the ability to sell idle invento-



*The Waterloo-Wellington Barterpay team, Rita Singh, Andree Schnarr, Tom Schnarr, Dori Power, Gord Slater*

ries at full retail price on trade. Trade works all over the world, but works best when geography and transportation is not a big factor. What if you could pay that business lunch with barter dollars? Or renovate your office with barter dollars? Imagine the flexibility you would have and the cash you would keep. It's happening right now. Companies all around Waterloo Region and Guelph are doing barter. It's just become more sophisticated, and is approaching critical mass.

David Harnock, at GTS Windows and Doors, is a 12-year member. "It has helped us immensely", Harnock says. Not only do they benefit by using the services of other BarterPay members, but they also have increased sales from members and receive referrals to outside business from other BarterPay members. "We have benefited from networking with Barterpay members," he continues, "drawing from their experience and expertise in marketing and advertising and small business issues."

Marie Slater, from Hearts & Flowers, uses BarterPay to maintain her business's services like electrical, plumbing, and telecommunication equipment. They've used Barter dollars to promote their business using signage and printing services available through the network of members. She does all this "without spending cash." As an added benefit, holiday times see an assortment of seasonal products available through trade, as Slater also gives thank you gifts to their employees. Since 2000, BarterPay Waterloo-Wellington franchise is owned and operated by Tom and Andree Schnarr. BarterPay has offices across Canada, where franchisee operators work with account executives to help coordinate trades. Give them a call today.



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# FOREIGN CURRENCY RISK: PROTECTING YOUR TOP AND BOTTOM LINES

BY PAUL LENNOX

Have you ever thought about the impact of a 10% adverse move in the USDCAD exchange rate on your business? Maybe imports are a small portion of your Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) or maybe your sales are all in Canada so foreign exchange market fluctuations are of no consequence and that is one less thing for you to worry about.

But what if you do have substantial sales to the US or you rely heavily on US suppliers? Is the business well positioned to handle a 10% appreciation or depreciation in the dollar? Here are two examples, one for a typical importer and one for an exporter to illustrate sensitivity of business earnings to the exchange rate:

## Example: Canadian Importer

CANADIAN IMPORTER		
SALES	\$50M	
COGS	-25M	(\$20M USD AT 1.2500)
GROSS PROFIT	\$25M	
OTHER COST	-15M	
NET INCOME	\$10M	

## If USD rises 10% to 1.3750 net income falls 25%:

CANADIAN IMPORTER		
SALES	\$50M	
COGS	-27.5M	(\$20M USD AT 1.3750)
GROSS PROFIT	\$22.5M	
OTHER COST	-15M	
NET INCOME	\$7.5M	

## Example: Canadian Exporter

CANADIAN EXPORTER		
FOREIGN SALES	\$50M	\$40M USD AT 1.2500)
COGS	-25M	
GROSS PROFIT	\$25M	
OTHER COST	-15M	
NET INCOME	\$10M	



Steve Kulchyk and Allison Gramlow of EncoreFX

## If USD falls 10% to 1.1364 net income falls 45%

CANADIAN EXPORTER		
FOREIGN SALES	\$45.5M	\$40M USD AT 1.1364)
COGS	-25M	
GROSS PROFIT	\$20.5M	
OTHER COST	-15M	
NET INCOME	\$5.5M	

Over the past 25 years there has been 10 years when USDCAD has appreciated at least 10% and 8 years when it has fallen at least 10%. 20%+ moves are not uncommon.

Is your business protected from this type of market risk? Do you have a cost-effective, prudent foreign exchange hedging program in place to protect your top and bottom lines?

EncoreFX specializes in foreign exchange risk management for companies that do not have in-house dedicated treasury staff. We currently have over 2,700 corporate clients across Canada, New Zealand and Australia. foreign exchange risk management provides an insurance policy against the impact negative currency swings can have on cash flows and the profitability of business operations.

If you are looking for protection from an adverse move in the exchange rate but want to participate in a favorable move, you may want to consider the merits of currency options. EncoreFX has the expertise and resources to tailor and help implement prudent option strategies for qualified businesses. Talk to us. You'll be amazed at the value we can add.

Call our local experts Allison Gramlow and Steve Kulchyk at 226-241-6669 or 1-833-307-4043.



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# COUNTING ON CANNABIS

*Serial entrepreneur John Bell was an early investor... and it has paid off in profits and "fun"*

BY JON ROHR

Exchange Magazine last caught up with John Bell in 2007-08, when Bell got involved with ATS during his Polymer Years. Polymer had done very well: "We were profitable, but were coming into a cash crisis," says Bell. "We went from \$9 million to over \$100 million, and that put a real stress on us. I sold it to two private equity firms with deep pockets." And just like that, Bell became both unemployed and a major investor.

Bell, now 71, admits that he misses the operations side of running a business. "I guess I'm a professional board member now, with a half a dozen [companies] on the go. But boy, you get itchy for operations, when you're on the ground doing stuff and things are happening. Now, I get to go into meetings, give my two bits and then get thrown out, that's until the next quarter."

In 2009, Bell bought into a small micro-cap Toronto public company called BSM, which "stood for Bay Street Moose." He turned over the board, put in new management, and in Bell's words, it "did really well for four to five years". At any time, Bell states that he might have a "bunch of early-stage growth companies on the go, which is kinda' what I like doing".

In 2014, Bell was introduced to what is now known as Canopy Growth. Then, the company was known as Tweed; it grew cannabis, and was just going public, "so I took this really high risk investment... A lot of people wouldn't touch it, certainly the banks wouldn't. The banks told us to go home". But John Bell really saw something in Tweed's CEO, Bruce Linton. Bell believes Linton will go down in history as one of Canada's great entrepreneurs. "So, it's a pure joy to be working with him, with his confidence. He's absolutely brilliant."

Bell says that Canopy Growth is now the largest cannabis company in the world, worth \$14 billion, "and when I got on board the stock was \$1.02." At time of writing, the stock sat at \$37.00.

Bell is the lead director of Canopy and a "pretty good sized shareholder, but it's been so much fun – I would have done it without all the financial rewards. They are significant, but I would

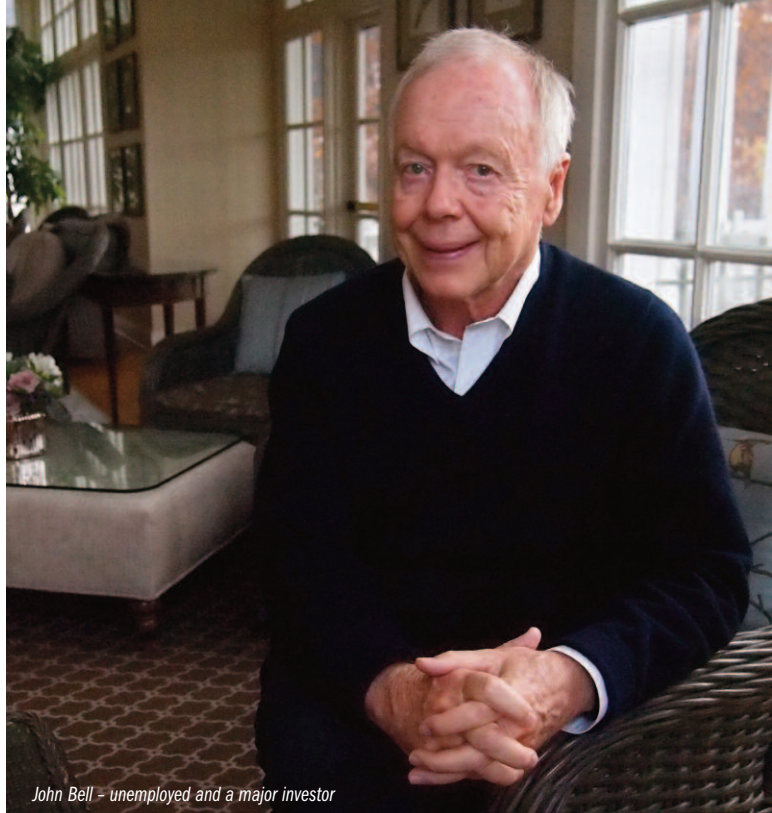
*"I would have done it without all the financial rewards... 'cause I'm having so much fun."*

do it anyway, 'cause I'm having so much fun."

He likens his time to what RIM's Mike Lazaridis and Jim Balsillie went through. "When you grow a company from nothing to several thousand employees, in a very short time, you're going to make some mistakes and that puts monstrous stress on everybody in the organization, but it's exciting stress for me. I like it."

The future of this industry, indicates Bell, is not about smoking cannabis, certainly not medicinally. "It will be unusual to smoke it," he says. "It will be provided usually as an oil or a gel cap." It's expected that next year businesses will be allowed to make and sell both edible and cannabis based beverages.

Bell says one of the more interesting things to watch for is how



John Bell – unemployed and a major investor

will this take, on the social scene. "Will I or my friends be offering, instead a glass of wine on Friday night, another kind of drink?"

## Pets and pot

There is a huge amount of research to be done. "We're investing heavily. They say pain management is one of the big ones. [Another] of the big ones will be pets – calming your pet down, [if it] barks all the time or is getting uncomfortable. So the pet market is going to be a big one."

Canopy has purchased approximately 26 companies, and most likely more will be added by the time this article is published. Besides Canada, they are in Germany, Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, Columbia, Chile, Brazil, Lesotho, Australia, and "Jamaica of course – we partnered with Michael Lee Chin in Jamaica". Their head office is in Smith Falls Ontario, located in the old Hershey Chocolate Factory, "so we now have a visitors' centre," says Bell. "It's a real destination."

Bell estimates that Canopy has 7 million sq. feet of growing area across the country. "We're growing in most provinces, and selling in all provinces."

But that's not all John Bell has been involved in. One investment and board role involves DelMar Pharmaceuticals Inc., which is producing a drug in clinical trial for glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. He's also on the board of Strongco.

Bell is approached by about 100 opportunities a month. "People just show up at my office," which is located in Cambridge's Galt district. "Most of the stuff I am doing is out of town, so I've lost most of my local connections. I miss my connections to the community."

Bell is concerned about maintaining free trade, and he encourages people to be vocal about it. "I know how important that is ... the amount of risk, today... We're starting to feel it here."

He is also worried about social issues, especially the plight of the poor, telling Exchange, "I am really concerned about the disconnect between the 1% and the people that can't afford housing." With Bell's track record of energetic involvement, don't be surprised if he finds a way to tackle that, as well.

X



Sara Bingham marches onward

## SILENT NO LONGER

*Sara Bingham's laptop is headquarters for a huge national brand*

BY PAUL KNOWLES

Women's March Canada has a branding problem – and it's the opposite of most entities trying to launch a brand. Volunteer Executive Director Sara Bingham, who lives in Waterloo Region, explains that, "the brand is so big... but the national head office is my laptop, on my couch." Because the organization has experienced phenomenal growth in only two years, it is indeed very well known – and the assumption by the general public is that it is a well-established, well-funded, institution. Nothing, says Bingham, could be further from the truth.

Bingham is living proof of the need for Women's March Canada to achieve some funding stability. By day, she is a business advisor employed by the city of Kitchener; in her off-hours, she is the unpaid Executive Director of Women's March Canada. "My 9 to 5 is small business, and my 5-9 is Women's March Canada."

The first official Women's March took place in Washington, D.C., in 2017. It was a social media-promoted, spontaneous response to the election of Donald Trump. Bingham attended that event, which attracted 470,000 participants, and she was inspired.

Bingham believes that the issues being raised in that first American march translate into a Canadian context. She says the issues highlighted by right-wing wins in the US are happening across "the entire world... and we're seeing it in Canada. We cannot be complacent."

The stated mission of the Women's Walk Canada is "Inspiring, uniting and leading the charge for the advancement of women across Canada." Bingham says that the goals are "health, econom-

*"We have a strategic plan to put more pro-choice feminists into office... I'm not just saying 'women'."*

ic security, regulations (an equal seat at the table) and safety."

Can that be achieved by marching, one day a year? That's just a start, says Bingham. "We're not just marching every year... we have a strategic plan to put more pro-choice feminists into office... and I'm not just saying 'women'."

The 2019 Women's March will take place on January 19. The first march here attracted about 12 people; the second, in 2018, drew 600. Bingham expects more this year. And that kind of growth is happening across Canada. In 2018, there were marches in 40 Canadian communities. Bingham expects there to be more, and that they will be bigger, in 2019. The exponential growth of the organization and the event means that Bingham has been more than busy in the lead-up to the national March.

Bingham has a goal for her organization – "I want to create the Women's March Canada as a self-sustaining, ongoing organization until it's not needed any more." That requires funding.

She does hope for a future where the organization would become redundant... but that is not the present. Although Canada is a country that officially provides equal rights to women, Bingham says, "We do on paper have equal rights... but we don't. When we get to equal representation, you will see things changing, and that change isn't a bad thing." She told Exchange, "My background is in speech therapy, helping people who have no voice, to use their voice." What she did as a therapist, she is now doing on a national scale as an activist for women's rights. "We're not going to be silent any more."

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## A milestone on their journey

Meet our successful CFE writers from the Waterloo office: Connor Curtin, Kaila Hopcroft, Angelika Jarski, Alexis Lowater, Michael Lozinski, and Stephanie Brosseau (not in photo).

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# "THE WHOLE CULTURE SPEAKS TO ME"

*Mary D'Alton is leading the Cowan Foundation*

BY PAUL KNOWLES

Over the last four years or so, Mary D'Alton has worn enough hats to keep a milliner in business. Until 2015, her professional life had been pretty stable – she had been President and Managing Director of the Waterloo Inn Conference Hotel since 2000, but then came a change in ownership, which led to the entire 200-member staff being let go... including D'Alton herself.

Since then, she has filled key interim positions at two local charities – the Humane Society and Nutrition for Learning, as well as playing volunteer roles as the Chair of the Board of Directors of Smart Serve Ontario, and a member of the boards of diverse organizations including THEMUSEUM, Waterloo North Hydro, and more.

This month, she dons another chapeau, as the new Executive Director of the Cowan Foundation. And she's really excited about it.

But while she is stepping out of the CEO post at Nutrition for Learning – succeeded by long-time NFL team member Brian Banks – she is staying involved. She becomes director of strategic initiatives at Nutrition for Learning for the next year, allowing her to follow through on some key initiatives for this organization that feeds more than 23,000 students, every day, in more than 122



*Mary D'Alton – dramatically changing lives*

schools in the region.

But D'Alton will be doing that work from her new office at the Cowan Foundation, with the full approval of Chair and CEO Maureen Cowan.

D'Alton believes she has found her perfect niche at Cowan. She told Exchange, "The whole value system at Cowan is where I feel comfortable." She added, "I have known Maureen through business over the years, so I have a sense of the value system that matters to the organization."

D'Alton explains, "This Foundation does not accept applications. It is more organic and in many ways reflects the values of the man that started it [Frank Cowan, Maureen's grandfather] – innovation, collaboration, commitment and integrity. All of the companies and the CEOs who are part of this are client-focused and results-driven, not a far stretch from the industry I left three



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years ago."

D'Alton prepared for the job by sitting on the Foundation's board for the past year. She says, "Besides the respect I have for the Chairman Maureen and the other senior management, I like the focus of the Foundation, having spent this past year sitting on the board."

After D'Alton's year on the board, "I really wanted to make the move. The whole value system at Cowan is where I feel comfortable... For me, the family and group of companies have an alignment that speaks to me of the best of business and philanthropy."

The Cowan portfolio of companies includes the Cowan Insurance Group, based in Cambridge; the Frank Cowan Company, in Princeton, Ontario; The

"The work the Cowan Foundation is partnering on, I think will dramatically change lives."

Guarantee Company of North America, headquartered in Toronto; Cowan Asset Management, in Cambridge; and Fountain Street Finance, in Toronto.

The CEOs of all Cowan companies advise the Foundation's executive director concerning potential projects. In 2017, recipients of grants from the Cowan Foundation have included Habitat for Humanity, Enable Haiti, the CURE Foundation and Prostate Cancer Canada. Forty-eight organizations, ranging from the Food Bank of Waterloo Region to the New Hamburg Hockey Association, received funding through the Foundation on behalf of the company's employees. Since it was founded in 1995, the Foundation has given out more than \$24 million.

One major grant in 2018 was a \$4 million gift to Conestoga College to help fund the new John Tibbits Campus in Waterloo.

D'Alton says there are some other "amazing projects" now under consideration, but she cannot reveal details. She added, "The work the Cowan Foundation is partnering on, I think will dramatically change lives."

"This job is very much aligned with my thinking," she told Exchange. "From a very young age, I have volunteered. This matches my personal philosophy of engagement and participation in the community. The whole culture here speaks to me."

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# READY TO SERVE THE LOCAL MARKET

Darrin Snider, Dean McIntyre and Steve Shepard stand in front of one of their sound dampening, work place dividers

## McIntyre Group brings innovative products to area businesses through vertical integration and Vertical Interiors

The Kitchener headquarters of the McIntyre Group is a quiet, calm workspace... but it's anything but boring. It's quiet, because the company practices what it preaches, using its own products to produce optimum acoustics throughout the facility. But it is definitely not boring, because Dean McIntyre continues to lead his team through exciting and challenging growth.

It's not that the company has abandoned its heritage – McIntyre Group continues to offer the office installation services that launched the company, in 1984. But in recent years, unique and innovative products – including ezoBord acoustical panels, Swiftspace flexible office furniture, and Starwall demountable walls – have expanded the company's profile, have increased McIntyre's employee roster, and brought a high level of excitement and engagement to a company that, Dean McIntyre admits, could have become complacent after two decades in the same field.

And now, McIntyre Group has launched another new initiative – the company will carry out sales and marketing on its own behalf under the Vertical Interiors by McIntyre banner in its two key regions – southern Ontario, served from its new Kitchener headquarters, and southern Alberta, from McIntyre's offices in Calgary. Darrin Snider joined the company a year ago, as Business Development Manager, to lead that effort.

Until very recently, the McIntyre Group used external agents as marketing representatives, and that is still the case outside their "local" markets. But Dean McIntyre and his team found that they were not capturing the share of those local markets that their unique products deserved. McIntyre says, "We decided we needed to represent our own products in our home markets."

A move from their original location in Ayr to a new, much larger building in Kitchener, provided the opportunity for the new headquarters to be a working showroom, with the company's products incorporated into every part of the facility. There is no doubt that the entire McIntyre team sees their workspace as a living, functioning

showroom. Visitors are welcomed by any team member they encounter – first of all, by Dean's wife, Leanne McIntyre, at the reception desk.

Making their workspace a showcase destination was the first step in creating their own marketing initiative. Now, the company is hiring new members of our sales and marketing teams, both in Kitchener and in Calgary, where a new office has also just been opened as a working showroom.

Snider says the opening of working showrooms has meant a "huge" upturn in interest and sales.

The story of McIntyre Group is a story of innovation and creativity. Dean McIntyre launched a building maintenance company in 1984; services including office cleaning, maintenance and landscaping. Four years later, the company morphed into McIntyre Group Office Services, and the focus shifted from maintenance to office furniture installations. Dean was not only the owner – in the beginning, he was the entire staff. "I self-taught myself to install furniture," he says.

The venture succeeded, serving the southern Ontario market, including Toronto. In 1990, McIntyre opened its Calgary office; by 1997, when the business relocated from its original facility in Cambridge to Ayr, it employed 50 staff members.

McIntyre says that the installation business – which continues to be the foundation of McIntyre Group – was the entire focus of the company until 2008.

But in that year, Calgary General Manager Jerry O'Brien had an epiphany. After decades of installing piecey complicated office furniture, he had a vision of mobile workstations – much more flexible, adaptable, and easy to install and to move. "Jerry came up with the concept of Swiftspace," says McIntyre. "We prototyped it and had it patented. This was our first foray into product creation."

Swiftspace changed the world for McIntyre Group. "It is a revolutionary product," says McIntyre. "It's significantly different from anything else on the market." The essential concept of Swiftspace, from the beginning and as the product line has expanded, is office furniture



that can be collapsed and wheeled into another room, ready for use again in minutes with no professional installation or tools required. McIntyre says, "It was innovative and it was exciting," and that excitement was contagious.

"We were ahead of our time," he adds, "but we could envision that office environments were going to be changing." They have, and Swiftspace has become a huge success story.

McIntyre and his colleagues admit their invention goes against their core business – furniture installation – because Swiftspace units don't require complex installation. That's another key to their success – not only the ease of use, but also, the cost savings every time offices are reconfigured, a common occurrence in today's workspace. "We feel we have the only product on the market that pays for itself over time."

This initial move into creating and distributing product lines led to the creation of a separate company – Swiftspace – a pattern that has continued for the McIntyre Group with each new product line.

The fact that Swiftspace doesn't require complicated installation doesn't mean people get an office-in-a-box with DIY instructions. Every product a McIntyre Group company sells includes installation. That is the service end of a truly vertically integrated business – McIntyre creates, develops, manufactures and fabricates under its various banners and then sells and markets under the Vertical Interiors banner. McIntyre also supplies expert installation services for any product and office installation need.

ezoBord is a highly innovative product – sound-dampening architectural features that produce significant noise reduction, but add attractive décor to the space. It's a Canadian product. It's also a very green product – although it can be manufactured to take on a variety of looks and design ideas, it feels like felt, but is made of plastic (50% from recycled water bottles) and is entirely recyclable if taken out of use.

Dean McIntyre says that customer interest in the product has been "Explosive". As office interiors have changed and walls have come down, it has changed the office environment significantly. Acoustic issues in the workplace have become a real challenge." EzoBord answers that challenge very effectively – as all visitors to the McIntyre working showroom quickly realize. Snider points out that companies and organizations enjoy the open concept but face significant health risks such as hearing impairment, interference with spoken communication, impaired task performance and negative social behaviours. Companies that have installed ezoBord say their staff enjoy "the ability to hear and to be heard... to concentrate." He cites a study that proved that with ezoBord mitigating sound features, "productivity goes up, wasted time is cut in half and absenteeism goes down."

Says Dean McIntyre, "We're the first company in Canada with a product like this. We are a Canadian manufacturer; we sell in Canadian dollars. The reception to us has been huge."

Two years ago, Starwall was added to the McIntyre product mix. The product is a demountable wall – walls that are not fixed into the building's superstructure, so they can be moved... even to another building, if the client moves or expands.

McIntyre General Manager Steve Shepard notes that customers can get whatever configuration they need – all Starwall installations are completely "customizable," including cut glass elements. Like the other McIntyre lines, Starwall products are installed by the McIntyre Group. Dean McIntyre says that is a key element when they are researching potential products: "We look at products that will require our specialty installation teams."

"A fourth product line under our corporate umbrella, Kitchen Visions,



Steve Shepard and Darrin Snider, sitting on a Swiftspace benching, with a decorative sound dampening, cnc cut, ezoBord feature on the wall behind.

is the company's cabinetry and custom millworking arm, located in Cambridge," adds McIntyre/

The McIntyre Group of companies, which now has about 175 employees, is also a distributor for other manufacturers – mostly Canadian companies.

McIntyre products are sold internationally – Canada, the US and more recently Europe. But there is no doubt that the current focus is very much on the local markets here and in Alberta.

"We really push the local feel," says Dean. "Leanne and I feel the culture of our business is very important. We are employing locally, manufacturing locally, selling locally."

There's an added plus for customers – the companies that make up McIntyre Group also keep a lot of inventory locally, so "the lead time on our own products is approximately four weeks," compared to competitors who are typically 2-3 times that.

Our group of companies has an international vision, coupled with a sharp local focus. They are committed to being a significant contributor to the local economy – the company is officially a "living wage employer", a fact proudly stated on a prominent sign (made from ezoBord, of course).

"We are part of our local communities," says Dean McIntyre. "That's a key factor in who we are. We are committed to making a difference here – economically and socially. And we truly believe we have innovative products that are going to meet the needs of the local corporate community. And so... everyone is welcome to come and see us, right here, on Trillium Drive."



# GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

*Former TV journalist, city councillor, building her company*

BY JON ROHR

**M**elissa Durrell left CTV in 2010, to take her seat as City Councillor for Uptown Waterloo Ward 7. Before the election, as she talked to other local candidates, she found some were interested in media training and were wondering how to get their message out. "So I did a little bit of consulting." Soon after, small businesses started to approach her and she thought, "this would be a great business opportunity... so I incorporated. Now, I've got a really awesome team. We're all women, interestingly, coming from a news room where it was mostly men."

Durrell says that being a female journalist was really difficult, "in the sense that it was really hard to find mentors." She was looking for women who had been in the business for 10-20 years, who could offer mentorship, and "I really wanted to create a space that was really healthy, so part of what I do here is mentor these amazing women to be great leaders."

"As a journalist, you get really good at meeting people and getting to their story really quickly; understanding who they are, and what they stand for. I love working with these young women and teaching them about that."

Durrell started out with some pretty small tech companies. A big part her business involved working with companies connected to Communtech, Accelerator Centre, Innovation Guelph, and the



*Melissa Durrell - "amplifying change makers"*

RIC Centre. When Durrell started off, "most of them were getting investment ready, and that was my niche, and then two three years later, you've got this great company, and they need this public relations firm, so then they come back to me - and so that was really my sales trajectory for ever. And it's continued to work. I've been really lucky". Her company, Durrell Communications, has clients locally as well as in New York, Switzerland, Vancouver, and "we're doing a launch in Montreal." She focuses on staying connected with the tech world.

Durrell is also Media and Public relations director of Women's March Global. "We amplify change makers. I work with the Global

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Brand." One of major campaigns Durrell is working on is getting the 13 activists that helped push the law for women to be able to drive cars in Saudi Arabia, out of prison. "They were all jailed, so now we have a 400,000 person petition that we put out to hopefully get them out of jail."

The cause works with many organizations from around the world, asking some tough questions like, "How much money are their countries benefiting from in relation with Saudi Arabia?" and "Why are so many countries scared of Saudi Arabia?"

"You look at it and it's \$5.3 trillion in the United States that they get from Saudi Arabia, and in Canada, it's multi, multi billions of dollars that we get from Saudi Arabia, and there-in lies the problem... So we wanted to make those numbers public."

"Citizens need to know," she states, so Durrell is running campaigns on social, digital, and via print media.

Durrell grew up in politics. "My dad was the Mayor of Ottawa when I was a kid. I remember saying to him when I was younger, 'What degree do I get?' and saying that I really want to go into politics, I want to make a difference in my community. He said, 'Don't be a politician, be a reporter... that's where the power is.'"

She attained a Journalism degree at Ryerson, worked across the

*"I love Uptown, I'm going to miss it 100%, but as a huge believer in term limits, I really believe strongly that you need to move up or move on."*

country for CTV, and landed in Waterloo. "I've only ever lived in uptown Waterloo." Her husband had an uncle and an aunt who lived here, but "we didn't know anybody here." It was their uncle who said, "You need to be as close to Vincenzo's as possible!"

Says Durrell, "We kinda fell in love with Uptown Waterloo. I think we lived in like six or seven houses... and now we're over at Allen, and still two blocks away from Vincenzo's."

"What was beautiful for us is that we fell into this incredible community in Waterloo. It was the right time, things were changing in the city, and Uptown was just having this rebirth, we made a lot of friends really quickly and we just fell in love with it".

Durrell says that what drove her to enter politics was what was missing from politics: "Passion. You really have to be passionate about making a difference." Durrell served two terms, and quickly learned that it was all about getting her projects into the budget. "As you can see," she says, gesturing toward King Street, just outside her office in Uptown Waterloo, "we've literally had the most money ever spent in Uptown, because I figured it out."

Durrell loved her political career. "I love Uptown, I'm going to miss it 100%, but as a huge believer in term limits, I really believe strongly that you need to move up or move on." She adds that, at this point, "I'm not interested in [running for] Mayor."

Durrell Communications is doing some incredible things. "I'm really looking forward to seeing this company grow. For us, it's looking at new opportunities for the business, working a lot with tech companies. I haven't put a lot of effort into not-profit, we do a tonne of pro-bono, but actually looking at what are their needs and how can we help them with communications."

Durrell's favourite thing to do is "white board and think about big ideas". She is changing the way people think about product and how countries think about people. "I'm trying to make it something that everybody can understand."

## A BILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT

*Coordinating a collaboration of like minded individuals*

BY JON ROHR

David Fransen is COO of Next Generation Manufacturing Canada (NGM) the not-for-profit corporation created to manage a \$200 million fund, as part of the federal Supercluster initiative. The feds set up five superclusters across Canada including an Ocean supercluster in the Atlantic, an AI supercluster in Québec, a Plant Protein supercluster in the Prairies, and a Digital supercluster in British Columbia. Southern Ontario was awarded the Advanced Manufacturing super cluster; NGM administers the dollars.

"We are a coalition of tech and manufacturing companies," Fransen told Exchange at the True North summit, last May. "We have letters of support from over 140 different companies, universities, colleges, Boards of Trade, etc. It's a big, broad coalition."

NGM will receive over \$200 million from the federal government, over the next five years, to invest in commercializing and leveraging advanced manufacturing. The goal? Growing an advanced manufacturing sector to attract new business opportunities and employ Southern Ontario citizens.

As Canada's biggest, maybe only "P3 Unicorn", NGM is a Public Private Partnership (P3). "It's us and the federal government," says Fransen, who calculates the Unicorn valuation by adding \$200 million from the feds and letters of support that total \$800 million of cash and in-kind.

"We're going to be playing with a billion dollars, and that money is going to be used for projects involving partnerships of companies."

The funding model is focused on projects "supporting globally competitive companies, and working with companies that can grow to that scale... having them come together."

To receive funding, partnerships of three or more independent groups, led by a private company, will need to demonstrate that "there is transformational technology involved or it's going to transform the company in such a way that they are going to become globally competitive."

Linamar's Linda Hasenfratz is Chair of the board of directors of



David Fransen - billions to play with



NGM Canada. The organization also includes Magna and Woodbridge – Tier-1 manufacturers with a global footprint. What they are doing “by joining with that initiative, is allowing Canadian, Ontario based companies, to partner with them to develop technology solutions, supply them with parts,” says Fransen. “We’ve got companies at that scale and then we’ve got smaller companies, that are still kind of out of the chute and are in the process of scaling up. They need partnerships – so a partnership with a Linamar, gets you into a global market place.”

**“We’re going to be playing with a billion dollars, and that money is going to be used for projects involving partnerships of companies.”**

Waterloo-based tech companies Thalmic Labs (now called North) and Clearpath Solutions are both manufacturing and technology companies that will be viewed as leaders in this pursuit. “They’re really in the sweet spot of what we’re trying to do,” says Jansen.

NGM is putting out calls for proposals, for companies large and small to reach out to each other, and develop collaborative project proposals. “Also, an important part of our mandate is ecosystem development and support. So how do we create the conditions for success? And that has to do with training. We’ve got companies screaming for talent and it’s hard to get the talent,” adds Fransen.

“We’ll be convening workshops and providing a theme, like robotics; so here we have a company like Clearpath, making robots. We’ve got other companies in Ontario that don’t really know what that’s about. This gives them an opportunity to come and hear a presentation, talk to a couple of people, and who knows what comes of that?”

Says Fransen, “We are size agnostic and sector agnostic. We want all the different sizes, and are primarily interested in companies that are scaling, from scale-ups to the big multi-nationals.”

He adds, “The leaders around our board table are Canadian based multi-nationals, and we have some scale-ups that can bring to the table the perspective of ‘here are the challenges that I confront’. It makes for an interesting dialogue.” **X**

## SLAM DUNKS, LOVE AND POSITIVITY

*Titans’ head coach has a message of hope for everyone*

BY PAUL KNOWLES

**I**n many ways, Cavell Johnson is the quintessential basketball player – he’s 2.05 metres (over 6 feet 8 inches), in terrific shape, and dedicated to the game he’s been involved with since he was a kid.

But forget the tough-guy b-ball stereotype – because Johnson, former player and now head coach of the KW Titans of the National Basketball League of Canada, sees his mission in life as “infiltrating minds with love and positivity.”

In fact, he has launched a brand – well, to be precise, a “BR4ND” – to promote the cause of kindness and love for others. “BR4ND” stands for “Building Reputations For Nurturing Development”.

Now, let’s be clear – Johnson is thoroughly dedicated to the Titans, to leading his team into the playoffs, and to building the Titans’ exposure in the community. Early in the season, the team sits in the middle of the 10-team league’s standings, which points to improvement over last season. The current Titan roster includes six Canadians and six Americans.

Johnson says the team has “absolutely” been embraced by the KW community. As a player in season one, and the head coach since late last season, he has been “part of the program since year one,” and he says, “I’ve seen the growth of interest, and turn-out at the games. There is definitely still room for growth, but the people who have been with us from day one, their enthusiasm continues to grow, and they spread the word.”

Johnson is an American, from Maryland, but chooses to live in KW, partly so he can spend the off-season spreading the word... creating awareness and excitement about the team, and about his personal causes. “That’s why I was here all summer,” he says, “to try to connect with the community.”

And one of his goals, he says, is “to infiltrate minds”... which might sound a touch ominous, until he adds, “with love and posi-

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*Cavell Johnson – encouraging people to care*

tivity.”

He says he’s just following through on his upbringing. “I was raised in a very loving and expressive family. And outside of my family, some of the more influential people in my life have influenced the lives of others through an appreciation of love, and kindness, and caring.”

His focus on such “positivity” was tested, and ultimately strengthened, by a tragedy – “losing my brother to suicide in Feb-

ruary, 2017.” That made Johnson even more determined “to help others be kind to others and to seek help for themselves” when confronted with mental illness.

Johnson takes his message of hope everywhere he can – in speaking engagements to schools and community groups, or over a drink in a café. He says that although BR4ND is a registered entity in the US, it is not designed to be a money-making endeavor; it’s an initiative designed “to make an impact in a positive way.”

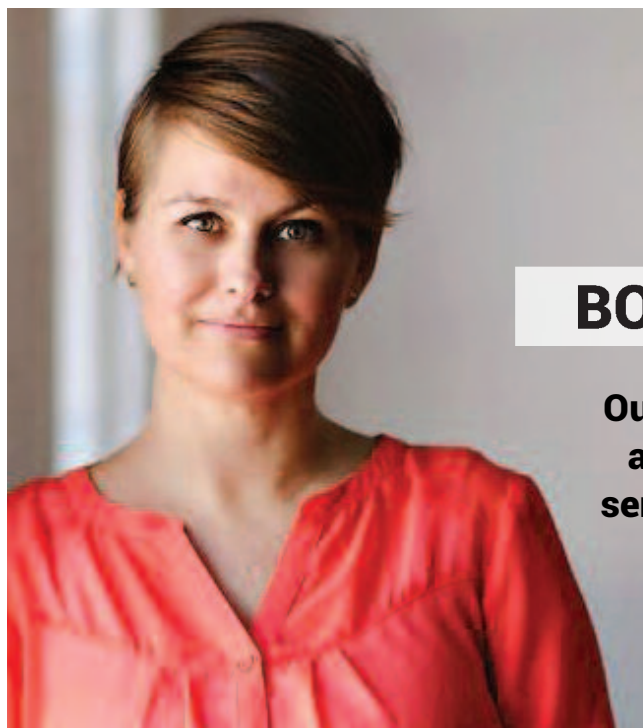
“I like to encourage people to encourage other people,” he says, “sharing God’s love and a positive mindset.”

The head coach has one professional regret – he doesn’t get to play basketball any more. He had a long career as a basketball player, before being appointed head coach. He played college basketball. He played professionally in the USA, China, Hungary, Greece and Finland, and in 2014 was the NBL Canada defensive player of the year, playing for the Brampton A’s, his second NBL Canada team (he was with the Saint John Mill Rats in New Brunswick in 2012-2013, and returned to the NBL Canada to join the inaugural KW Titans in 2016). The Titans’ ownership group includes Ball Construction and local entrepreneur, Leon Martin.

Johnson says, “I’ve played it my whole life. I love the teamwork behind it. I have grown to have a deep appreciation for the way certain mental approaches to the game can transfer to different aspects of your life.” That sounds like a coach – but he admits “I miss playing, a lot. I’ll do some shooting contests with some of my players, but I don’t play right now.”

But he does stay in shape! “I love to work out. Physical fitness is going to be a part of my life no matter if I am coaching or not.”

And clearly, so is communicating a message of love and positivity to everyone Johnson happens to encounter. X



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# NOBEL LAUREATE GENERATES INCREDIBLE EXCITEMENT

*The University of Waterloo experiences campus-wide impact of Strickland's physics honour*

BY JON ROHR

It's a phrase that resonates with everyone: "The Nobel Prize." And last month, a University of Waterloo professor became one of the elite group to receive that honour. Donna Strickland is an optical physicist and pioneer in the field of pulsed lasers. In December, she was formally awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics, presented to her by the King of Sweden, Carl XVI Gustaf. Strickland received the honour together with Gerard Mourou, for the invention of chirped pulse amplification.

"I've never seen so much pride at the University of Waterloo," says Kelly McManus, Senior Director, Community Relations at the University of Waterloo. "Our department of Physics, our faculty of science, our entire university is really proud in terms of the number of new initiatives that are rolling out that are honouring and building on Professor Strickland's work."

Life for Strickland, and for those around her, has suddenly changed. "The excitement is incredible. Everybody all around me so excited, whether it's my immediate family that is excited to be with me, to my friends, to every person I meet practically wants to have a selfie with me," says Strickland in a telephone interview from Sweden, the day after she was presented the Nobel Prize Award.

This is additional encouragement for "women who are entering into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)." Strickland highlighted the fact that "many people brought their daughters to meet me, and more women are talking to me about being an inspiration, and so, I think times are changing and things keep moving forward. I'm just one little piece of the whole thing."

Strickland says that memorable moments include meeting Sweden's Royal family. "It was just an unbelievable treat, very few people get that opportunity, don't they, that I got to walk in, with the King of Sweden ... And the really fun conversation at the dinner table. You think it would be stiff, with Royals, but it was not at all. It was just a really enjoyable night."

Since the announcement, Dr. Strickland has been thinking a lot about her Nobel Lecture, in part because it was to be a public lecture. Which means, "anybody should be able to come and understand it." Strickland worked on that "quite a bit. Eventually, I was able to explain Photo Energy [related] to the size of a basketball player, and that analogy worked, as a lot of people told me that they understood it like that." Next step is for Strickland to "take that talk on the road... so I have a pretty good analogy for how my work can be compared to everyday things." She says it's been "a learning experience to change how you talk, in a completely different way ... saying the same thing in a completely different way."



Nobel Laureate Dr. Donna Strickland

But it does take some effort to figure out how to do that."

In 2020, she'll start giving talks at science conferences as well as universities. Along with her roadshow, and having "this new platform", Strickland has started to talk about Photonics, for environmental measurement and monitoring. "Now I am able to have a bit more political voice in that, and I have been invited by Environment Canada to speak at their [climate change] research meeting in February in Ottawa". Photonics is a personal interest for Strickland, although she doesn't work in Photonics. "I work on the idea that Photonics is important and is probably going to be the technology of the 21st century." She also works with The Optical Society, the leading professional society in optics and photonics, "to help to make sure all governments understand that. And that every country should be monitoring the environment now, and we think photonics has a great big role to play with that".

For the next several months, Strickland will be teaching as much as she can – "in January, certainly the first two weeks" – and then the course will be team taught, while she is travelling. Her hopes are to teach at least "half of the course this term," and "I still want to do research."

Strickland is now a full professor, whose class enrolment has doubled in size – students want to be taught by a Nobel Laureate. Strickland says her designation as a full professor "really only changed my title ... it's what other people thought was a big deal."

Mike Hudson, UW Professor of Physics and Astronomy, told Exchange, "this is the highest award you can receive in physics and it's world renowned. It will enormously raise the visibility of the University of Waterloo, puts us on a global stage, even more than we are already."

Ray Laflamme is Canada Research Chair in Quantum Computing and the Mike and Ophelia Lazaridis "John von Neumann" Chair in Quantum Information, at UW. He highlights "the amount of energy that this brings... This brings us all together, not only the physics department, but the faculty of science, the university as a whole, including the Perimeter Institute... Thanks to Donna ... she did the hard work." Laflamme believes Strickland's award "raises the bar for all of us. This is one of the great things that happens, when one of us receives this – not only the person receiving a prize for the great work they have done, but all of us, the colleagues, also raise the bar and say, 'What we can achieve if we become even stronger?' It is incredible."

X

# PLANNING TO CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

*THEMUSEUM CEO is listening to the community's call for more collaboration*

BY JON ROHR

**T**o David Marskell, CEO of THEMUSEUM, receiving an award that recognizes his community involvement, generosity, and hard work, was "not expected... and I truly do feel humbled by it".

Marskell went to Ottawa to accept the Senate of Canada 150+ Commemorative Medal with 50 other people. "When they say making your country a better place ... it's pretty powerful, and pretty emotional," said Marskell, in an exclusive interview with Exchange Magazine. "I do sincerely accept this on behalf of THEMUSEUM and the Board... my board is so patient with me." He adds, "Anybody who knows me needs patience with me... the team here is so great."

Marskell, who has been with THEMUSEUM since 2006, is now totally immersed in thinking about the future and with that, and a generous contribution from BMO, the expansion of THEMUSEUM's floor space.

Marskell is focused on growth and development of THEMUSEUM. And he has put money where his vision is – he and his brother Ken have personally guided \$1,000,000 to this cause, from their parents' endowment fund.

He has been meeting with various community groups "to get buy-in on a broad basis from the community, to seek their input of what they want here." He sees this as an important step. "I need to be armed when we get to the municipalities, because the municipalities have to buy into this, or it implodes... it's as simple as that."

THEMUSEUM hired Metroline research company to conduct surveys in the community with respect to next steps. "We've got 1060 surveys completed."

From the surveys, says Marskell, came three key results: "1) a huge percentage want us to collaborate with others, 2) interesting feedback on the features and design people want, and 3) dedicated feeder space, permanent family exhibition, enhanced food and beverage, merchandising and so on."

Marskell considers "the one that really was wonderful and interesting," is that they want THEMUSEUM to collaborate.

"We gave a choice of who to collaborate with, whether it was the Clay and Glass, the rare Charitable Reserve, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), The Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), or Launch Waterloo which is a recent non-profit start-up venture designed to create and curate STEAM-powered programming to harness the creativity and curiosity of our community's youngest members... People could check all that they wanted."

The top five results were checked off by more than 65% of respondents. Number one, with 78%, was the ROM. "Very significant" says Marskell. Respondents "want us to partner with the ROM." Number 2 spot goes to local artists, musicians and theatre; number 3 is working with local tech companies; number 4 goes to cultural diversity; and number 5 is to work with the AGO.

Marskell says, "What respondents said, is they want us to bring really great, high level stuff here, and put it alongside the innovative cool stuff that our local artists and tech companies are doing."



David Marskell - "We need to flourish"

He has been meeting with many different groups, both large and small.

Marskell says, "Before I got here there were some [cultural and artistic] silos, for whatever reason. I believe it stems from not being amalgamated, and funding is a dogs' breakfast ... some of the local theatre groups are thriving... Larger organizations are limping along. We're in trouble," says Marskell. "Sustainability is one thing, but we need to flourish."

Marskell highlights the failure of "The Creative Enterprise Initiative", founded by a well-meaning group of business people. "They tried and unfortunately for whatever reason it didn't work. This does give us some opportunity," he states, adding that a fundamental problem with the model was that The Creative Enterprise model was "top-down", and "how we're going to grow... is bottom up."

His plan will take time, "four to five years at the earliest." Marskell says to make it work, "the federal government, the provincial government and local municipalities need to be onside."

The CEO is "truly optimistic" about the future. "I've never felt as good about the community. There is a plan and it's not about THEMUSEUM, it's about a project. Yes, THEMUSEUM is involved, and helps the organization become sustainable, it helps many arts groups, and it's also an anchor and entrance to downtown Kitchener". X

## Conestoga Welcomes New Board Chair



Lydia Chudleigh has been appointed as Chair of the Board of Governors for Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. A recognized leader in Ontario's health-care

sector, Lydia has worked at St. Mary's General Hospital for 30 years. She has served on Conestoga's Board of Governors since 2013.

Lydia's strategic vision and commitment to operational excellence, combined with her extensive management experience and deep understanding of the local community, will help guide Conestoga in our efforts to deliver excellence in career-focused education and applied research to address workforce needs and build prosperity across our region and beyond.



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# NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL

*Chamber working beyond its borders for collaborative advantages*

BY JON ROHR

It wasn't business as usual at the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Greater Chamber of Commerce's last meeting of 2018. Certainly, highlights were discussed. Ian McLean, GWKCC's CEO, mentioned the partnerships that they have fostered, the number of events that they do. He also noted annual events in which the Chamber is a partner, like the Businesses Expo, where GWKCC partners with the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce and the Guelph Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber members talked about the work they're doing around the Immigration Partnership.

They also talked a lot about health care, because the Chamber has functioned as a community coordinator in terms of attracting doctors to the Waterloo Region. They compared 15 years ago, when there were about 44,000 citizens in the community in need of a doctor, with now, with only 18,000 people still in need.

*"Dumb luck or good timing, we were way ahead of other people, we are doing all the things that the federal government wanted."*

McLean tells Exchange that the gap continues because the community is growing and doctors are retiring in greater numbers, with new doctors not taking the same patient loads. He says ongoing promotion is important because "we're competing in the country and across the province" for physicians.

The GWKCC is a "stable organization" says McLean, "that really needs to be seen as a community partner, for a lot of the things that we do."

But they can't do it all, so they partner, whether it's with Communitech, Waterloo Economic Development, the LHIN, "all our social service agencies. The real strength of the Chamber is that we are a very positive and progressive chamber," says McLean.

So what was unusual about this 130-year-old organization of

like-minded business people? It turns out that over the past few years, McLean and his team at the Chamber have been very busy. This Chamber is addressing the problems we face as a thriving and growing business community. The Chamber has reached out in a unique and collaborative way and developed a Southern Ontario (GTA) network of Chambers of



Ian McLean – working together

Commerce and Boards of Trade to support transportation funding. The collaboration also helped to accelerate the success of Ontario's bid for the Super Cluster funding project (see page 13).

## Going for GO

Jan De Silva is President & CEO of the Toronto Region Board of Trade. She leads the Chamber of Commerce for Canada's largest urban centre, representing 12,000 members and 200,000 business professionals. De Silva grew up in Kitchener-Waterloo, and since her parents live in Waterloo, she's here frequently.

When McLean and De Silva connected, McLean says, "We saw the synergies between the business community we have, at both ends of the corridor... About three years ago, we said 'How can we work together?'"

First on the agenda for the two chambers, was "the need for all-day, two-way GO."

They started down that road. It quickly became apparent there were a lot of things they could do together. "We agreed," says McLean, "that it would be more powerful, if it were all the Chambers along the corridor... So we went to Cambridge, Guelph, Milton, Halton Hills, Brampton, Mississauga, and Hamilton, and we got that group together and asked 'What are the things that we could work on together?' Transit, transportation – moving the goods and services, talent, are all issues that we all face. So we started working on those things together."

And serendipity entered the picture, because "Two days before the meeting, the Federal government announced the Supercluster bid... That took us down that road... Dumb luck or good timing, we were way ahead of other people, we are doing all the things that the federal government wanted, [collaborating with] business, academia, municipalities – making sure 'everyone is on the same page'."

McLean says that collaboration with Toronto has grown from there, as the two Chambers consider "what can we do to really advance what we're doing between Toronto and Waterloo."

De Silva thinks about the GTA as an economic zone, Toronto to Waterloo, and "for marketing purposes it's the Toronto and Waterloo Corridor, Canada's Innovation corridor."

An energizer for the GWKCC is the heightened level of influence it now possesses. Working with the other Chambers will provide an unprecedented foundation from which to collaboratively approach Queen's Park. "There will be a lot of things that we'll be doing when we go door knocking," says McLean. He and De Silva plan to make a point of going to Queen's Park "a couple of times... talk to the relevant ministers... whomever and whoever we need to, as a group that we co-chair". They plan to let the key politicians know, "Here are the big issues that we face."

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# LISTENING IS THE KEY

*Karen Redman preaches collaboration and cooperation on the Regional stage*

BY PAUL KNOWLES

It may not be all that remarkable that Karen Redman is the new Chair of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo. After all, as a former M.P., as one-time Liberal Party Whip, and as a Kitchener representative on Waterloo Regional Council until she ran for Chair, she came into the municipal election with name recognition and a solid reputation.

But it must be significant that, running against three opponents – all men – she defeated them all in all seven municipalities that make up the region, including in their home territories, taking 62.4% of the votes overall.

Redman believes she is ready to take on the job, but she knows challenges lie ahead. Redman says that the 2018 municipal election reinforced one key truth – the Region of Waterloo is huge, and keeping connected with the entire Region is “a formidable task.” The population of the Region probably topped 600,000 in 2018. It includes seven municipalities. Redman adds that, not only is the Region big, it is also diverse, and that diversity is one of its strengths. “I genuinely value the different characteristics” across the region, she says. “The townships are hugely important, both economically and for quality of life.” She is a supporter of the Region’s “countryside line” policy, a more stringent protection of rural land than provincial policy. She points to the strength in economic diversity, as well, noting that two often-ignored sectors are in the top five economic engines in the region – agriculture, and traditional manufacturing.

Voter turnout in the municipal election measured a paltry 30.78%. Redman believes she knows at least one reason for voter apathy – she keeps hearing people say, “‘Stop asking our opinion, and having it go into a black hole.’ People in Waterloo Region are happy to be part of the process, and willing to give that input,” if they believe it is actually listened to. But Redman thinks that’s where things have broken down – surveys and public consultations are common, but there is little evidence they make a difference in the decision-making. She admits, “We haven’t done a

good job, closing that loop.”

Redman believes her job involves lobbying and cooperation with the provincial and federal governments, and also being involved in the new, larger geographical brands like the Innovation Corridor. She points out, “We are marketing on a global scale.”

And in contrast to her predecessor, she says, “It is my intention to actively par-



*Karen Redman – strength in diversity*

ticipate as the outward face of Regional Council in national and international meetings and trade missions.”

When it comes to the Region’s relationship with the province, Redman admits that the PC government “is an unknown quantity and a little bit unpredictable.” She believes that the Region will be most successful in intergovernmental affairs by being proactive.

*She keeps hearing people say, “Stop asking our opinion, and having it go into a black hole.”*

“Governments are always looking for solutions,” she says, so the Region will be trying to anticipate issues, and have answers ready when questions are raised at provincial or federal levels. She cites “two-way, all-day GO service” as an example.

This does not mean Redman is entirely positive about the future, as it relates to the province. She notes that there is “a history of things being downloaded to the Region without sufficient economic resources.”

And she sees some significant challenges facing her and the new Regional council. “We need mental health services, yesterday,” she says. She also points to the question of homelessness, and argues there is need for public-private partnerships. Building additional subsidized housing facilities, while part of a long-term solution, does not solve immediate needs; rental accommodations need to be made available for people lacking housing, she says.

And she says the opioid epidemic “is truly a crisis. We need to keep reminding each other there is no ‘them’ and ‘us’.” These are people from our community dying in our community.” Redman points out that this is a wide-sweeping issue demanding “long-term solutions,” because “it is about isolation, addiction, mental health, job loss...” And as the new Chair of the Region, she knows the issue is “huge and very divisive.”

She told Exchange, “I am very excited about this council. There is a great mix of stability and experience, and new faces and new dynamics.” She encourages her colleagues and the regional staff to be collaborative, to draw on the strength of the elected and administrative sides to come up with the best solutions... most of all, to “listen”.

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# SEILING SEEKING NEXT STAGE

*Former Regional Chair looking for opportunities*

BY PAUL KNOWLES

It's somewhat ironic that perhaps the most lasting tribute to retired Waterloo Regional Chair Ken Seiling is that they have named a museum after him. But from another perspective, it's entirely appropriate.

Sure, renaming The Waterloo Regional Museum as "The Ken Seiling Waterloo Regional Museum" may conjure up a few jokes about antiques and artifacts – after all, Seiling's record of serving as Regional Chair for 33 years is undoubtedly historic.

But Seiling's early career included a successful stint as director of the Wellington County Museum. He admits to being an advocate for all things historic over the years. History is in his blood – so what more fitting honour could the Region have found than branding the museum in his name.

*"The fragmented hospital system doesn't serve us well. It doesn't put us in a position to deal with Queen's Park... We have three remodeled old hospitals."*

Seiling says, "My first reaction was, 'That's not my style'. But I was also kind of flattered."

Exchange magazine interviewed Seiling earlier in 2018, and published an article at that time. But the outgoing chair had promised a second interview in the days immediately before his final term ended. Our first question concerned his plans for the future. "I have no plans," he said. "I've had several inquiries about things."

Seiling has a unique record when it comes to being elected – he was first named Regional Chair by a vote of his colleagues on council; when the position was put to public election, he won every time he ran.

He admits that the decision to step down was not easy. Now, "I'm going through a grieving process." That process may be complicated by the fact that his first job upon leaving the chair is to go through 90 boxes of his official and personal papers.

Seiling isn't going completely quietly. When he talked to Exchange, he freely offered his opinion on a number of issues. One he would not discuss – because nothing had been officially stated by the province – is the future of two-tiered regional government.

He did say that "It's time the Region had one body running all three hospitals;" the current situation sees three separate boards and administrations operating Grand River, St. Mary's, and Cambridge Memorial.

Seiling believes that having three independent, relatively small hospitals has hurt the Region's chances of having optimum health care facilities. "We have lost the opportunity to have a centralized hospital," he said, "and the fragmented hospital system doesn't serve us well. It doesn't put us in a position to deal with Queen's Park... We have three remodeled old hospitals."



Ken Seiling – "I have no plans"

Seiling says, "The province would have to step in" to unify the system. That would mean "better access to service within a unified structure... And better rationalization of services. There would not be three competing hospitals."

The change of government at Queen's Park had a clear impact on provincial-municipal relations, as the provincial government acted immediately to slash the size of Toronto city council, and initiate changes in several other municipalities just prior to the election last fall. Seiling says, "Changes in government are always challenging. But you find new ways to deal with them."

Another issue on everyone's mind is the perpetually delayed launch of the ION Light Rail Transit system. Seiling finds it ironic that the failure to meet schedule, in his view, is not the fault of the Region. "People always say government can't do anything, only the private sector can. But who let us down? The private sector. We put our faith in a Canadian company that didn't perform. To say I am disappointed is an understatement."

Seiling says that, if asked, he will "give my perspective on things" to his successor, Regional Chair Karen Redman. He notes that, "I've always maintained that the Region's been pretty stable for years, and has done good things, because of the continuity of elected officials." Seiling adds, "That's not to say you can never change. But it's helpful to understand why things have happened the way they have."

And he identifies a number of areas that need attention from the Region, or at the inter-governmental level.

First, he says, is the "opioid issue. There's a role for local municipalities in all of that. Particularly in Cambridge where there is a certain group who don't want anything in their neighbourhood, which is where the problem is."

Then, keeping his focus on Cambridge, he says the Region "Needs to put the routing for the second phase of the LRT in place."

And he also highlights "the whole question of affordable and supportive housing.... Council should be concerned about that."

He says he has faith in the new council, and the new chair. "I made the decision not to run when I knew there were competent people ready to run. I was confident that if Karen won, she could do the job."

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John Tibbits – “come a long way”

## BEMUSED BY A UNIQUE HONOUR

*“I’d not dead,” says Tibbits, but they named a campus after him anyway*

BY PAUL KNOWLES

John Tibbits cracks a wry smile, and says, “Go ahead, ask – ‘If they’re naming buildings after you, why aren’t you dead?’” The reality is that the John W. Tibbits Campus of Conestoga College was officially opened in October, named for the man who is President of Conestoga College – and has been, since 1987.

But when the 150,000 square foot facility – which now features IT courses, culinary arts classes, and programs for new Canadians – was in the planning stages, being honoured with the name was the farthest thing from Tibbits’ mind. He was focused on raising the money to convert the old high school site into a marquee facility on University Avenue, to grab the attention of students and visitors at both Waterloo’s universities. So he approached Maureen Cowan, Chair of the Cowan Foundation. “The Cowan Foundation has been a supporter of the College for years.”

Cowan came through with \$4 million of the \$58 million price tag. “No one has ever given us \$4 million,” says Tibbits. But there

was a condition – “They could put any name they wanted on the building,” subject to the approval of the College’s Board of Governors.

Tibbits was sure the name would be the “Cowan Campus”. Well into the project, Tibbits finally discovered the name that Cowan had chosen – his own. “I didn’t know what to make of it,” he told Exchange. “It’s never been done before. It’s

an honour, and I appreciate it, but I find it at times a bit odd.”

This new campus is just one more step in the amazing growth of the College; and that’s the result of the hard work put in by Tibbits and his team over the past three decades. “We’ve come a long way. We’ve got a good team, here,” says Tibbits. “Top-notch academic leaders who care about excellence and equity.”

Tibbits’ official title is indeed President, but perhaps it should be “Head Cheerleader” for the College. He never tires of promoting his school, and a conversation with him is peppered with superlatives. He points out that “We have about 4,000 students who already have degrees,” and he believes that number will increase, as university grads come to Conestoga seeking the practical training the College offers. He argues that the College is not competing with universities – “We think of ourselves as different from universities, not less than,” but at the same time, he believes that Conestoga will be able to offer more and more degree programs, including post-graduate, applied Master’s degrees.

He envisions a post-graduate nursing degree. Changes in health care education will be driven by need, says Conestoga’s president. There is a shortage of nurses in Ontario, and an even greater shortage of Personal Support Worker (another Conestoga program). Tibbits says Ontario currently needs 10,000 more PSWs.

Conestoga continues to see growth by every measure possible. In the year 2000, for example, the college attracted between 400 and 500 international students. This term, there are over 8,000.

That’s good news for Canadian students, insists Tibbits. International students are filling programs that did not attract sufficient interest from Canadians. That means those programs can exist, and they’re open to the Canadians who do want them. Tibbits notes that programs that attract large numbers of Canadian applicants – like the 900 applications Conestoga receives for 32 spaces in the paramedic program – reserve all their spaces for Canadians.

Tibbits believes his College will play an even more vital role in the economy. The entire employment picture is changing, and changing fast: “I don’t think everyone’s going to be unemployed, but I do think we’re going to have a big issue keeping people up to speed in terms of employment.” Even people “with high-level skills” are finding that they need to work hard to keep up to the never-ending changes that come to the workplace. The answer? In Tibbits’ view – Conestoga College. “The future is going to be more and more short-term training. It’s not so much what degree you have, but what skills, what competence.”

The numbers suggest this is already happening. Tibbits says Conestoga has 16,600 full-time students – but that’s just a fraction of the 60,000 or so that are full or part-time, including apprentices. Even in the summer months, which used to be virtually dead at the school, there will be 6,000 students on one of the three campuses (Kitchener/Cambridge, Waterloo, and Brantford).

Tibbits could have retired some years ago. But he says, “I’m working because I like it. And I like to think I’m in reasonable shape (he’s actually a championship level senior tennis player). This is fun. We’re growing. Training is becoming more and more important, and we want to be in that market.... We’re getting more and more into on-line” education. Tibbits is not resting on his laurels “We’re going to grow in Brantford,” he says. Despite a recent set-back in provincial funding, “We will be in Milton.” And on the south Kitchener campus, a 50,000 square foot expansion will start in May of this year.

Says Tibbits, “We need to adapt, we’re ready to adapt, we have to adapt.”

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# AWARDS, EXPLOSIVE GROWTH AT AXONIFY

*Carol Leaman is the heart-beat of the Axonify success story*

BY PAUL KNOWLES

It's rather ironic – Carol Leaman has never been a fan of awards, and yet she, and her company, Axonify, have been raking in the honours in recent months. In October, Leaman was named Canadian HR Champion in the fifth annual Canadian HR Awards, chosen “for outstanding achievements and contribution to the HR sector and for championing HR best practices.”

In April, the Globe & Mail placed Axonify sixth on the list of “Best Workplaces in Canada” – up from tenth a year previously.

And then, Axonify was named the top “Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise” in Aon’s “Best Employers in Canada”.

Leaman told Exchange, “It took me a bit of a mind-shift to understand the value of these [awards].” She says she has come to recognize that these awards underscore the positive workplace culture at Axonify, and that has become increasingly important in

*“We have an amazing product. It works, and our customers are rabid believers.”*

recruiting and retaining top employees.

“The number one question I’m asked when I interview people is, ‘What’s it like to work here, what’s the culture like?’ Ten years ago, nobody asked about the culture. Now, culture is big!”

She adds that when potential staff are looking for an employer, “People look for companies on the ‘best employer’ list.” People apply to Axonify because of its reputation, which makes awards “hugely important for us from a talent attraction perspective... and it’s also a source of pride” for the Axonify team.

As for Leaman herself? “Now, I just roll with it.”

## Growth off the charts

Carol Leaman doesn’t have a lot of time to savour honours and awards, however many may come her way. She’s a serial entrepreneur who seems to have found her long-term niche at Axonify.

Leaman, and business partner Christine Tutssel – Senior Vice President of Strategic Initiatives at Axonify – bought Axonify in 2011. Leaman says the company at that point included on customer, two employees, “and some source code.”

Axonify offers a unique way of training employees, using a trademarked “microlearning platform,” and by every possible measuring stick, their investment has been a gigantic success.

Their staff now numbers 175. In 2017, the company moved across a Waterloo parking lot from their 10,000 square foot home to a new, 30,000 square foot facility – and Leaman has retained both the lease on the original property, and an option to lease on more of the building, anticipating further growth.

Revenue growth is off the charts. In 2011, the company was doing \$100,000 in revenue. A year later, the total hit \$300,000. Today, Axonify records \$26 million in recurring revenue, with an A-list of giant corporate clients, including Walmart, Johnson & Johnson, Manulife, Citizens’ Bank in the US, M&M Food Markets, Levis, Grab Taxi – the “Uber” of south east Asia, with millions of



Carol Leaman – “culture is big!”

drivers – and the two biggest banks in Africa. Leaman says their customer roster currently numbers 180 (although several significant additional contracts were pending at the time of this interview). Thirty per cent of these clients are from outside North American, 20% are Canadian, and about 50% are American.

Not surprisingly, then, Leaman says “It’s been a big year. It’s just that we are on a surge right now, and we have great customer traction.”

## “It’s been a journey”

Although Axonify’s success seems relatively sudden, Leaman argues that it did not really come quickly, and certainly not easily. Axonify’s new approach to employee training was not an instant sell to HR departments entrenched in old patterns.

“It’s been a journey,” she says. “We’re disrupting the status quo, changing the mindset of well-entrenched executives who have always done it a certain way. It’s been a journey to convince people that there is a better way.”

Given this reluctance on the part of potential clients, how did Axonify go from \$100,000 to \$26 million in such a relatively short time? Leaman outlines “a three-part collision of factors that have resulted in us being in the right place at the right time.”

First, she says, the characteristics of employees – what they need, to be happy – “have changed over the last 10 to 15 years.”

Along with that, there is “the evolution of technology”, to the point where “there is a computer in the hands of every employee.”

And key to the whole process is “what we have learned about how the brain works to remember things... the evolution of cognitive science.” That is not only the key to Axonify’s success – it’s the key to their product. Leaman says that Axonify’s service combines the best in current technology with the latest in cognitive science – and that they are getting better at that, all the time.

One Axonify team member holds a PhD with a speciality in “gameification” – he’s studied how video games keep players interested, and that gets applied to Axonify’s products, so employees stay interested in their own training.

Axonify also works with Toronto-based cognitive scientist Dr. Alice Kim, an expert in neurocognitive processes that lead to improved memory, who approached Axonify when she discovered the cognitive learning processes the company was using.

Leaman says that relationship is continuing, and she credits Kim with helping the Axonify team learn more about why what they were doing worked: “We started to understand the science

even better.... We have amazing product," she adds. "It works, and our customers are rabid believers."

The corporate world has recognized the value of what Axonify has to offer. Leaman says, "There has been a shift in the last seven years... now they're coming to us, saying, 'Tell us about your microlearning platform'." She explains that this is because companies – including her own – find it difficult to "attract and retain the best people." In fact, Axonify's remarkable success has led to a significant amount of recruiting of her own people – "we are being inundated with recruiters" – and retention levels have dropped slightly with the company. Ironically, though, several people have recently left, and then asked if they could return, most finding their positions had already been filled.

Leaman has no doubts about the quality of her team. "I've had a hand in hiring most people here. We have done a really good job in attracting top-drawer people." Those people become part of the "Axonifam" – short-hand for "family". She adds that even if employees do move on – mostly, for opportunities to take on leadership roles that can't always be offered at Axonify – "I want them to look back at Axonify as the best place they have worked."

### "I don't need power"

Leaman brings a very personal touch to her role. Her office is in sharp contrast to the stereotypical "corner office suite" of many successful executives – Leaman's office is a glass-walled box smack in the middle of the Axonify building. Virtually every employee walks past her office on a regular basis. This, says Leaman, is deliberate. "I want them to have the opportunity to pop in and say, 'We did this yesterday,' to give me good news, to ask me a question. One of the keys to my success is, I am just a regular

person who works here and has a job to do like everyone else. I enjoy being connected with everybody."

She brings a unique sense to her job: "I am so, not powerful. I'm at the mercy of everybody else... and I love that. I don't need power, I don't need ego. I need for everybody around to feel good here, every day." But she adds, "I feel the weight of 175 people on me – I feel responsible for their success in my company. They're counting on me... but it's not going to change who I am."

Exchange asked Leaman if her gender makes her a different kind of leader. She believes it does. She says that the stereotype of woman as "nurturer" holds some truth, and "There is an element of that, that does come to the workplace."

She suspects any gender differences arise more from "socialization" than genetics, but that doesn't make it less real. "Men are socialized in a very different way... that the right thing to be is powerful, have a big ego, talk a big game." Leaman's 10-person executive team is split 50/50 – which she says is a coincidence, but a happy one.

Just this month, Axonify has launched a new program, empowering a research team to start exploring possibilities "outside the box... experimentation we're doing on the side." This team will develop and propose new ideas and products for Axonify. Some of them will move toward commercialization, all in a calculated effort "to stay ahead of the competition," to offer even better product and service to customers, and to create "something new, for new markets."

Leaman is excited: "We'll test 10 ideas, prioritize, pick the top two, and put some effort behind that."

Will these new ideas be successful? Given Carol Leaman's track record, the best cognitive thinkers would never bet against it. **X**



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