

Think green

Seizing green-based opportunities for growth



LEADING GROWTH FIRM SERIES

REPORT 17





“We understand that, in today’s world, to grow your economy you must green your economy.”

**Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario**

Innovators showcase

Seven examples of successful small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) based in Ontario that have seized green opportunities and prospered

Unicell Ltd.

Unicell, a Toronto-based truck-body manufacturer, has produced North America's first all-electric delivery truck. Deriving its energy from two on-board batteries, the 250-horsepower Quicksider can go 80 kilometres on a single charge. With an electric motor coupled to each rear wheel, the Quicksider offers additional productivity features, such as the ability to "kneel" at the rear or side, allowing drivers to roll their delivery dollies straight out the door for faster service. Purolator Courier Ltd. hopes to launch a test with five or more vehicles later this year. Roger Martin, Unicell's chairman, admits current prices for batteries and electric motors make the Quicksider expensive, but he believes that as increased research and production bring prices down, fully electric vehicles will soon be able to pay their own way.



Xero Flor Canada Ltd.

If you think there is nothing new under the sun, take a look at Xero Flor. This Mississauga company sells unique green-roof packages to owners of commercial, industrial and residential buildings. Xero Flor's technology, developed in Germany and adapted for Canadian climates, involves covering rooftops with a shallow layer of mineral substrate that nurtures a self-sustaining ecosystem of low-growth, drought-resistant plants, or with deeper systems using a variety of perennials and grasses. The advantages of a green roof include added insulation as the green roof absorbs much of the sun's heat; storm water retention and filtering; and reduced stress on roof membranes, which leads to fewer water leaks and longer lifespans. And no, you never have to mow the roof.



Nedco Products

Nedco Products of Newmarket has reinvented one of society's oldest tools: the rain barrel. Produced from recycled food barrels, Nedco's Rain Collector system diverts rainwater from downspouts into one or more 60-gallon drums. A hose for watering the garden can be hooked up to an all-weather plastic spigot, reducing municipal water use and water bills. Custom-designed valves keep the water flowing and divert overflow storm water back to the downspout, while the barrel's sealed top prevents infestation by egg-laying mosquitoes. As the price of municipal water continues to rise, Nedco expects that more homeowners will adopt the harvesting of rain in response to the growing need for water conservation.



Thru-way Trailers

BladeMaster isn't the latest Hollywood action movie; it is an innovative transportation solution from Thru-way Trailers. The Milton-based manufacturer of custom trailers created the BladeMaster to transport long, cumbersome wind-turbine blades. The trailer itself is 16 metres long and can extend to 39 metres to cradle the biggest blades. What makes it easier, safer and more cost-effective than conventional trailers is the microprocessor-controlled Active Steering Metrics system, which helps the trailer negotiate tight corners. That means contractors can use more direct routes, with fewer stops and fewer support vehicles, saving time and money. Interest has come from across North America; one customer even ordered two units that extend to 43 metres because turbine blades keep getting bigger.



MDS Nordion

Ottawa-based MDS Nordion is not just a world leader in the advanced sectors of molecular and nuclear medicine. The provider of innovative technologies for medical imaging, target cancer treatments and medical device sterilization is also a leader in protecting the environment. Its winning environmental programs have earned the company several national awards for its "lean" approaches to energy use, including lighting modifications that produced an 18 per cent decrease in electricity consumption and an overhaul of its insulation, heating and air-conditioning systems that cuts natural gas consumption by 15 per cent. In 2006, MDS Nordion's waste-reduction and recycling program diverted 72 per cent of its waste from landfill.



6N Silicon Inc.

Founded in 2006, Vaughan-based 6N Silicon has developed an inexpensive and innovative method to produce purified solar-grade silicon that could make the company the solution to the need for abundant, low-cost material for the growing solar-energy industry. Production began last October at its new 2,000 tonne per year production facility, initially creating 84 new jobs, thanks in part to support from Ontario's Next Generation of Jobs Fund. 6N Silicon's production process, devised by founder Scott Nichol, uses less energy, floor space and capital than conventional processes. It could help relieve the shortage of feedstock material to solar cell producers that has been slowing the growth of the photovoltaic sector.



PowerWatch Inc.

Knowledge is power: less power, that is. When consumers can actually see how much electricity they save by turning off computers or installing compact fluorescent bulbs, they are more likely to become conservation-conscious throughout the house. That is the experience of PowerWatch, an Oakville company that produces real-time energy-monitoring systems for home and commercial use. PowerWatch claims its customers quickly cut their power bills by 10 per cent to 20 per cent, savings that can add up to \$400 a year. The idea for the system came to Janeen Stodulski, an Oakville accountant, during the blackout of August 2003. If everybody used a little less power, she figured, there would be less stress on the system and more security for everyone.



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CEO PERSPECTIVES

The Leading Growth Firm Series researches and promotes the effective management practices of CEOs, presidents and owners of Ontario's innovative, high-performance firms.

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