

# THE RESULTS OF THE INSTITUTE FOR ENTERPRISE EDUCATION'S SURVEY OF CANADA'S FASTEST GROWING COMPANIES

as determined by Profit magazine study  
40 respondents

1.) Please give a brief history of your involvement with the business (provide dates of significant events.)

<b>a) Did you</b>		
inherit	0	0.0%
purchase	3	7.5%
start this enterprise	30	75.0%
none of the above	5	12.5%
combination of start & purchase	2	5.0%

<b>b) Have you been hired to manage this enterprise?</b>		
Yes	10	25.0%
No	30	75.0%

Most popular years for starting an enterprise:

- 1987 23.34%
- 1986 16.66%
- 1988 16.66%
- 1981 10.00%
- 1989 10.00%
- 1982 6.70%
- 1983 3.30%
- 1984 3.30%
- 1992 3.30%

**Chart of Significant Dates:**

Year	Start Ups	%	Purchase	%	None of the above	%	Combo Start/ Purchase	%
1981	3	10.00	0					
1982	2	6.67	0					
1983	1	3.33	1	2.5%			''''	
1984	1	3.33	0					
1985	2	6.67	0					
1986	5	16.67	0					
1987	7	23.33	0					
1988	5	16.67	1	2.5%				
1989	3	10.00	1	2.5%			2	5.0%
1990	0	0.00	0					
1991	0	0.00	0					
1992	1	3.33	0					
1993	0	0.00	0		3	7.5%		
1994	0	0.00	0		2	5.0%		
	30.00		3.00		5.00		2.00	

**2.a) How has this enterprise changed while in your hands?**

● <b>size</b>		
smaller	1	2.5%
same as	0	0.0%
larger	3	7.5%
significantly larger	75	75.0%

● <b>significant product development</b>
have our own fleet; logistics consulting; strategic stocking units
consulting services: Lotus Notes; SAP
specialty fabrics used in ballistics and fire protection
visual Banker
Starquote NG (pc windows based product); new features: prochart, business edge, Dow Jones scrolling headlines network enhancements & more
leather nesting; truss projection
V60 surveillance camera & V70 surveillance cameras many dp 1000; LimsLink
dragon's lair; space age
database & call central technology
chemical coatings systems & products
single gate powder scale loss-in-weight grain scale
franchise system; new cartridge type; new re-use methods
fulcrum search server (software product)
added services for customers
LTL consolidation, warehousing and distribution
over 100 categories of products having more than 300 SKU's
Services not products, many unique services developed

<b>● significant product development</b>
product line expansion
Private label and controlled private label horse health care and harness products
data acc. furniture
Container service/recycling
Group personal line commercial programs - insurance
section repair processes
software products to 10 million
commercial fields
services

<b>● Sales through products introduced in the last 2 years:</b>		
greater	34	85.0%
same as	3	7.5%
lesser	0	0.0%
not applicable	3	7.5%

<b>● Sales through exports:</b>		
greater	26.0	65.0%
same as	2.5	2.5%
lesser	0.0	0.0%
not applicable	13.0	32.5%

● <b>Profitability:</b>		
greater	30	75.0%
same as	7	17.5%
lesser	3	7.5%

● <b>Source of personal satisfaction:</b>		
much greater	24	60.0%
greater	9	22.5%
same as	4	10.0%
lesser	3	7.5%

**2b) What did you envision that this business could become when you got involved with it?**

- < best supplier in North America
- < profitable computer software retailer
- < profitable, state of the art in our field
- < \$100 million in sales in 5 years
- < a significant provider of solutions to the financial services industry
- < small, manageable yet high quality - high growth company
- < start-up tech firm - medium growth
- < a leader in security cameras for niche markets
- < did not envision what it could become
- < Canada wide Sales
- < small corporation - leader in specialized field
- < comfortable living; chance for great success
- < the highest quality producer of goods and services in our industry
- < about 50% of what it is today
- < no
- < world wide supplier to grain processing industry
- < national supplier to ROB 1000 companies of laser support and supplier
- < small software company with less than 25 employees
- < much smaller and more localized than it currently is
- < small consulting firm
- < that it would be short term
- < we are on target
- < a leader in the field

- < services not products; many unique services developed
- < a 12-person, million to 2 million/year operation
- < a much more larger and more profitable enterprise
- < self-supporting
- < # 1 in Canada and # 2 in the USA Mail order
- < only intended to stay in business 2 - 3 years
- < largest in our market
- < significant presence as a private competitor
- < a medium-size travel agency
- < a successful insurance brokerage
- < solid competitor in the service business
- < bare minimum growth to survive
- < best supplier of Point of Sale in Canada
- < wasn't sure objective was to be
- < 25 % growth in production
- < intermediate and eventually senior producer

● <b>Has the vision changed?</b>		
Yes	22	55.0%
No	18	45.0%

**If yes, how?**

- < much greater involvement in consulting services
- < more crystallized - will be a company in excess of \$100 million/year in the next 5 years
- < new global player with 100% and growth expectations
- < gotten larger
- < international
- < same goals but on a much larger scale
- < much larger
- < world mandate
- < broader market
- < could become international
- < refined and enlarged
- < the potential in this field is much greater and more complicated than expected
- < same idea on a grandeur scale
- < that there is tremendous growth potential

● <b>Has it been realized?</b>		
Yes	27.0	68.5%

● <b>Has it been realized?</b>		
No	10.0	25.0%
Partially	3.0	7.5%

● **What now is your vision for the future of this business and your role in it?**

- < maturation and education of the market; to help our people be the best they can be both corporately and personally
- < more and more emphasis on value-added side of business - my role is management
- < progress-continue to modernize and be imaginative
- < become development are of large, international sales-oriented partner - role to develop relationship
- < grow the company through internal development and external purchase of products and services for the financial services industry
- < want growth to continue but want my role to be less significant
- < remain as CEO-growth through sales plus strategic acquisitions - \$90 million in 3 years
- < leading supplier of surveillance systems for city transit business
- < get even larger
- < making it automatic
- < continue to grow as long as we continue being profitable
- < grow business/merger/buy out/IPO in next 3 years - my role much more managerial less hands-on
- < expansion of this formula for success into the US market; my role: coach and cheerleader
- < further expansion - USA - very active
- < expand - international distribution
- < LOB - chairman; system & TS & products & telecom service; entertainment, sports
- < world wide supplier to several powder industries
- < international expansion
- < more sophisticated technology, underlying simple to use value added applications
- < the company is a bona fide "public" service business and should go "public"
- < maintain present course
- < larger satellite offices, more involved with future planning
- < keep growing at 30-40% per year for the next 5 years
- < to be THE leader, worldwide
- < Obtain outside investment to grow CANADA wide
- < To make the organization more efficient, more profitable, and more

- < satisfying
- < Further growth through export to Europe, back seat role.
- < My role same/less active - now developing a management team.
- < continue to operate as is or SOAR
- < Sell out - continue to manage
- < High-tech capital equipment used for efficiently processed recyclable from residual wastes
- < As big as we can get with new innovative ideas without losing the personal touch
- < We intend to insure ALL Albertans (GROWTH)
- < To increase growth even further and to take the company to where I thought was never possible
- < To grow to \$ 50 million company in the next 5 years, I will lead the management team as chairman
- < As long as the company and people continue to grow. I'm interested in running it. Still want to be the best networking company in our province.
- < Continue to demonstrate per share growth in cash flow and earnings

**3. a) *What significant developmental experiences in your background most prepared you for your role as leader in this organization?***

- < Seven habits of highly successful people; principle centred leadership
- < my ability to manage more people which came from owning and operating several other small businesses
- < observation of family members as they worked; formal education
- < managing a software services company
- < president of the Canadian organization of multinational technology companies: Prime Computer & Bull HN Information Systems
- < business education (university) as well as practical experience in less efficient environment
- < marketing experience (multinational); turnaround at premium S/W coy
- < financial & market background
- < background as a psychologist
- < large variety of entrepreneurial positions
- < sales and marketing; BSc & MSc
- < none - always entrepreneurial
- < 10 years of training with the naval reserve - general arts - post secondary education
- < background was in sales and advertising - helped to market
- < systems sales (information processing)
- < business failure in '79



- < PhD in physics and MBA program
- < education; experience as sales rep - Xerox company, etc.;
- < manager - Bell & Howell; experience with smaller firm - N.T.I.
- < sales and marketing high technology products; working for a company that failed (failure is part of the learning process)
- < 25 years in technology and sales and upper management in the Canadian plastics industry
- < a variety of supervisory, junior management, and middle management roles in a growing company
- < work experience and education
- < mentor
- < this question strains my brain - need time to think about it (no easy answer)
- < previous small business/entrepreneurship experience
- < independent attitude
- < 25 years in Food Industry - major private label supplier to Loblaw's - David Nichol - 20 years Chairman Public Company. Early years with the Canadian Armed Forces
- < 5 years university and 13 years as a high school teacher -- worked in trades while at university
- < Financial knowledge - corporate structuring - industry adaptability - customer priority
- < Many personal and job experiences as someone on the consumer end and employee end
- < Marketing experiences in other industries worked extremely well in the general insurance industry which is very resistive to change of any sort.
- < University education, the discipline of self-control
- < Consulting and building and selling other businesses
- < Being hired to save a business from bankruptcy
- < Learning from the bottom and within someone else's business
- < management of exploration function at this company and exposure to successful management style at a previous employer

**3b) What do you consider the single most important factor that contributes to your success in this business?**

- < Strong direction and integrity
- < Management skills and ability to control costs
- < Willing to recognize that there are areas in which I need expert help and go and get that help
- < Vision
- < My ability to recognize important contributions to the organization and to do new contributions, where necessary, to create a team environment
- < Focus (product and market)
- < Innovative direct marketing strategies
- < Client relationships and reputation - conceptual or soft sales approach
- < Adaptability to change and strong customer service focus
- < Drive
- < Innovative ideas
- < Technical skills/right place-right time/common sense approach
- < integrity and creativity
- < Unique concept
- < Persistence
- < Bold Caution
- < Hard work and luck
- < determination
- < innovative product development
- < bulldog determination
- < integrity
- < industry experience
- < administrative skills
- < rapid decision-making
- < god looks - no, smart - no, business sense - none, aggressive - YES, Opportunistic - YES, perseverance - YES, sexy - yes
- < persistence
- < product and customer loyalty
- < I "LOVE" what I do - it's not work
- < Patience and perseverance
- < service
- < detailed knowledge of industry operations and industry niches, what competitors are doing
- < honesty, knowledge, service orientation, little competition that's honourable
- < No insurance background to inhibit improving the service/delivery system to the client
- < customer service
- < staying focussed on the issues I have decided were important

- < Having a business partner with common objectives but different approaches
- < Value added
- < low cost structure with good exploratory drilling success

**3c) In your mind what is the single most important factor that is responsible for your decision to enter this business?**

- < Self-employment
- < Opportunity -- I had no plan to enter this business
- < Importance of emerging PC technology
- < The opportunity to grow a small Canadian company into a significant global organization
- < Opportunity to build dynamic organization
- < Challenge
- < A fascination with financial markets
- < Something interesting to do (interest/challenge)
- < Luck
- < Partner problems in previous business
- < Timing
- < Integrity
- < Independence - to work for myself
- < Unemployment
- < "obsession" with business
- < Seeing a niche market opportunity
- < Fit with background, potential of growth
- < Failure of the company I was working for
- < Tremendous market need
- < Entrepreneurial spirit
- < Long term financial security
- < Seize the opportunity in a niche market
- < Support of others (future colleagues)
- < Myself and my partner have three the energy of normal people and found ourselves suppressed and stagnated at our previous employer
- < Desire to offer alternatives to mainstream food products
- < Independence
- < It's a virgin and under-developed industry that is hard to get into and hard to be knocked out of.
- < Desire to try a NEW corporation and be my own boss and Disillusioned with education system
- < Family history in this business
- < Private corporation serviceability and value vs Multi-national public companies
- < I had to support my family and at the time it was what I knew best

- < without the major investment -- no inventory
- < The opportunity for ground floor entry in an industry where traditional methods had to be examined and changed.
- < Satisfaction in knowing I could control my own future and that of my immediate family
- < The opportunity technology married to retail presented
- < Challenge
- < freedom
- < fascinating business levels

**4) At the present time what percentage of your sales is based on exports?**

Less than 10 %	19	47.50 %
10 - 25 %	6	15.0 %
25 - 50 %	3	7.5 %
50 - 75 %	3	7.5 %
75 % +	9	22.5 %

**Five years from now what do you estimate your sales to be from exports?**

Less than 10 %	11	27.5 %
10 - 25 %	4	10.0 %
25 - 50 %	8	20 %
50 - 75 %	4	10 %
75 % +	13	32.5 %

**5.) Given the changing nature of the Global Economy, what do you see as the key issues facing your organization?**

<b>Rank Order : 1 = most important ; 9 = least important</b>		
1	PEOPLE WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION	shortage of skilled developers; Labour intensive and highly skilled; government has given our population a poor work ethic; lack of quality people
2	INCREASE IN GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS	Japanese yen; Hollywood now in our business
3	PRODUCTIVITY ISSUES	Always important; technology change and cost
4	GOVERNMENT TAXATION	too high, expensive; Less money to reinvest; they don't understand business; hurts
5	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	Packaging issues
6	GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS	Foreign government regulations; costly
7	GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS	R & D credits; Always - like grants; uneven level playing fields
8	OTHER ISSUES	doing business internationally; industry technology: tough for a small company to keep up with; Financial Institutional support; Government debt and attitude towards it.
9	SOCIETAL ISSUES	age wave; work habits changes

**Comments:**

You lined them up in our order of importance -- you must understand how universal the problems and opportunities are!

Detailed knowledge of financial institutional for capital support

Business/profit is a "dirty word" in Canada - especially Ontario.

**6.) *Keeping in mind the employees needs for your enterprise, which of these would you rank as most important.***

Attitude	32	80%
Knowledge	5	5%
Skills	3	3%

**Comments:**

All very important.

**7.) *If you were to hire new employees for your organization, what would your expectations be in each of the three areas: Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills.***

**Attitudes:**

1. Motivated (50% surveyed ranked this as number 1)
2. Shows Initiative
3. Demonstrates Responsibility
4. Determined/Persevering
5. Seeks opportunity
6. Empathetic and Understanding of others
7. Confident
8. Enjoys change
9. Other

**Knowledge:**

1. Knowledge of subject (42 % surveyed ranked this as #1)
2. How to find and use information (40% surveyed ranked this as #1)
3. How to Run projects (15 % surveyed ranked this as #1)
4. Business/economic knowledge (2.5% surveyed ranked this as #1)
5. Transferring skills to other parts of organization
6. Other

**Skills:**

1. Communications/interpersonal (32.5% surveyed ranked this as #1)
2. Problem Solving (25% surveyed ranked this as #1)
3. Creative (20% surveyed ranked this as #1)
4. Teamwork (17.5% surveyed ranked this as #1)
5. Literacy
6. Planning
7. Negotiating
8. Numeracy
9. Other

**Comments:** Much of this depends on the job. eg. programming vs custom service.  
 Literacy and Numeracy are a given  
 The school system is having a problem teaching "BASIC" numeracy and literacy skills to potential lower level blue collar workers. It's scary to see how many young workers cannot functionally read and write, forget SPELLING!  
 Literacy and Numeracy area a given in our industry

**8. *Keeping in mind the growth of your enterprise, and your contribution to its success, which of these three would you rank as most important (rank order from 1 as most important to 3 as least important)***

Attitude	77.5% surveyed ranked this #1
Knowledge	17.5% surveyed ranked this as #1
Skills	5% surveyed ranked this as #1

**Most important to your enterprise growth and success:**

	1	2	3
attitude	31	4	5
knowledge	7	17	16
skills	2	21	17

**9.) Given the critical importance of ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE, and SKILLS in today's rapidly changing Global Environment, list which of the three above have contributed most to the success of your enterprise.**

Attitudes	77% surveyed this was #1
Knowledge	20% surveyed ranked this #1
Skills	7.5% ranked this #1

	rank 1	2	3
attitude	31	4	5
knowledge	8	20	12
skills	3	17	20

**Comments for this question:**

**Attitude:**

be willing to change, adapt, have empathy  
 Insistence that there is a way to overcome obstacles  
 Customer needs and priority issues  
 Believing in your plan  
 Motivation, determined, opportunistic, flexibility

**Knowledge:**

willing to learn, we will teach  
 where to find people with necessary technical financial knowledge  
 Knowing competitor's moves  
 Awareness of your plan and your environment, competitors, and surrounding  
 Project management, technology information

**Skills:**

have the basics, literacy, mechanical  
 Persuasiveness, problem-solving  
 Equipment adaptability  
 Strategic and Tactical skills  
 Negotiating and communications



**Additional Comments:**

- < All of these skills are necessary -- we wouldn't hire people unless they were well-round in all areas. Also, our programmers are more knowledge oriented, our artists are more skill oriented. We expect all people to be motivated. When we order these categories we would prefer to rank them 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 -- rather than 1,2,3.
- < We are recognized for all of these, they are what have set us apart.

**9.b) What have you been thinking and obsessing about lately?**

- < Completing the product line, managing rapid growth
- < Getting our newest consulting group (SAP) up and running, profitably
- < Trying to bring about more of a team approach to the total operation
- < Supporting an international business
- < The next solution we will provide and the next company we will purchase
- < Corporate culture change; internationalism
- < Additional financing
- < Identifying the right economies of scale for a small company such as ours
- < Growth
- < How difficult it is to make a profit in this country - taxes, regulations, roadblocks
- < Cash flow, product late for the market
- < My challenges (personal) in moving from entrepreneur to professional member and lack of government accountability
- < How to continue expansion and growth
- < Finance
- < The entertainment industry, How do I own TSN and Blue Jays
- < New product and market opportunities
- < Profitability - sales growth, cost control, cashflow
- < Dramatic change in software pricing driver by the Internet
- < Our next couple of projects we are undertaking
- < Concern for keeping an entrepreneurial spirit in a medium sized growing company
- < That we have reached our limits with current start
- < I never get obsess - What I think is to establish a work pattern that does not demand on individuals but on team work
- < Finding good people, productivity improvement; improving growth, innovation
- < How NOT to have to deal with human resources issues
- < How to make this company profitable

- < Continued growth
- < Maintaining company during business slowdown
- < Selling out
- < Reducing waste to landfill and increase recyclable for markets providing revenue
- < Getting more employees - motivated, creative and street smart - scam companies - ie Trawchet
- < Building more efficiency into each area of our operation
- < How my three children will actually like or want to work with me
- < Obtaining the capital to support continued growth- moving my business from, Toronto to USA
- < Our next growth challenge
- < to remain profitable in highly competitive markets
- < lowering cost structure

### **9.c) What impact would this have on you or your enterprise?**

- < Essential for the long term health of the company
- < Could double our net profit within 1 year
- < This is the way to run a company -- ALL involved in decision making and the responsibility
- < Allow it to grow to its full potential
- < Continue to grow at a rate in excess of 20% per year
- < Uncertainty -- more change
- < Fund marketing endeavour and inventory
- < Use our resources at capacity and increase profitability
- < Much
- < Contemplating leaving
- < Need to borrow form bank, wasted marketing spend
- < As a better lesson, my company can continue to maximize its potential, an accountable government will foster a good economic climate
- < Keeps myself and staff motivated
- < Growth and stability
- < Mix it up, any short term but key with US partners on long term
- < Growth
- < Increase rate of growth
- < Shift in software products to value added services
- < 50% expansion
- < Personal change on increase
- < More free time for me and organization runs smooth
- < To use others on the most important issues (delegate? group decision making)
- < If we can off-load mundane issues like M.R., ADMIN., etc. we

- could concentrate on what we do best -- business development and therefore making money and growing this company.
- < Reduce stress, relieve likelihood of failure
- < To remain profitable during downsizing is critical to welfare of company
- < Increase Growth
- < Meet the 3 R's, government agenda - 50% reduction by Year 2000 from all generator sources
- < Growth \$\$\$\$
- < Improved customer service resulting in increased sales and profitability
- < If they don't, will be "GAME OVER"; I could actually think of stopping. (wondering if the children will work or want to work with the respondent.) (is there someone to take over)
- < Next stage for all staff's careers. Significant.
- < growth
- < continued profitability