

FINANCIAL



**IGM posts \$185.3m profit in Q1, up 15.3%**

TORONTO ♦ Mutual fund company IGM Financial Inc. earned a profit of \$185.3 million in its latest first quarter, up 15.3 per cent from a year earlier.

"For the last three years, we've seen strong Canadian equity markets, which has served to improve investor confidence, adviser productivity and mutual fund sales and asset levels," said Murray Taylor, left, co-president and co-CEO.

The Canadian Press

COMPUTERS



**New Dell customer centre triples staff to 1,500**

OTTAWA ♦ Computer maker Dell Inc. is adding 1,000 jobs at its newly opened Ottawa office, tripling the projected workforce to 1,500. It's one of several customer centres the Texas-based company has around the world.

The Ottawa workforce will include about 150 sales and sales support people focused on the federal government and French-speaking customers in Quebec and across Canada.

The Canadian Press

BEVERAGES



**PepsiCo alters drink to settle copycat suit**

NEW YORK ♦ PepsiCo Inc. has agreed to change the look of its SoBe Life Water drink to settle a lawsuit.

Energy Brands, which does business as Glaceau, sued PepsiCo saying the look of the SoBe Life Water product was vastly similar to its own Vitaminwater brand. It accused the giant firm of launching its product only after first trying to acquire the Vitaminwater brand.

The Associated Press

**SPECTICKER... FOOD FIGHT. MEAT PACKERS WAGE WAR WITH THE 10-MINUTE POT ROAST. GO 15**

**BEST PRACTICES** ||| Behind the scenes of a successful local business

**AN INVENTOR WITH EDGE**



PAUL HOURIGAN, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR  
Keith Green says Q-File is a software system that manages workflow for small and medium businesses.

*Keith Green had the smarts to create unique software*

BY MEREDITH MacLEOD

Keith Green is that rare combination of inventor and businessman.

His mind constantly overflows with ideas and he's able to translate them into marketable concepts. That's the inventor side. The business side knows when to cut and run when an idea won't work or has run its course.

Many a bankrupt inventor can't say the same. Green's latest venture is MasterMind Data Corp., a software company that designed Q-File, a complete workflow management system for small and medium businesses. The idea is that in one software package, the company's business is conducted from the order coming in to the shipment going out.

He says the big guys have had comprehensive operational software for years. It's built in-house and customized to how workflow moves through a company. Green discovered that small operators have had to rely on a mishmash of programs, many of which don't talk well to one another.

"I was doing consulting work with small businesses and I found they were struggling for years with having all their information in several different baskets like Word, Excel or having to ask several different people," said Green, who has an office in his hometown of Dundas, along with a Toronto location. There are two programmers, a salesperson and two partners in the business.

"I saw a unique market in providing small to medium businesses with an information system that could keep everything in one place."

He boasts that a business owner or supervisor can check on the status of any order or project at any stage. It stores customer information that can be easily sorted in all kinds of ways.

"One push of a button will tell you how much money is stuck in the queue. That helps an owner understand where he needs to spend some time and attention."

Another mouse click and an owner can print out every document associated with a particular job or order. It's the electronic equivalent of pulling a file folder out of a metal drawer. Setting up a queue of work and managing documents are the two keys to Q-File, says Green. The software is built on the popular FileMaker platform.

Q-File is set up with desktop "file folders" that represent various operations. Green likens it to the old paper-based system of leaving file folders in trays on office doors. In the electronic case, as work flows through the system, it is automatic-

ly passed onto the next employee in the queue.

Green says about 80 per cent of the software is ready for any business, the rest is customized. It works with Windows, Mac and Linux platforms and is compatible with the web and wireless handheld devices. The software then hands its information over to bookkeeping software like Quickbooks or Simply Accounting.

The software is used locally by Hamilton Bulldogs, Jan Gelderman Landscaping, the Olympic Banquet Centre and Dairy Queen Canada.

Green anticipates his business will more than double this year. Dairy Queen uses Q-File, along with another software system developed for the company by MasterMind. Made to Measure is a web-based package that allows the company's 700-plus Canadian franchisees to build their own direct mail promotional material.

Before, the franchisees decided what they wanted to feature and phoned it into headquarters. They wouldn't know what the mailers looked like until they got them along with their customers.

Green landed the lucrative Dairy Queen account after demonstrating Q-File to a Dundas computer club. The graphics manager for Dairy Queen was there and soon Green was pitching his software to company executives.

The fascinating thing is that no two businesses are the same.

KEITH GREEN

It's just one example where networking has paid off. He's a long-time member of a local business executive network, a member of the Chamber of Commerce and a dedicated Rotarian. Green grew up in Dundas and after leaving Highland Secondary in 1974 joined his father's business, Dundas Lock and Key.

But Green quickly found retail wasn't for him. Soaring property crime rates convinced the young Green that people wanted more than locks and keys. He started an alarm division that grossed \$8,000 in 1974 and brought in \$500,000 when Green sold it in 1986.

He went on to electronic temperature control before getting into hairstyling. Green, whose wife Christine owned a salon, developed Hairvisions. For \$35, a black and white photo of a customer was taken that was blended with hundreds of haircuts stored in a database. The system was in 10 locations but Green shut it down when colour arrived because it would have been too expensive to shift.

"It wasn't going any further. I saw that it had had its day."

His volunteer work with a Rotary cable auction led Green to buy software to track the auction items and build newspaper ads. Soon he was adapting the stock software to help medical researchers track their statistics and helping a friend develop software for a booming computer sales call centre.

He got a business partner, Dylan Lyall, and the pair worked to build software for Lyall's father's lighting business in Toronto. Q-File was born.

He says the key to the software is that it can be totally adapted to how a business operates.

MasterMind staff spend three or four days immersed in a company's operations, interviewing employees, analysing workflow and studying where communication works and where it doesn't.

"The fascinating thing is that no two businesses are the same. I could go to five landscapers and they all do it differently!"

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**RECOGNIZE THAT YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL ALONE**

**Biggest challenge:**

"Getting financing as an entrepreneur and managing cash flow. When you start a new business, it usually takes at least one to two years before you start making a profit."

**Biggest surprise:**

"Inventing new, innovative ways to provide solutions for your clients and having them actually enjoy using the software."

**Best decision:**

"Hiring brilliant people. You can't do it all alone. I've been able to hire people with complementary skill sets to my own. A great team makes all the difference."

**Worst decision:**

"As an entrepreneur thinking I could do it all myself and not recognizing soon enough that I needed help bringing the product to market. As soon as I realized this, I immediately hired staff with the required skill sets and haven't looked back."

**Best advice given:**

"To network and be with people, which has led me to make wonderful friends and valuable business contacts."

**Best advice to give:**

"Be honest and upfront with your clients at all times. It is so

important. Lack of trust can ruin a partnership. The partnership between MasterMind and its clients is based on mutual trust."

**Learn the most:**

"From building and developing a company from an idea. As an entrepreneur, each day is a totally new learning experience."

**Secret to success:**

"You have to be able to recognize the slightest shift in consumer demand and anticipate the consequences. You owe it to yourself, your team and your clients to stay ahead of the curve."

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