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### **Where Are They Now? FundaMetal Designs Inc.**

Solving some of life's little problems can be rewarding. That's what FundaMetal Designs Inc. is discovering. FundaMetal won a second-place prize in the New Ventures British Columbia 2001 competition.

The Port Coquitlam-based start-up entered the NVBC 2001 competition last year with a business idea that was in its very early prototype stage - a small hydraulic device designed to level wobbly tables. Today, they have a finished product, Table Shox, four full-time staff, six part-time staff running a small manufacturing operation in Port Coquitlam, 10 distributors across North America and revenues into the six figures. Their initial market is restaurants and hotels but already, the company is broadening its market by adapting Table Shox to work on appliances such as washing machines.

During the NVBC competition, company president Evian Macmillan and his partner, inventor Ian MacDonald, really hustled. By competition's end, they had a completely finished, working product and had already attended a U.S. trade show where they encountered interest in their product from 37 countries.

"It's a very simple idea," says Macmillan. "It's based on hydraulics, with oil inside. It's just like a little shock absorber. The weight of the table compresses or extends it."

Participating in NVBC was a valuable exercise, says Macmillan. "Because there were different stages in the competition, we had to keep up with those," he explains. "We felt we had a better chance at winning if we had a product that was working and proven. It was teamwork for all of us, with deadlines and good pressure."

Macmillan says the best aspect of the competition was presenting his team's business idea before a panel of six judges. "They were relentless," he says. "They drilled us left and right and tested us. It was a great experience. We knew that for prospective investors, we'd have to get our financing and accounting in order and make sure we had a good financial plan."

FundaMetal's second-prize package was \$15,000 cash and \$5,000 in kind. Macmillan has made the most of it. He spent the \$15,000 on a hydraulic press for manufacturing assembly and on marketing. He obtained \$2,000 worth of free legal documents from competition sponsor Campney & Murphy, a Vancouver legal firm that specializes in technology start-ups. And he's expanding on his marketing plan with \$3,000 worth of assistance from NVBC sponsor TAP Ventures, Inc., a Vancouver media company. An unexpected bonus was the media attention his firm received during the competition. "We've had a number of customers who heard about us through NVBC," he says, mentioning a television spot that resulted in many new customers.

FundaMetal continues to design simple new products, recently developing a line of metal products called 'FlatFold' that address the high costs of shipping. So far, they've designed a folding metal wine rack in two different styles and a CD rack. "The innovation is that these items ship completely flat," says Macmillan. After purchase, the

end-user simply folds the item into its final shape. He adds, “Our ability to ship 25 or 50 wine racks in a small box is very simple for retailers.”

For more information about this year’s TELUS New Ventures British Columbia competition, or to register, visit [www.newventuresbc.com](http://www.newventuresbc.com)

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**CONTACT:** Deborah Kirby, TELUS New Ventures British Columbia, 604-268-7978  
Evian Macmillan, FundaMetal, 604-941-9961