

2001 Competitors Where Are They Now?

Air Games Wireless Inc.

Air Games Wireless, Inc., winner of the 2001 competition, has executed its business plan formulated during the competition and is no longer in start-up mode.

Established by three young entrepreneurs, the company creates wireless games that can be played on wireless devices such as cellular phones and personal digital assistants.

Their business plan called for them to initially license their games to mobile telecom carriers and then begin distributing other creators' games. Air Games derives its income from a small fee per minute of play.

Today, the company distributes over 100 wireless games to almost 40 wireless telecom carriers around the world. Fifty percent of their product mix represents 20 other companies' games, which they distribute over their network. "In 2002, we generated 100 million minutes of play," says company president Frederik Ghahramani. "We now have 590,000 active subscribers and we continue to see double digit growth on most channels." He expects 2003 to be a very good year, with a dramatic increase in the adoption of Air Games' products worldwide.

Fundamental Designs Inc.

Second-place winner, Fundamental Designs Inc., entered the competition with a prototype for self-adjusting hydraulic glides that could automatically level wobbly tables.

Today, Table Shox are manufactured in China and distributed through 110 dealers in North America, with good dealer interest appearing in Europe and Australia.

In November last year, at the prestigious International Hotel/Motel and Restaurant Show in New York City, Table Shox was chosen Best New Product for 2002. Recently, Fundamental signed a deal with a large U.S. manufacturer, which will install Table Shox on all of its tables.

“We’re on track to double last year’s sales,” says company president Evian MacMillan, who will attend 20 tradeshows this year with assistance from Export Development Canada’s Program for Export Market Development (PEMD). The Port Coquitlam company now has five full-time employees and up to 10 part-time employees.

Airzone Recreation Inc.

Competition finalist AirZone Recreation Inc. of Kelowna has just sold the first container load of its unique, inflatable tents to a firm in Norway.

Unlike other tents that use aluminum or shock-corded fiberglass poles for support, the Airzone tent uses durable, pneumatic tube supports that self-erect in as little as seven seconds using a carbon dioxide cartridge or in less than one minute using a hand pump.

Airzone has experienced a lot of turbulence while bringing its tent into production and to market. Financing has been difficult and a deal with a Chinese manufacturer fell through, leaving the family-run company scrambling to find another manufacturer, this time in Bangladesh. Still, Airzone vice-president Marc Turcot is hoping to have the first tents delivered in July this year.

The tent has attracted interest from retailers, distributors and military organizations around the world. Consumer interest in the tents has been high too – countless editorials in consumer magazines, coupled with the tents featured on U.S. television shows such as The Price is Right, have already garnered more than 1,000 prepaid on-line orders. It has also inspired interest from manufacturers of outdoor recreational vehicles, which would like to incorporate the tent into their marketing plans.

“We hope next year we’ll be enroute to becoming a dominant force in the tenting market,” says Turcot. “Our hopes are to open another door to people who haven’t camped before because of the difficulty associated with erecting conventional tents.”

Interestingly, the CO2 inflator technology Airzone created to inflate its tent supports has spawned a new, online company for the Turcot family – Inflation Zone (<http://www.inflationzone.com>). “The inflator can serve as an emergency low-pressure device for flat tires and belly boats,” says Turcot. “And carpenters don’t have to drag

around air compressors and hoses anymore for their brad nailers – they can just hang our inflator and a bottle of CO2 on their belt and use it to blast out 4,000 nails.” The computer industry, he says, can use the inflator, coupled with their newly designed needle nozzle, to clean up to 80 computers at a time.

“The CO2 cartridges were already available before we developed our tent,” explains Turcot, “but nobody had developed a way to harness that air power in large volumes from a small package. We developed the neck and the trigger grip dispenser that attaches to the cartridge. Now, we’ve modified that design and have created other fittings specifically adapted to a variety of new uses.”

Turcot is now working to establish a small manufacturing facility in Kelowna to produce the air support technology for the tent. He has approached the Okanagan Capital Fund (VCC) Inc. of Kelowna for potential funding and assistance with expansion. The Okanagan Capital Fund is a venture capital corporation approved by the provincial government to raise up to \$5 million to assist high growth emerging and expanding businesses in the Okanagan.

“We’re really excited about that possibility,” says Turcot. He says the company is developing further new products.