

## 5 THINGS TO SUCCEED

Joel Schlessinger looks at five must-dos to help you achieve small-business success.

### 1. A little soul searching

The first step is to have a clear idea of why you want to start a small business. While that sounds elementary, Gord Sawatzky of the Business Link, which supports Alberta entrepreneurs, says people want to start businesses for a lot of reasons, but not all of them are necessarily good ones. "Some people start businesses for necessity because they need the money. Others start it for a lifestyle, thinking it'd be pretty nice to not have a boss." But these shouldn't be the primary drivers. Perhaps the best reason for launching a small business is that it is your passion, because it's that fire in your belly that will help you overcome the challenges you'll likely face.

### 2. Research, research, research

Is there a market for your idea? You need to do some homework. "This is about determining the feasibility of your idea," he says. "Some people look around and find a problem that a lot of people share and then try to find a product or service that solves that problem." It also helps to keep abreast of trends so you can find a niche in the market.

### 3. Plan for success

All that aforementioned research will be useful when you write a business plan, which is essential. "A business plan is really a road map to your business and helps you navigate the startup process." Furthermore, if you need money from investors — like a bank loan — they're not going to hand over any money unless you've got a plan that shows them how you're going to make money to pay them back.



Twin brothers Jon, front, and Marv Gurman sit in their Ferrari in the new brand colour of Yeh! Yogourt. They plan to open more than 100 stores in China in the next three years. *PIERRE OBENDRAUF/MONTREAL GAZETTE*

# Montreal yogurt kings 'painting world pink'

Gurman twins taking Yeh! global with expansion into Lebanon, China

**PAUL DELEAN**  
MONTREAL GAZETTE

Montreal twins Jon and Marv Gurman are dreaming in colour. And that colour is pink.

They've put in on taxis, luxury cars (their own Lamborghini and Ferrari, among others), T-shirts and business cards as part of an eye-catching promotional blitz for their chain of self-serve frozen-yogurt shops, Yeh! Yogourt.

"We're painting the world pink," said Jon, 55, in an interview outside one of the chain's 11 Montreal locations.

"We needed something to get the brand out there, to rise above the clutter," added Marv. "And we did it ourselves, without paying some big agency to do it."

Nationally, they now have about 30 outlets from Nova Scotia to Alberta, two-thirds of them franchised. Another eight are in the pipeline. Not bad for a business that started with a single independent

ises blown away by the taste of the non-fat frozen yogurt (made on the premises), the colourful decor and the pay-by-weight concept.

The Gurmans soon after acquired a stake in the business, then bought out the founders in 2012.

Since then, they've been aggressively adding locations and expanding the concept.

To counter slower sales in the fall and winter, they're adding less-seasonal items to the menu, such as grilled cheese and protein shakes, and putting a new emphasis on coffee.

"The key to longevity will be to make our stores more than just yogurt," Jon said. "We want them to have more of a café feeling, a place you can go for breakfast or lunch."

Instead of stand-alone stores exclusively, they now have food-court counters and kiosks in malls and Walmart stores, plus portable carts for special events. A Yeh! store in

Wasaga Beach, Ont., will be set up next summer in a collapsible container. Mobile hawkers sell Yeh! yogurt during events at the Bell Centre and it's available at several Guzzo cinemas in the Montreal area. A catering division is being developed to supply weddings, parties and charity events.

"Catering will be part of our business going forward," Marv said. "We're also working on a wholesale side, to get the product into grocery stores, likely in 2015."

Jon Gurman said Yeh! is a fun brand with particular appeal to young people, and that's the target market.

They've had music and TV celebrities visit Yeh! locations and generated additional buzz with periodic "free yogurt" giveaways at local stores, inevitably met with lineups around the block.

"Why we love the retail business so much is that we can market it ourselves, express our creativity, and ultimately control our own destiny," Jon said. "We're going to do the same thing with our next concept in the self-serve arena, but that's another story."

# Diamond drilling firm built bit by bit

**GERRY BELLETT**  
POSTMEDIA NEWS

There was a time 14 years ago when Eric Gaunder ran his diamond drill bit company from the kitchen table of his Richmond, B.C., home.

How times have changed.

Now he sits in his own large office on Number 5 Road in Steveston above a manufacturing plant that turns out about 110,000 diamond-tipped drill bits a year for the mining industry worldwide. A collection of industry and community awards on the wall grows bigger each year.

The latest to be hung in the gallery is a 2014 Ethno BC award from the Ethno Business Council of British Columbia, which recognizes the achievements of new Canadian entrepreneurs in helping expand the country's economy.

"We are very proud of those awards," says Gaunder, president and founder of Hayden Diamond Bit Industries, who came to Canada in 1986 from Fiji.

More than 70 per cent of his Richmond-made drill bits, which are mostly used by the mining exploration industry to take core samples, go for export.

Gaunder came to Canada to study accounting at the University of B.C., where he received a business diploma and qualified as a Certified General Accountant, and went to work as a comptroller for a company servicing the mining industry.

A downturn in the economy caused the company to shut down and he was left without a job.

"I had two options: I could go back to accounting and go on with that or do something in business. I had an interest in the mining service industry because I knew something about that sector," he says.

That led Gaunder to import drill bits manufactured in South Africa and sell them to mineral exploration companies. In 2002 he opened a small warehouse with seven employees.

However, it wouldn't be long before he began thinking about making the drill bits himself.

"In 2004 I decided to manufacture my own drill bit here in Richmond. We have a unique technology. We purchased high-tech equipment, set it all up, and designed our own matrixes. My focus was to create a quality product because with a quality product, we could get well into the market," he says.

"We started with seven employees and in 2009 we bought this property and built this building, and now we have 75 employees," he says.

#### 4. Show me the money

Fledgling businesses often need money grow while building a customer base on the way to profitability. Of course, the first place to look is your own wallet. But usually that's not enough, so you will need other sources. You can go the traditional route, seeking a bank loan, or have friends and family chip in some cash. Crowdfunding, angel investors or venture capitalists are other ways. "But there are also alternative financing options out there," including non-profits such as Community Futures and Futurpreneur Canada that provide grants and loans to entrepreneurs, Sawatzky says.

#### 5. Help needed

You will need the help of experts to get up and running, and that's where organizations like the Business Link can help. "You need to find the resources that are out there to help you overcome those unexpected challenges," Sawatzky says. "Within those organizations there are resources, referrals, training and networking opportunities." It's also a good idea to seek out a business mentor, a friend or someone in the community who has successfully run a small business.

store in Montreal five years ago.

But the Gurmans say they're just getting warmed up.

They expect the Canadian market can handle 75 to 100 stores, but they're not stopping there.

If things go according to plan, the chain will go global and more than triple in size within three years. Their first Middle East location will open in Lebanon this month. Peru and France will be next.

The key market, however, is China. Through contacts established with their other business, apparel wholesaler JCorp Inc., the Gurmans have found partners in China keen to help them introduce Yeh! there in a joint venture.

"The fact we're already dealing with the world in our clothing business is a big plus. We've never seriously marketed ourselves internationally, but we know a lot of people, and that's paying dividends," Jon said. "We've already set up an office in Shanghai. The business plan is to open more than 100 stores in China in the next three years. That'll be our biggest market. China is at a point now where it wants real brands selling a more high-end product, and the way I see it, we're the Starbucks of the yogurt business. We've got atmosphere as well as a great product."

As strongly as they believe in Yeh!, the Gurmans didn't create it.

It was founded in 2009 by a young Montreal couple, Grace Yeh and Jean-Daniel Nadeau.

Jon Gurman happened to walk into their newly-opened shop one day, seeking only a bottle of water for his daughter, and left the prem-

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