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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010

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HOW A YOUNG CEO TURNED A
ONE-TRUCK HAULING COMPANY INTO
AN \$111 MILLION FRANCHISE

The Slow Movement

CANADIAN BUSINESS LEADERS PULL
AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION BY
DELIBERATELY SLOWING THE PACE





Young pea sprouts growing under “natural daylight” bulbs at Toronto Sprouts.

Why would anyone in business decide to slow down? It seems counterintuitive. Slowing the pace of work invites the competition to pull ahead. Slowing down is something to look forward to for a holiday or retirement, but it doesn't sound like a realistic option for a growing company.

The executives profiled in this issue's cover feature, “Taking it Slow,” are proving that joining the Slow Movement—embracing the mindset that faster isn't always better and that work should be approached with deliberation and care—will not cause a business to suffer. In fact, their companies have seen only benefits.

The Slow Movement has led companies like Larch Wood Enterprises in Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia and Toronto Sprouts in Ontario to values-conscious customers who have been eager to direct money toward businesses that embody the causes they believe in.

Other proponents of “slow business” have experienced improved client relations. Farah Perelmueter's Toronto-based company, Speakers' Spotlight, relies on positive relationships with the authors, actors, athletes, and entrepreneurs it represents. The Slow Movement provides a logical framework for improving her company's connection to each one.

“We recognize the importance of building relationships with our clients slowly, based on trust,” Farah says. “That has become the foundation of our business.”

The experiences of these business leaders suggest that the Slow Movement doesn't have as much to do with speed as it does with making time for relationships.

Lena Singer
Features editor

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The lodge's gathering room, part of a 2008 addition, is the recreational and entertainment centre for Paintearth's residents and staff.



PAINTEARTH LODGE

Independent-living facility runs on a \$1 million annual budget but doesn't cut corners with resident care

BY DANIEL CASCIATO

AT A GLANCE

LOCATIONS:
CASTOR, AB

EMPLOYEES:
30

AREA OF SPECIALTY:
SENIOR HOUSING IN
SUPPORT OF INDE-
PENDENT LIVING

WHEN THE PAINTEARTH LODGE COMPLETED ITS \$4 million addition in 2008, it left the facility \$2 million in debt—even with a \$2 million grant from the province of Alberta.

But though money is a constant challenge for this supportive-living facility for low-income seniors, the Castor, Alberta-based home has come to rely upon the fundraising efforts of its staff and the generosity of the community to supplement its municipal and provincial funding.

Every other year, Executive Director Sylvia Wold explains, the lodge operates a casino, where it raises approximately \$25,000. It hosts golf tournaments, silent auctions,

“Paintearth Idol” competitions, pancake breakfasts, and Christmas festivals.

Two years ago, a photographer from VG Photography donated her time to shoot photographs of a dozen female lodge residents in various poses—as firewomen, cowgirls, brides—and Paintearth sold the calendars to raise money.

And then, there are generous neighbours.

In 2007, while the lodge was building its addition, a local oil-building manufacturer donated more than 1,300 hours of manual labour—the equivalent of nearly \$41,000 worth of work. When the lodge found itself wondering whether a local gas leak would force the evacuation of its residents, Paintearth Energy offered each and every resident a ride to its building 20 miles away. “It’s just an awesome neighbourhood,” Wold says.

Founded in the 1960s, Paintearth Lodge is one of hundreds of senior-living facilities across Canada. It started as a 30-unit facility and has since grown to 55 units, which house 63 seniors.

To enter the lodge and qualify for rent subsidies from Alberta’s Lodge Assistance Program, residents must earn



“

Our bragging rights are [that] if seniors give us three months here, 90 percent will have their health improve.

—Sylvia Wold, Executive Director

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\$27,825 a year or less. As rent runs about \$1,000 per month—\$1,200 for a one-bedroom apartment—plus utilities, residents must have at least \$265 in additional disposable income; if not, they are eligible for lodge assistance.

Residents receive more than a roof over their heads. Paintearth offers many desirable amenities, including:

- three nutritious meals each day, plus snacks;
- 24-hour nonmedical staffing (Alberta Health Services, rather than lodge staff, provides the medical care for residents who need it);
- linen and personal laundry service;
- social and recreational opportunities provided by a full-time coordinator;
- referrals to community-based offerings and access to local services;
- hairdressers, massage therapists, nail technicians, and hearing-aid specialists;
- a physical activity and exercise room for guests and visitors;
- a game room with shuffleboard, games, and computers.

Wold says it's the mixture of supportive housing and community that helps its residents thrive. "Our bragging rights are [that] if seniors give us three months here, 90 percent will have their health improve," she says. "They will have fewer doctors visits, fewer hospital stays, and the family will go on and on about how relieved they are because they know about our security. No matter what happens, there will be somebody here for them."

In addition to provincial and municipal funding (Paintearth Lodge is supported by the County of

Paintearth, the Town of Castor, the Town of Coronation, and the Village of Halkirk), Paintearth's administration, staff, and board receive educational and lobbying support from the Alberta Public Housing Administrative Association and the Alberta Senior Citizens Housing Association.

Wold has great praise for the government of Alberta, which runs its lodges under the departments of Senior & Community Services and Housing & Urban Affairs.

"I've never been swatted down," Wold notes. "I can go beyond the housing advisor. I can go to the department deputy minister, and we've even gone to the minister and had a good listening ear because, if it affects seniors, they want to know about it. They practice what they preach."

And though Wold admits that Paintearth's primary challenge always will be funding—the \$4 million addition left three wings built in 1963 virtually untouched—she doesn't anticipate any reduction in the quality of care the lodge provides its residents. She points to the lodge's full capacity and long waiting list as a testament to its reputation, and says that, if anything, she'd like to begin adding services, such as a community liaison who can bring community members such as those isolated on far-away farmland or who have no driver's licence to the lodge to benefit from its activities and education programs.

"That way," Wold says, "it would be Wheels to Meals instead of Meals on Wheels." CEQ

A MESSAGE FROM INTERACTIONS HR SOLUTIONS INC.

Congratulations to Sylvia Wold and the Paintearth Lodge team for demonstrating your commitment to organizational excellence!

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