

Danny Tuff turns passion and energy into timely business

Founder of Blue Line Innovations Inc. wins BDC's Young Entrepreneur Award for Newfoundland and Labrador
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Inspired by his father's desire to monitor the family's energy consumption, and his brother's ideas of how that might be accomplished, Danny Tuff, 31, has transformed the idea into a business that boasts the world's largest deployment of real-time energy feedback technology. For this achievement, Danny has earned BDC's Young Entrepreneur Award for Newfoundland and Labrador and will be honoured tonight at a ceremony in Moncton, New Brunswick.

"When we were young, we had no appreciation whatsoever for how we used electricity," points out Danny who grew up in a family of six children. "My father thought that it would be great if there was a device that could show the cost of the energy we were using. And so, in 2003, my brother Maurice - an electrical engineer - and I started Blue Line Innovations." Their innovation, the Powercost Monitor(TM) is an in-home table-top unit that works like a "speedometer for energy consumption". The only one of its kind on the market, the monitor displays in real-time and dollars and cents how much electricity the consumer is using.

With growing global concerns about energy supply problems, Blue Line's timing was impeccable. "Research has demonstrated that when people know in real-time how much electricity they're consuming, they have a tendency to reduce their consumption," Danny explains. Blue Line was soon undertaking pilot projects with Hydro One, B.C. Hydro, Newfoundland Power, London (Ontario) Hydro, and was doing work with Southern California Edison and appliance manufacturer Whirlpool.

Success in real time

Results of the Hydro One pilot were so positive that the utility is now extending the project to 30,000 customers in the northern part of the province. Preparing for the \$4.5 million contract has meant scaling up for Blue Line, which counts 12 employees; the company is working with an Ottawa manufacturer and a logistics firm that will be responsible for order fulfillment and customer service.

Danny attributes Blue Line's growing success to his network of supporters: from employees, investors and customers to the Newfoundland government, the National Research Council, ACOA and BDC. "You can't do it alone," he explains. "You have to rely on that network of people who believe in what you're doing. Our supporters have bought into the idea, they've believed and trusted. And I've always made sure there were no excuses for not doing what we said we would do."

"Danny stands out as a role model for young Canadian entrepreneurs," says BDC President and CEO Jean-René Halde. "In a world where energy conservation is so important, Blue Line Innovations has made an important breakthrough. It's a pleasure to recognize his passion, drive and excellence with this award."

For Danny, the Hydro One project is just the beginning of his vision for the future of Blue Line Innovations. "I see us with a variety of related technologies that contribute to helping people make better use of electricity, water and gas, on a global basis," he says. "The sky's the limit."

Recognition for young entrepreneurs

A major feature of Small Business Week, BDC's Young Entrepreneur Awards recognize the entrepreneurial spirit and business success of Canadians between the ages of 19 and 35. The winners - one from each province and territory - are selected by a committee based on criteria including success, growth potential, innovation, participation in new economy activities and community involvement. The committee also considers export performance, the entrepreneur's age when the business was started and any special challenges overcome.

Small Business Week partners

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About BDC

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