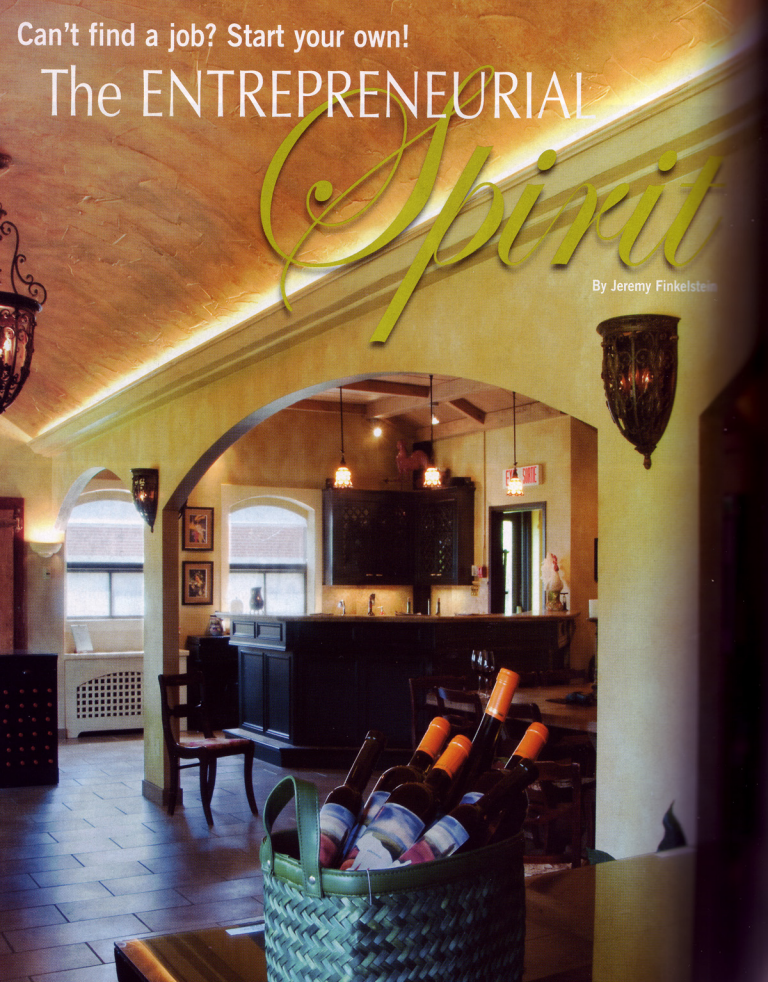


Can't find a job? Start your own!

The ENTREPRENEURIAL

Spirit

By Jeremy Finkelstein



This April, Stats Can confirmed that employers have been shedding jobs at a rate not seen since the early 80's, with 2.1 percent of the workforce let go between October and March. That said, May revealed a notable ray of sunshine and we would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge an exciting new trend. In April, employment actually grew, fuelled largely by an increase in the numbers of the self-employed. ***It would seem Canadians are now staring down a tight job market, and using the opportunity to take charge of their destinies.*** We think that's great, so we've assembled a panel of local entrepreneurs to pass on a few pearls of wisdom, in the hope that it will empower a reader or two to discover a rewarding new life by embracing their inner-entrepreneur.

The view from the Foreign Affair Winery
4890 Victoria Ave. North, Vineland Station, Ontario
foreignaffairwine.com

THE DREAMER

"Success is really found in fulfilling a dream. Being able to express an idea and turn it into something real. It provides me with a phenomenal amount of satisfaction."
Len Crispino, The Foreign Affair Winery

We all have visions for our lives that often go unfulfilled, leaving us contemplating that unanswerable 'what if?'. Whether it's climbing Mount Everest or purchasing the perfect private island for our retirement, it's easy to get lost in the romance of a moment. But what is it that makes some people turn these personal pipedreams into reality? Ask Len Crispino, the Canadian ex-pat who fell in love with an Italian temptress.

You may know Len as the CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. What you may not know is that, when away from his office, he moonlights as Ontario's next great winemaker. Years ago, while in Milan, Len and his wife Marisa discovered the Amarone style of wine, where grapes are dried before being pressed, creating a complex tasting experience. The two were smitten and promised each other they'd bring the secret back to Ontario. Fast forward nearly ten years. It's 1999 and Len and his family are hit with a more significant challenge than starting their own business. At the age of fifty, Len was diagnosed with cancer. Facing his own mortality, he and Marisa turned the disease into a reason to realize their old dream of becoming winemakers, and bought a parcel of land on the Niagara peninsula. "I had nothing to lose. At that point it wasn't really a risk anymore and for us it was an act of defiance... for me, it was the most therapeutic treatment I could ever get," he recounts.

By 2004, Len had beaten cancer and the couple had harvested their first crop. Today, the Foreign Affair Winery is Ontario's lone producer of Amarone wines. The brand has a loyal following of enthusiasts and is starting its own tasting club known as the Foreign Affair Conspiracy Council. "In life and in success, you have to operate as part of a larger team. Like that old saying 'dream and the world will conspire', we wouldn't have been able to do this without our friends and families. They're all conspirators to help make this dream come true." Len's story not only reminds us to keep on dreaming, but to ensure we pursue our dreams. "If you don't act on your dream, you will regret it. The worst that can happen is that you fail... that doesn't mean that you fail in life".

THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

"Information does not equal change. If you want to influence the environment, you have to reach people at the point of decision making." Ian Morton, The Summerhill Group

A cursory glance of any newspaper will reveal multiple stories on global warming, habitat loss, toxic waste and resource depletion. No surprise there. Since the industrial revolution, it seems an accepted fact that business cannot grow without depleting or destroying the planet's resources. Fortunately, times change and we are now witnessing the rise of a new breed of business superhero, the social entrepreneur... one who, taking a cue from nature, earns a living like the bee that doesn't harm the flower. One particularly busy bee has led the game of social entrepreneurship for a while, and though you don't know Ian Morton, you do know his work.

The Summerhill Group, co-founded with partner James Alden, applies business principles to environmental problems. But before you write them off as another breed of tree hugger, take a look at their impressive client list, which includes some of the most recognized names in energy and retail. In fact, the next time you walk into Home Depot to trade in your gas guzzling mower for a credit towards that new energy efficient model, or get handed a free carbon fluorescent light bulb, or purchase from their many 'eco-options', thank Ian. However, retail's just a piece of the vision. Having also founded the Clean Air Foundation, an organizer of engagement programs that lead to measurable emissions reductions, Ian has developed an operating structure where both charity and consultancy operate under one roof to support a common vision. "We embody a new approach to doing business where you're able to interact with government, the private sector and the social economy to create good programs. Environment is everybody's responsibility, but when programs are fragmented, they lack credibility." Indicators suggest he's right, with the non-profit sector representing one of the fastest growing areas of the economy, attributed to the droves of people who now recognize the problems we face, and that conventional solutions aren't working.

So is there room for a few more socially conscious entrepreneurs in our market? Ian sees social entrepreneurs leading the charge in a changing economy. "I'm very optimistic. Right now, knowledge transfer is a tremendous competitive advantage for Canadians, particularly in countries like China and India which have strong impressions of Canada. Carbon, energy conservation, waste diversion, water, the air we breathe... there is no lack of opportunity here."