

**BUSINESS PLAN**

# Solo cyberspace solutions for startups

By Joel McKay

**Company name:** Ryan Sadler, IT Sourcing Consultant

**Principal:** Ryan Sadler

**Location:** 1200 W. Georgia Street, Vancouver

**Business Venture:** One-man information technology (IT) solutions for startups and small businesses

**History:** Ryan Sadler dove into the IT consulting business in 2007 when he became soured working for a proprietary software company that created as many bugs as it solved.

"They were the only ones in the industry that did it, and people were paying them ridiculous amounts of money to fix their own bugs," said Sadler.

He wouldn't name the company (though it was located in Alberta), but he felt it would be better to go out on his own and offer small businesses affordable technology solutions.

"I'm kind of like that guy in your company who knows how everything works, except you don't have to hire me as an employee," he said.

In layman's terms, Sadler's venture is a small business for startups, although he has worked for large corporations such as **ABB, Occidental Petroleum, Qualcomm** and **ICI**.

He's the only employee, he travels to his clients so he doesn't have a permanent office and he named the business after himself to build his reputation.

He only takes on half a dozen contracts a year, yet those multi-month contracts keep him more than busy, he said, and provide a net annual income of approximately \$100,000.

His passion for IT solutions began in 1994 when he attended **Simon Fraser University**.

He spent several years studying and learning the ropes of programming and coding.

After university, where he earned an electrical engineering degree, he had brief stints with **Nortel Networks Corp.** (OTC:NRTLQ) and **Broadcom Corp.** (NASDAQ:BRCM) before



KURT PICHLER

IT consultant Ryan Sadler: helping companies decide whether they should outsource their IT support or find it locally

he jumped into the "startup scene."

"I realized that I had a lot of skills that were a need to a lot of small companies," Sadler said.

Small companies don't often have the financial wherewithal to hire a big IT firm, or the technical savvy to make off-the-shelf solutions work for them – and that's where he comes in.

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– Ryan Sadler, IT sourcing consultant

"They want to get to market quickly, they want to go into maintenance, which means they have a need for one tech person," he said. "Do they really want to hire an in-house team to do that? So what are their other options?"

His business plan is to provide advice to startups that aren't sure what they need to get the technology side of their businesses up and running.

He provides technical know-how and connects them with a network of IT companies that can provide the solutions he can't.

**Challenges:** Sadler's biggest challenge is choosing the right clients.

"I often have to say no to

work, because I don't think I'm the right person."

His specialty is data management, so companies looking for design solutions might look elsewhere.

He also freely admits he's not an expert in every sector of business technology.

"A lot of business in the financial world I was turning away ... I don't have the grounding in financial systems to make a difference in those businesses."

That problem led Sadler to Las Vegas not long ago where he finished an apprenticeship program with an electronic trading company.

"One of the areas I wanted to get into was automated trading systems, because I kept meeting these boutique statistical arbitrage companies doing really interesting things," he said. He now feels comfortable providing solutions for those companies, although he remains focused on data systems.

**Analysis:** Martin DesRosiers believes the Vancouver market is saturated with one-man IT consulting firms who can only handle a certain type of client.

DesRosiers is director of technical services at **Fully Managed Inc.**, a 20-person tech firm that supports, designs and hosts IT infrastructure for small and medium-sized businesses.

"We can support 150 users because we have a dedicated network operation centre running 24-7," said DesRosiers. "How is one person supposed to support 150 users? There's no way."

DesRosiers used to be an independent IT consultant

before he launched his own firm called **Blackheron Technology Solutions**, which merged with Fully Managed last year.

He believes the largest company a firm like Sadler's could handle would probably have 10 employees, and it couldn't handle too many clients at one time.

Responded Sadler: "I think he's referring to the general industry of freelance computer fix-it people. The group of technology consultants I represent, however, are highly specialized individuals who have skills that are in demand in small companies as well as large multinationals. Usually I'm brought in because there

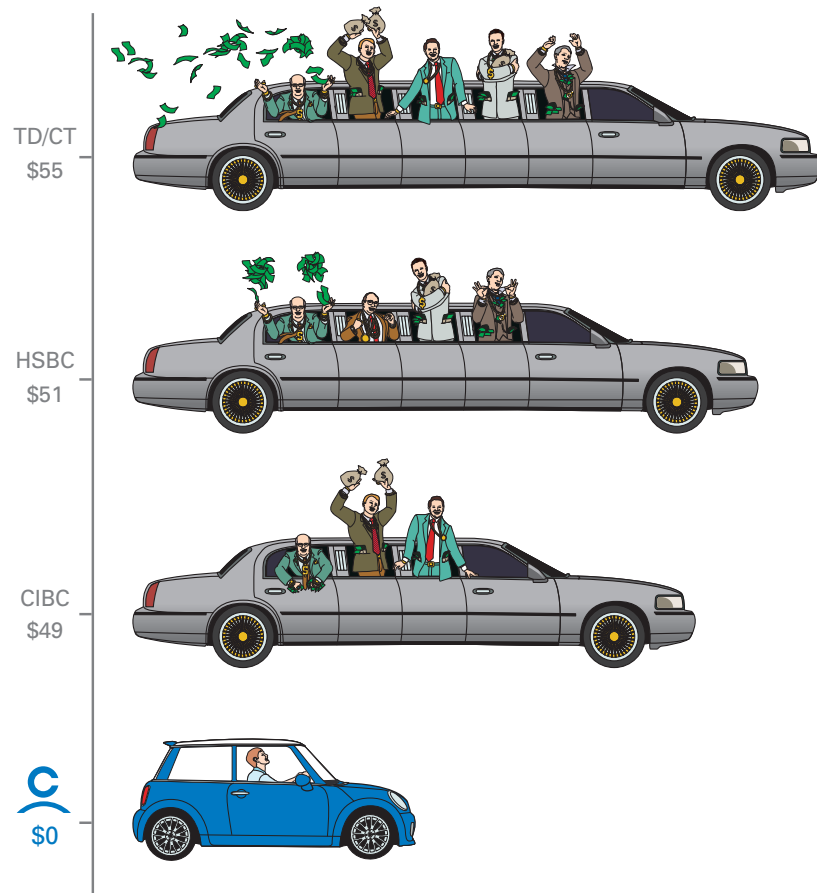
is a particular problem they are having difficulty solving and time is critical, or I complement the skill set of their existing team to bring the project to a successful completion."

DesRosiers acknowledges that specializing in one area of IT support can help a small firm beat out the competition and land more contracts, but success comes with the ability to communicate beyond cyberspace.

"It's key," he said. "Being able to converse with executives and business owners from a high level, not talking on the bits and bytes [but] focusing on their business needs." ■

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