

Aspiring entrepreneurs attempt to enter the Dragon's Den

By Dave Cooper, edmontonjournal.com March 12, 2011

EDMONTON - Dozens of fledgling entrepreneurs took their first step Saturday into CBC's Dragons' Den, pitching TV producers seeking solid ideas that the show's five millionaires can "sink their teeth into."



Nancy Yowney (L) with her Boutbuddy boutineer magnet and Tara Murray with her Tidy Bottoms traveling underwear storage bag during tryouts for CBC's Dragon's Den show at the Westin Hotel in Edmonton Ab on Saturday Mar. 12, 2011. Photograph by: John Lucas, edmontonjournal.com

Up to 4,000 hopefuls across Canada are expected to audition for about 200 spots that will air during the show's sixth season, with taping set to begin in mid-April.

Nancy Yowney was looking for \$150,000 for 25 per cent of her company, which sells patented "Boutbuddy" magnetic sticks to wholesale florists and has already gained four per cent of the market and is planning a U.S. expansion. The money will go toward winning a share of the global market.

"My sister is a florist, and I had to make something which would not be additional work when they are making corsages and boutonnieres," she said.

The plastic stem is wrapped into the corsage, and a magnet is placed under the lapel, replacing the need for pins. The device retails for \$1,

and she has sold over 300,000.

"There are 115,000 weddings every day in the world, with Turkey as the leader followed by Las Vegas. So it is a huge market," said Yowney.

Tara Murray thinks she is on to something that women travellers will appreciate, especially if their undies are removed by customs agents during border crossings

"Tidy Bottoms" (starting at \$24.99) are decorated bags which hold both clean and dirty underwear.

"I have sold 195 in six weeks in just three stores, and many of the buyers are men. I hope these will be carried in many more stores," said Murray, who will be looking for \$48,000 from the dragons for 20 per cent of her company.

Marcel Fluet-Howrsh thinks people trying to move heavy objects on stairways will snap up his hand truck with an attached jack powered by an electric drill.

"I thought of it when I had to move appliances on my own," he said.

Commercial devices cost several thousand dollars, but he thinks his can retail for \$100. And while he wasn't looking for a set amount of money, but thinks the dragons can offer him valuable assistance to get his hand truck into the marketplace.

Dragons producer Lindsey Neely said the show is "looking for businesses with sales and potential to grow, or great ideas that need just a little push."

The show also aims to impart a little bit of the business world to its two-million strong audience, which have made the den CBC's second highest-rated production. The show features five successful business people who invest in companies they think will succeed.

"We want people coming away from the show feeling they have learned something about business," said Neely.

Two alumni turned up Saturday to provide an update on their product, which did appear on the show.

The "Rugged Man Advanced Hair System" was aired Wednesday. It is simply a piece of shag carpet with an elastic strap, but the hilarious box is a slick production.

"We had 3,500 hits on our website after the show. This is just a hobby, and has been an idea of seven years," said Terry Syvenky.

They had 1,000 boxes made up, and were the hit of gift fairs and trade shows.

"Everybody was wearing our 'I got shagged' stickers.

Syvenky and Richard Korbyl said they are just back from Las Vegas, where they were talking with distributors to novelty stores — a \$17 billion market.

"One guy said he is considering test marketing, and would need 35,000," said Korbyl.

Perhaps the best thing about their product is the laughs it gets.

"We love to play mystery shopper, and see people break up when they see Rugged Man," said Korbyl.

CBC is back for auditions in Edmonton on March 30. They also are on the lookout for teenage entrepreneurs.

"We are aiming to do an episode with teenage entrepreneurs next year. We always get a couple coming out for auditions in each city," she said.



Terry Syvenky (L) and Richard Korbyl with their "Rugged Man" product during tryouts for the CBC show Dragon's Den at the Westin Hotel in Edmonton Ab on Saturday Mar. 12, 2011. Photograph by: John Lucas, edmontonjournal.com