

Focus on Leadership

A SPECIAL SERIES ON CALGARY'S BUSINESS VISIONARIES

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Wil Andruschak photos

KPMG employees select their community involvement activity, which allows them to decide based on what they are passionate about, says managing partner John Gordon.

Building relationships key to KPMG's success

If you're one of the world's top companies in your field, employing competent, dedicated professionals is the beginning of success, not the end.

What separates good professional services firms from great ones is the quality of their relationships with clients and the community, says John Gordon, managing partner of KPMG LLP's Calgary office.

"We strive to build and maintain a culture where our success is based on the quality and strength of relationships we have with our clients," he says. "We try to think about, and measure the value or quality of, what we do through our clients' eyes, not through our own. If it's not working for the clients, it's not working."

KPMG strives to be an active, community-minded organization, and Gordon says the Action Calgary initiative is a great example of how that

principle is put into action.

"Action Calgary is trying to build and create opportunities for Calgary as a community, and for businesses in general. It's part of our community strategy to support these kinds of initiatives.

"If I look at the initiatives that Action Calgary is doing, there are several of those that are closely aligned with what we focus on — particularly the Global Business Centre."

But KPMG's community involvement goes far beyond the corporate or leadership level.

"We have about 450 employees in Calgary, and all of us have a role to be involved in and supportive of our community in whatever way that makes a difference," he says. "The individuals get to select what community activity they have the most passion for, and we'll support them being involved — through knowl-

edge and training and trying to ensure they have the time and opportunity to make a difference."

KPMG's Calgary roots stretch back nine decades. Today, it provides audit, tax and tax compliance and advisory services to a broad spectrum of businesses in Calgary — large and small, publicly traded and privately owned.

"KPMG focuses on the needs of private companies. These companies need business advice that may be beyond the usual tax and audit advice. We cater to those private company needs" Gordon explains.

Like the rest of the firm, the Calgary office's employee base is in a state of constant renewal, as it hires 35 to 40 graduates from business schools each year.

"New people bring new ideas and new experiences to the organization; it's a very impressive group."

The thrill of Calgary living

If you were asked to list the attributes that make Calgary unique among Western Canadian cities, chances are the Rocky Mountains would be near the top of that list.

That's why it's fitting that the largest private alpine resort operator in North America is based right here in Calgary.

"The mountains are part of the fabric of Calgary, and we're proud to have our head office here," says Matt Mosteller, vice-president of sales and marketing for Resorts of the Canadian Rockies Inc. "Calgarians are freedom-seekers and adventurers at heart, and we share that love of these mountains with so many Calgarians."

Founded in 2002, RCR operates the Nakiska Ski Resort in Alberta, Fernie Alpine Resort and Kimberley Alpine Resort in British Columbia and Mont-Sainte-Anne and Stoneham in Quebec.

RCR's operations offer unparalleled natural settings and state-of-the-art, world-class facilities and amenities. And the company's central reservation system helps customers plan every aspect of their vacations with one phone call.

"We can create a custom package including lift tickets, flights, car rentals, lodging and airport shuttles," Mosteller says. "We will provide an effortless and tailored vacation that guarantees the best vacation experience possible."

RCR is also committed to the environment as it is to its customers — the company has a number of environmental stewardship strategies in place and in development.

"We are committed to protecting and preserving, as well as enjoying, the beautiful mountain environment in which it is our privilege to live, work, and play," says Mosteller.

Another focus for the company is family. RCR partnered recently with Husky Energy to provide the Husky Grade 2 Fun Pass, providing free skiing to seven-year-olds in British Columbia and Alberta.

"We're also very concerned about safety. We're the only resort operator in North America that has taken the big air jumps out of our rail parks, and our skiing and riding experience is far safer because of it. We hear that from the mothers who ski and ride with us. It was a bold move, but guest safety is our top priority."

RCR's workforce swells from off-season levels of 500 to 1,000 core employees to between 2,000 and 3,000 in peak season.

"Two things we all have in common are we're all obsessed with snow, and we're focused on providing high-quality outdoor recreation for our guests, and creating lifetime memories and experiences for them."



Calgarians are freedom- and thrill-seekers, says RCR vice-president of sales and marketing Matt Mosteller.

Global Business Centre opens doors for Calgary

Calgary's place as a Western Canadian business hub is secure and undisputed, but that's only the beginning of the city's economic potential.

That's why Calgary Economic Development has established a Global Business Centre to help the city grow as an international business powerhouse.

"If we want to be a great city and province, we can't wait for the world to come to us," says Bruce Graham, president and CEO of Calgary Economic Development. "We hope that this Global Business Centre will help change the mindset of Calgarians that we're an international business centre, not just a Western Canadian business centre."

The 7,000-square-foot facility is spread out over four floors of the Telus Convention Centre, with its main entrance on the Stephen Avenue Mall. Its bold signage and prominent location send a message to Calgarians and visitors about Calgary's international potential and ambitions, but the space's purpose goes far beyond the symbolic.

"It serves as a resource for visiting investors, and also for Calgary companies looking to dive into the global market," Graham says.

"At the centre, we offer

services and information for exporters who are looking at international business. And, it provides space for incoming investors — we call it a 'hotelting setup,' so they can work temporarily and receive support services from our office."

That kind of infrastructure is just what the city needs, says Scott Van Vliet, executive vice-president of Environmental Refuelling Systems Inc.

"If Calgary wants to be a world-class economic power, it needs to be accommodating for people who want to come in and do business. This is a big step in that direction," he says.

"It's ideal for companies that blow in from out of town with reconnaissance work to do, so they can make some investment decisions. A facility like the Global Business Centre can save you months and months of agony trying to stumble your way downtown."

CED hosts several dozen international business and trade delegations each year. Business-to-business matchmaking will continue to be one of the agency's mandates within the centre, Graham says.

"There's a multi-functional room that can be used for hosting delegations, events, seminars and educational forums for folks to get on international trade and business develop-



Calgary Economic Development president and CEO Bruce Graham says the GBC will help change the way Calgarians operate their businesses on a global scale.

ment. It directly complements our existing services at Calgary Economic Development," says Graham.

Small and mid-sized firms dominate the city's economy, which demonstrates the entrepreneurial spirit of Calgary. But many of these organizations lack the global reach and connections that are necessary to growing internationally.

The GBC is open to all southern Alberta businesses,

and it helps provide the tools and know-how to make those transitions.

CED is launching the centre this week, and the timing is impeccable, says Glenn Graves, vice-president of Commercial Financial Services with RBC Royal Bank.

"The recession has driven many Calgary businesses to explore opportunities outside of Alberta — to the rest of Canada and the world — to make use

of the excess capacity in their plants and keep the economy running," says Graves, who works specifically with companies involved in manufacturing, wholesaling, transportation and logistics.

"I believe this is an excellent forum for southern Alberta businesses to gain knowledge and apply new strategies through mentorship, new synergies and collaboration that benefits everyone."

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