

Sauder alumni
big before 40

10 to watch.

BY JENNIFER WAH AND ROB MCMAHON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PERRY ZAVITZ

make it



Mike likes the view from the top.

Mike Desjardins,
Driver, ViRTUS

By the numbers:

- Age: 34
- BCom 94 (Marketing)
- At 25, became the youngest president in North America's pool and spa industry. Built a \$750,000 company into a \$4 million business, making it the largest supplier of hot tub chemicals in Canada
- The company he bought into in October 2000, ViRTUS, currently has 21 employees and annual revenues of \$1.3 million

By the way:

- Designed a marketing and dealer acquisition strategy that enabled Beachcomber Hot Tubs Worldwide to grow from \$12 million in annual sales to over \$35 million in under three years
- Invited to join the Entrepreneurs' Organization in June 2002, and is the Vancouver Chapter President 2007/2008

In his own words:

"I don't use words like 'CEO' or 'president.' I would rather call myself a 'driver' because I am driving the business. My business grows because I have a solid, committed team who have bought into the culture of our business and are interested in personally growing and improving."

The Roast:

"Mike and I have been skiing together many times, mostly at Whistler-Blackcomb. He likes Black Diamond runs—even when he's struggling to keep up with me. I remember one off-peak experience, when we were chasing the sunshine around the mountain and dropped into a steep, tight, gladed run. My girlfriend (now my fiancée) slipped and started sliding towards a tree or cliff. Mike hopped on her to stop her sliding, and landed in an interesting position; it was only about an hour and a half after they first met!"

"We've also traveled together on a business trip to New Orleans, many years before Hurricane Katrina. We checked out Bourbon Street and tried blackened catfish—I'm an adventurous eater and Mike is likewise. At House of Blues, we saw a Tragically Hip concert, and we maybe met one American in the whole place, even though it's in the middle of New Orleans. The audience was all Canadian."

Former colleague Blair Miller, Director, TELUS TV, TELUS