

Book chronicles successes of local businesses

Ric Swihart

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rswhart@lethbridgeherald.com

If success breeds success, two University of Lethbridge business management specialists have published a roadmap for small business success.

Gordon Hunter, professor of information systems, and Dan Kazakoff, director for theory into practice programs, collaborated on "Little Empires — Multi-Generation Small Business in Southern Alberta," a collection of 11 first-person stories of successful business ventures in the region.

Published through Heidelberg Press of Victoria, Australia and printed at the U of L, "Little Empires" takes a long look to demonstrate the economic value and contributions of the area multi-generational businesses.

It was formally launched Monday at city hall with complementary books presented to the 11 families, owners and operators of: Davis Pontiac; Edwards Land; Erickson's operating as Lethbridge Catering Ltd.; Foster and Sons Jewelers; Galko Homes; Greer Home Builders; Haney Farms of Picture Butte; Martin Brothers Funeral Chapels; McDonald Auto Group; Murray Chev Cadillac Lethbridge; and Thomas Radiators.

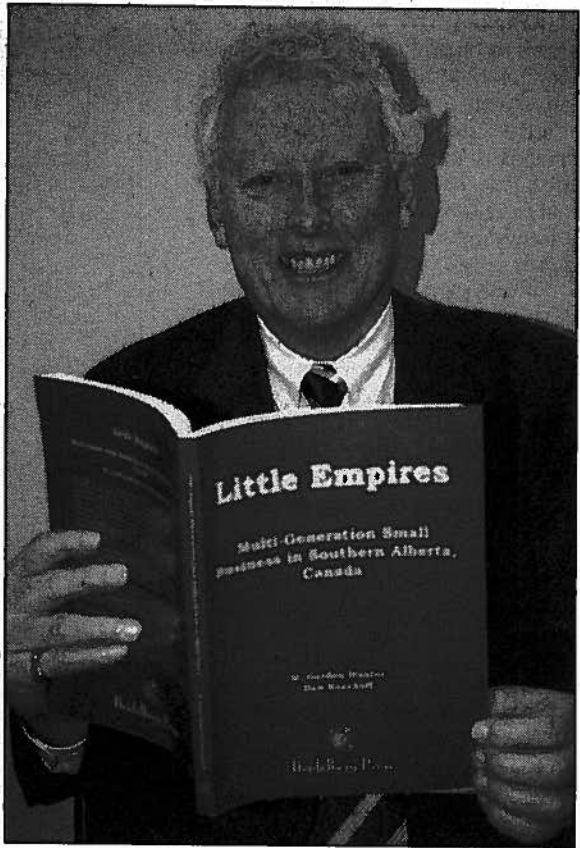
In an earlier interview, Hunter said the book provides valuable insights in the approaches taken by the businesses, especially attempts to ensure the viability of a business launched by a previous generation.

He feels the comments of the published business leaders are valuable to individuals involved with small business and those considering such a career. Students of small business will find a discussion of interesting practical issues and theoretical frameworks.

Hunter pointed to Statistics Canada figures to promote the educational component of "Little Empires."

About 125,000 small businesses in Canada fail every year, "and we don't hear about it."

That was one of the driving forces to research, write and publish "Little Empires" — look closely at success stories, especially multi-generational



Herald photo by Ric Swihart

Gordon Hunter, co-author of "Little Empire," a look at 11 southern Alberta multi-generational businesses and the keys to their successes, spoke at the SouthGrow business awards ceremony.

business that have been successful over time.

The business owners and operators provide first-person analysis of what worked for them, and Hunter and Kazakoff translate that into an analysis of what will work for small business.

The multi-generational business scene is special, said Hunter. Evidence from the research shows the greatest success comes from treating the business as a family asset, not strictly as a business. That allows the business principals to accommodate siblings and other non-participating family members grandpa may have hoped would take on the family business.

A common comment for the method of managing the multi-generational company, said Hunter, is, "This is what Dad would have wanted."

The authors asked each business operator for a personal review of their own involvement in the operation.

"It shows the passion that each person has for working in their own small business and their feeling of responsibility they have for maintaining the family asset for future generations," he said.

The 219-page soft-cover book has an early price tag of \$40, available by contacting Hunter at his office at 403-329-2672 or by email at ghunter@uleth.ca.