'Useless' $8,500 computer started firm

Henry Koch

About a year ago **Eugene Rose**, 56, of Waterloo, bought an $8,500 computer to perform simple functions, track investment funds and update records for his clients at Regal Capital Planners, a Waterloo mutual funds company.

He took it home and found it "didn't do what it was supposed to do." All it would do was print labels. What's worse, the store where it was purchased wouldn't take it back and Rose couldn't sell it. Nobody wanted it.

Rose and his four sons, **David, Dale, Dean** and **Duane**, were "disturbed and frustrated" over the family's "negative encounter" with a computer.

* * *

They could not understand why a salesperson would tell somone a computer would perform certain functions when it would not.

Then they did some research and found that "an unbelievable number of people were at the point of frustration with computers because of a lack of understanding between salespeople and buyers as to what was expected of a computer."

That is not to say that all sellers of computers in this area either misrepresent the capabilities of certain computers or fail to take the time to properly explain what they will or won't do.

* * *

Not at all. Their research revealed that a large number of firms dealing in computers do make the effort to explain and go out of their way not to misrepresent. But "far too many" make little or no effort, they found.

"They just pull them off the shelves and say they they will do so and so," Dale Rose said. "It seems that some don't really care because they get customers coming in off the street every five minutes."

The Rose family also found that more than 40,000 microcomputers in North America are "sitting on shelves and collecting dust" for the same reason that Eugene's Rose's $8,500 computer is idle most of the time.

* * *

Instead of lamenting their father's bad luck, the family decided to become knowledgeable about computers, start its own business and "market computers the way we felt they should be marketed."

Dale Rose, three brothers, father, decided to fill a computer need.

About eight months ago Eugene and his four sons became equal partners in 5D Marketing and Distributing Inc., housed in Suite 301 of the Bell Canada Yellow Pages building at 319 Bridgeport Rd. E., Waterloo.

They called it 5D because all four of the Rose brothers' first names start with a D, "with dad making up the fifth D."

* * *

Only two of the five Roses, Dale and Duane, are actively involved in the firm. Eugene, David, 29, and Dean, 25, sell investment funds at Regal Capital Planners. Dale, 28, and Duane, 22, are the active principals. Dean is president of 5D, Dale and Duane are vice-presidents, David is general manager and Eugene (Dad) is secretary-treasurer.

The company is supplied by a number of computer companies from Mississauga to Japan and was recently appointed the Burroughs Canada dealer for southwestern Ontario. It was selected from more than 100 applicants after Burroughs studied the applicants for a year, Dale said.

5D's marketing approach is different than the others in that it has no retail store and does not sell home computers or computer games.

* * *

Its representatives go to businesses, assess their individual needs and matches their requirements with the proper systems.

Along with a wide range of hardware, software and peripherals such as printers, the company provides professional consulting, personalized training, customized programming and on-site service through Dataforce, a division of Bell Canada.

The service is guaranteed in a maximum of four hours, "but sometimes the service people get there in 25 minutes," Dale said.

* * *

After conducting in-depth assessment needs for businesses, the company explains how a system works through demonstrations and offers purchase or lease options, whichever is more beneficial for tax purposes.

It also arranges bank loans for customers. Its computers range from $3,500 to more than $75,000. They're delivered in the back seats of cars, unpacked, set up and tested. The company's customers include investment, accounting, planning and blueprint firms from the Kitchener-Waterloo area to Moorefield.

5D also conducts computer seminars at no cost or obligation to provide the public with general information about how a computer works and how it can be beneficial in an office. The seminars include demonstrations and question-and-answer periods.

* * *

"We also explain how to go about purchasing a system for a business so as not to make the first exposure to a computer a negative one," Dale said.

The Roses turned a bad computer experience into a business opportunity that is starting to pay off.

"We do a lot more work than we should," Dale conceded. "We are honest people. We also realize that it takes time, effort and money to establish trust with the local business community. We can't buy that trust. We must earn it," Dale said.

The company is holding open house next Thursday and Friday at its official opening.

Truck stop carries on

Scheduled to close this year, the Tu-Lane restaurant on Highway 8 will carry on indefinitely, **Brian Calder**, the owner, said.

The restaurant has been a favorite stopping place of road-weary truck drivers for more than 30 years. It was originally called the Old Orchard Inn and had cottages for rent.

Calder said he has received information that the Highway 8 bypass has been delayed. "Hopefully for us, it will be years before it's started." Calder has owned the Tu-Lane for 12 years and also owns the Tu-Lane 97 at Highways 97 and 401, another favorite of truck drivers.

The restaurant on Highway 8 closed on Christmas and New Year's until five years ago. Since then it has opened 24 hours every day. "It's one of the few restaurants open on Christmas Day and we get a lot of people who have nowhere else to eat," Calder said.

Insurance office opens

Dennis Roth of Kitchener and **Ed Nowak** of New Hamburg have opened Roth Nowak Insurance Brokers in the White Rose nursery building at 200 Weber St. N., Waterloo.

Roth has been in insurance in this area for five years and Nowak was manager of the Mennonite Credit Union branch in New Hamburg for five years. Their business handles all types of insurance except life.

Sixth K-W McDonald's

Construction of the sixth McDonald's restaurant in Kitchener-Waterloo has started at the Pioneer Sportsworld entrance on Highway 8. It's scheduled for completion early in March.

The restaurant will seat 108 inside and 80 outside. "It will be a showplace with a pioneer colonial theme to blend with Pioneer Sportsworld," **Larry Burke**, McDonald's area supervisor, said.

Is six McDonald's in Kitchener-Waterloo the largest number per capita anywhere? Burke didn't know, but a McDonald's spokesmen in Waterloo said "it might well be true."