

King entrepreneur gets full support on Dragons? Den

By Mark Pavilons

A King entrepreneur is laughing all the way to the bank. And he has some high-profile partners.

Mike Dunlop appeared on CBC's reality show Dragons' Den, pitching his unique product ? Dragonfly Wingman.

When he first appeared before the five-member panel of would-be investors, laughter erupted at his quirky invention. But after hearing Dan's story and popularity of the product, they went all in and joined Dan in his company.

He came in asking for \$100,000 for a 20% share of his company, and left with all five Dragons as partners, but he had to give up 30% to make it happen. This five-member investment partnership was a first for the show.

Mike said the idea hit him while he and his wife were boating on Georgian Bay. During their stop they were swarmed by blackflies and deerflies. That is, until the apex predator, the dragonfly, showed up. The flies vanished.

His product is a clip-on plastic dragonfly, and while it looks somewhat humorous, it's been proven very effective.

The proof is in his success. With less than a \$10,000 investment, Dan has amassed some \$750,000 in gross sales, with 130,000 units sold since 2018.

The dragonfly retails for between \$12 and \$14 and is available in roughly 600 stores in Canada. In the early going, Dan knocked on countless doors drumming up support and in 2021, he was approach by Canadian Tire to sell his product.

Mike's story, one filled with tragedy, inspired the Dragons. He and his wife lost their house in a fire in 2018 and they lost their son in a motocross accident in 2021.

Mike and his wife ?stayed strong? and carried on.

He said he wanted the investors to help with three spin-off products he's working on.

Arlene Dickinson made the offer of joining with all other Dragons ? Manjit Minhas, Michele Romanow, Vincenzo Guzzo and Wes Hall ? for 30%, or \$20,000 and 6% each.

?We love you,? Guzzo said, adding Mike's resilience after being beaten down was amazing.

?When you wish for good things, good things will come,? Mike said.

?I am totally elated with the outcome of our deal with the Dragons! Clean sweep and to date 5.6 million TikTok views through CBC. I sure didn't see that coming!?

Dunlop said having the Dragons' guidance and know-how is one thing you can't buy.

?I have been extremely happy and proud of what my family and I have achieved so far. My pitch on Dragons' Den will definitely accelerate the growth of the Dragonfly Wingman. It makes me feel good that I have taken an idea from an observation all the way to market and it enhances people's enjoyment of the outdoors.?

While elated, Mike admitted it was a ?very daunting experience.? He did radio interviews in the past and has been comfortable with

the atmosphere.

"When you're pitching to a panel of Canadian business moguls on national television it was hard to hold my nerves in check."

He developed the product some eight years ago and was the sole salesman in the start. He was "very pumped on the acceptance of my new product and the ease I was able to get in stores."

Prior to this he had no sales experience. Today, his product is in roughly 600 stores.

He was also highlighted in Cottage Life magazine in 2018 as well as Parry Sound's Sideroads and Shorelines.

The product is simple and that's what makes it great, he said.

"It solves a large problem that chemical deterrents do not. Deer and horse flies are primarily visual hunters that are relentless in their pursuit of a blood meal. However, when they spot a dragonfly "their most feared predator " they flee."

The Dragonfly Wingman simulates a real dragonfly in flight using a "scarecrow approach" that naturally fools these flies by tapping into Mother Nature's predatory laws.

His Amazon reviews are 91% positive and the retail store retention is amazing. Most new stores have searched him out for retail opportunities.

Clip it on your hat, clip it to a stroller, pretty much anywhere it's needed to drive away those pesky biting insects. It's great for hiking, backpacking, walking, running, biking, camping, boating, fishing and just enjoying the outdoors.

Dunlop noted many of us have all come up with great business ideas and never followed through.

"This was one that I made the move on and have been more successful than I imagined. I am grateful for all the local support I've received in my home town."

Full episodes and exclusive behind-the-scenes content can be viewed at cbc.ca/dragonsden.

Dragons' Den is filmed at the CBC Broadcasting Centre in Toronto and airs Thursdays at 8 p.m.

Mike says "feel free to bug me" at 905-967-5436 or email him at getyourbug@outlook.com