



By J.D. Booth, August 6, 2009

(TRAVERSE CITY, MI) Donald Williams was honored by the state's largest business publication for his impact on the growth of Michigan business enterprises, proven innovation, and determination and drive to succeed. Taking his firm belief that success hinges on trust, honesty and integrity and couple that with his entrepreneurial spirit and unfailing drive to succeed, the result: www.corpmagazine.com Entrepreneur of Distinction, Opti Temp Inc. Founder and CEO Donald Williams

Donald C. Williams

Opti Temp Inc.,
www.optitemp.com

It was 22 years ago that Don Williams, faced with a layoff from a public company vowed never to put himself in that position. Even with other offers in hand, he launched Opti Temp, which specializes in the design and manufacture of innovative heat transfer solutions for a wide range of commercial, industrial, military and laboratory applications. Essentially, Williams reinvented himself as an entrepreneur. He calls it "one of the best decisions I've ever made." But the reinvention part wasn't quite complete; a year after opening the doors, a minority partner left and with him, the company's sales operation. "We had to expand our product line, obtain new sales outlets, change our marketing strategy, and also enter other markets." Williams sees the role of entrepreneur as "coach," directing the team in the game of business. And what's needed to succeed? "First and foremost, today's entrepreneur must have people skills, and the capability to select capable people that will fit into the culture of the company," says Williams. "It is absolutely necessary to select and retain good people. The entrepreneur must also have planning skills both in marketing and sales, and in operations. Marketing is aiming the gun, and sales is the action of pulling the trigger." Among the challenges Williams sees today are dealing with the short lifecycle of products. "We constantly look for new features and new products that we can introduce to keep ahead of the competition." He's also been around long enough to recognize that economic downturns are a way of life. "They occur about every four to eight years. I think it is necessary to recognize this and plan accordingly. It is also necessary to identify industries that are not as susceptible to these downturns and market to these industries. We constantly try to find these industries and avoid those most susceptible to downturns."