



NEW BRUNSWICK

ATLANTIC WHEELCHAIR

PIERRE MALLET chose to make his entrepreneurial debut in a business where he understood the products, the customer expectations, and the market demands. While this is a basic rule for any new entrepreneur, the fact that Pierre is also a potential customer gave him a unique perspective of the realities and opportunities of managing his business.

Located in downtown Moncton, New Brunswick, Atlantic Wheelchair was established in early 1991. The company sells and rents wheelchairs, medical supplies, hospital beds and car accessories (such as lifts, hand controls and remote controls) needed by people with physical challenges. Pierre's own experience as a quadriplegic, resulting from Muscular Dystrophy, taught him that equipment emergencies rarely happen at convenient times, so Atlantic Wheelchair also offers 24 hours a day emergency service. "It's a sense of security for many customers," he admits.

Pierre happened into entrepreneurship as a means of personal employment. "It was difficult for me to find work," he confides. "There aren't many opportunities for quadriplegic employees. But I knew what I was capable of. I had completed two years of my commerce degree at l'Université de Moncton, and then got my diploma in entrepreneurship from the New Brunswick Community College. I was ready."

The opportunity represented more than just a job – it offered a sense of independence. Although he knew his capabilities, getting the company off the ground was a fairly significant undertaking. "Atlantic Wheelchair was really my first true job," he explains. "I had no personal savings to finance the start of the business. Finding money was a serious obstacle. Fortunately I made contact with the New Brunswick government's entrepreneurial program



Barnett and Mackay

(Program Entrepreneurship) which provides financial assistance and entrepreneurial training for entrepreneurs with disabilities."

Finding initial funding was one thing, but Pierre soon learned that cash flow is perhaps the most significant challenge any business faces – and it's a daily concern. He agrees that it is sometimes worrisome trying to bal-

tinues, not just from a morale point of view, but in being there to offer a helping hand when you need it most. Pierre credits his employees and family for helping him to build a successful venture.

"My advice to potential entrepreneurs is to open the business of your dreams. But make sure you get some experience in the same field of busi-

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ance your monthly receivables with your payables.

"On the plus side, there's a great deal of satisfaction for anyone who is successfully self-employed," points out Pierre. "I know that I'm very proud every time I stop to really look at what I've created. Sure there is a lot of responsibility and hard work – and you never have a secure income – but it's worth the risks."

A dependable circle of support is critical for an entrepreneur, he con-

ness – it's critical to know your customers and your products. It is also important to have good business management skills."

Atlantic Wheelchair will continue to roll along under Pierre's experienced eye. His product line grows regularly as he is able to finance new products that will satisfy the changing needs of a growing list of customers. He hopes to expand into manufacturing at some point in the future.

Pierre Mallet

WHERE TO REACH PIERRE MALLET

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