

ANNE-MARIE RYAN: An E-Commerce Pioneer

By Karen Christensen

Anne-Marie Ryan's (MBA '78) passion for innovation was nourished early in her career. After graduating from U of T in 1970 with a B.A. in political science, her first job was at the Toronto Stock Exchange, where she helped develop the Computer Assisted Trading System. "CATS", as it is known, was the first automated trade execution system in North America, and for many years was the model used around the world. "It got me excited about what technology meant for the investment business. When you work on a project like that at the beginning of your career, it wakes you up to the fact that jobs don't have to be mundane, that you can be part of something that is about changing the world."

A desire to be a catalyst for change has been the "guiding principle" of Anne-Marie's career. She has always been drawn to companies that are committed to innovation. "I'm not interested in automating existing processes – I believe in finding new ways to use technology to make processes better. For me, the rewards come from building things."

As vice president of On-Line Trading at Digital Gem Corporation, her challenge is to build the E-Commerce online brokerage division of Northern Securities Inc., an Internet investment bank and wholly-owned subsidiary of Digital Gem. eNorthern (www.enorthern.com) will trade stocks, options, and mutual funds, as well as conduct public offerings online. The eNorthern customer base will become the distribution arm for the corporate finance business of Northern Securities, which is a registered Investment Dealer and a member of the Investment Dealers Association of Canada (IDAC).

eNorthern, says Anne-Marie, is "poised to become an independent Canadian innovator" by providing online public offerings – something that's been very popular in the U.S., but

"hasn't really been done well yet in Canada. The online investing market in Canada is currently dominated by the large banks, and by two U.S. providers, E*Trade and Charles Schwab," says Anne-Marie. "There is no independent company like ours in Canada. In the States, they give away free quotes, charts, whatever you need. In Canada, very little is free – in most cases, you have to be a customer to get onto the site. We're challenging that model dramatically."

Something Anne-Marie finds great satisfaction in is finding and nurturing talent. "I've hired a lot of young people over the years, and have enjoyed mentoring them along the way, giving them the skill sets to grow as individuals. I find that very challenging and satisfying."

Anne-Marie is "passionate" about her work, but she does find time for other activi-

"What you don't want to do is let technology happen to you. Either you take charge and become a master of your own destiny, or technology will run you over."

ties. She loves to golf, read, and spend time with her family, which includes her husband, a derivatives trading manager with a large investment dealer, and sons, Michael, 15 and Brendan, 19. She feels strongly that "you have to constantly upgrade yourself – the world is changing so fast, you can't ever think you're done."

She takes lots of industry-related courses, and is "constantly reading management books." One that she highly recommends is *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* by James C. Collins, which looks at ten companies that have been extremely successful and how their core values have set a standard, transcending specific leaders who come and go.

Do her two teen-aged sons know their mom is an E-Commerce pioneer? "If you asked them," says Anne-Marie, "they'd probably say I should be doing something way more cool than trading stocks – like video games or MP3 technology." **RM**