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SPENDING SAVE US
FROM RECESSION?

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ALL ENGINES GO:
Travel agent Dean
Horvath says business
is still booming with
his high-end clientele,
who spend upwards of
\$50,000 per vacation

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BCIT AEROSPACE CAMPUS

A primer on
how to get
B.C.'s moneyed
class to spend,
in good times
and bad

Money

(That's What I Want)

Let's face it: things are rough. If the economy were a celebrity, it would be Britney Spears in her head-shaving, rehab-going, strapped-to-a-gurney days. Hit with sagging investment portfolios and declining house values, British Columbians have seen an across-the-board hit to their net worth in recent months and are tightening their purse strings accordingly. But all pain isn't created equal. The well-to-do, while doing with less, still have a disproportionate amount of disposable income – and, for businesses and organizations catering to the wealthy, figuring out how to get them to part with that cash has become crucial.

Those profiled in the following pages are intimately in tune with the needs and desires of B.C.'s moneyed class: the BC Cancer Foundation, with its intensely focused and collaborative approach to fundraising; BMO Harris private banking, with its personal and specialized client relationships; and Mason Horvath Inc., with its sky's-the-limit attitude toward customer satisfaction. Each offers unique insights into tapping a consumer group that's sophisticated, demanding and extremely valuable.

BY Jessica Werb PHOTOGRAPH BY Paul Joseph

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Of course, any marketer will tell you that wealthy consumers are not all alike; Environics Analytics Group Ltd's *Prizm Marketer's Handbook*, for instance, gives them names such as "Cosmopolitan Elite," "Furs & Philanthropy" and "Asian Affluence" to differentiate. In recognition of such distinctions, our special package includes profiles (below) of three types of affluence: one who has inherited family wealth, another who immigrated from overseas to build his multimillion-dollar empire and a young entrepreneurial couple just now beginning to enjoy the trappings of success.



High Flyers:
The Luxury Service Provider There's no way to find Mason Horvath Inc. by accident: the business has no storefront, no signs, and does little to no advertising. And that's just the way its president, Dean Horvath, wants it. "We don't want our time taken up with people who are just browsing," says the 35-year-old executive, who founded the luxury travel agency a year and a half ago with former partner Claudia Mason, whom he bought out last October.

Holding court in his 14th-floor office at Granville and Hastings, Horvath explains the discriminating nature of his business. "We want to selectively choose our clients and have them choose us and spend time working to build the relationship, as opposed to just firing our name out there and getting random people calling us." Unlike discount travel agency Flight Centre, where Horvath previously worked in corporate travel, Mason Horvath isn't about catering to the cost-cutting needs of cash-strapped trekkers. Rather, the company is intensely service oriented, specializing in complex business and leisure-travel itineraries for busy corporate executives for whom economy class is not an option.

A low profile is all part of the mystique of high-end travel,

where 24-hour individualized service is key and no request is too outlandish. Want to spend a day with a pal taking part in an aerial dogfight with an Italian-built fighter? That'll run you upward of \$6,800. How about 24 hours in Europe pretending you're James Bond, complete with M16 training, helicopter flights and a terrorist combat mission? A cool \$53,500. Or maybe a flight into outer space? In August, the agency was accredited to represent Virgin Galactic LLC, a division of Virgin Group Ltd. that will start offering passenger flights into space starting in 2010. The cost? A mere \$200,000 for a seat on the shuttle.

Today's moneyed exec, explains Horvath, isn't interested in a comfortable luxury holiday so much as the experience of a lifetime. In an age when airlines have been folding and hotel chains are bracing for sharp downturns, elite travel seems to be in a league all its own. After \$8 million in revenue in his first year of operation, Horvath is predicting he'll pull in \$10 million this year, in spite of the current economic climate; the super-rich may be a little less super, but they're still willing to splurge. The company has 627 clients, says Horvath, who spend an average of \$3,660 per business trip and anywhere from \$5,000 to \$80,000 per person for a leisure vacation.

"We spend an hour with people when we plan their vacations before we even talk about what or where," he boasts, "just to find out what kind of trips they've gone on in the past, what they're looking for in this holiday, what their likes and dislikes are." Mason Horvath will also call hotels before their clients arrive, informing operators that a VIP is staying there and asking them to go above and beyond in serving them.

"In the travel industry, 95 per cent of companies are streamlining everything... which works for 95 per cent of travellers," he observes. As for the other five per cent? Well, your space shuttle awaits.

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The Wealthy: Old Money

David C. Bental
Age: 53
Children: Three daughters, one son
Cars: Jeep (S Type) and Ford Escape Hybrid
Property: Home in Kenilside; co-ownership of summer property in Howe Sound
Gadget: BlackBerry
Hobby: Competitive water-skiing



When David C. Bental's kids were growing up (they're now aged 27, 25, 23 and 17), they were given three jars each for their allowance: "One jar was for spending money, one jar was for savings and one jar was for giving," recalls the 53-year-old founder of Next Step Advisors Inc. and former president of Dominion Construction Inc., which was founded by his grandfather Charles Bental. Every dollar was to be divided: "Ten cents had to go into the giving jar, 10 cents into the saving jar and 80 cents they could do what they wanted with."

Although Bental himself went to the public Magee Secondary School, he sent his son to St. George's and his daughters to Crofton House. Each child can count on a down payment for a house when they turn 30 or when they get married—in whichever comes sooner. There is a

family trust fund as well as other money available for his heirs, says Bental, but they will not have access to it until they are much older and established.

As for himself, Bental insists he eschews extravagance. The 2006 True Wealth Report, which included Bental in its survey of high-net-worth Canadians, found that 90 per cent had art collections—but Bental counts himself among the other 10 per cent. He's a sports fan, preferring a hockey game to a symphony concert. "Our two biggest priorities are charity and travel," he says, noting that he and his wife, Alison, support UIC's Business Families Centre, St. George's School and Hope International Development Agency, among other organizations. Travel these days tends to revolve around his hobby as a competitive water-skiier, which has taken him as far as South Africa, but generally, he says, "we have not been world travelers."

When he shops for clothes, Bental says, he's all about the service, frequenting Madison Men's Wear Ltd. on West Pender, where he sometimes runs into Premier Gordon Campbell. "How they hooked me is that I needed some pants taken in," he recalls. "I popped in and asked, 'What do you charge for alterations?' They said, 'Nothing.' Just think about us when you need something new." If a business wants to attract him, he says, the bottom line is "personalized service, tailor-made solutions, empathetic listening and anything... that will save me time."

The Wealthy: New Money

Claire Lamont and Alan Bedingfield



Age: Both 30
Children: None
Cars: One Mini Cooper
Property: Loft at Main and 1st
Gadget: iPods
Last holiday: Vegas ("for the restaurants and cocktail lounges")

Self-confessed "partners in crime and business," Claire Lamont and Alan Bedingfield are the founders of Smak PR, a Vancouver-based agency with a focus on viral and guerrilla marketing tactics that, they say, has seen 50 per cent annual growth since its inception in 2003 and now brings in over \$3 million in annual revenues. That may not qualify them for multimillionaire status, and they won't reveal their personal salaries, but with no kids and little taste for big luxuries, they have plenty of (continued on p. 42)

Big Givers:
The Philanthropic Foundation
In a 2006 survey by Concerco Marketing Group Inc. and Steiner Investment Partners of 465 Canadians with a net worth of \$10 million or more, entitled the *True Wealth Report*, 69

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