



Dan Boow (left) and his wife Sherry Polkosnik (right) have seen their family business grow. TIM FRASER

## WINNING THE POOL

### How a Windsor small-business owner went from pool minder to tie boss

As the owner of a pool store in Windsor, Ontario, Dan Boow was well acquainted with the

organic junk — the leaves, maple keys, and “white fluffies,” as he calls them, not to mention toads and rodents —

that would end up floating on the surface of people’s pools or getting sucked into the skimmers. Within a

year of opening his store, LA Pools, Boow had come up with a solution: Zak the Pool Minder.

Zak — named after the son of Boow’s silent partner — is that rare thing: an item made in Canada with entirely Canadian parts. The pool cleaner catches and collects everything on the surface of the water before it can reach and potentially damage the basket and pump.

The Zak team is a family affair, consisting of Boow, his wife and business partner Sherry Polkosnik, each of their sons — Jared and Christian, both 18 — as well as other students and a woman Boow hired through Arc Industries, which helps to find employment for developmentally disabled adults. All the assembly, boxing and shipping takes place in Boow’s store.

In the two years since Boow trademarked Zak the Pool Minder, he has not only introduced the device into Canadian Tire and other stores across Canada, but he is in the process of buying half of a company that produces another product, Tie Boss, billed as the “world’s easiest tie-down.”

“Zak is great,” says Boow, “customers love it, and sales have been really good. But it’s seasonal. Tie Boss is an all-year-round product.”

Currently, Tie Boss — a rope pulley

## CIBC TIPS: A ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

- Do you have an innovative product? Are you addressing a niche market need? Whatever your approach, a **great business concept** is a key pillar of a great business.

- **Set clear long-term goals** by starting with a thorough assessment of your current state and ensure your business has the structure and resources in place to support your aims.

- Your **financial partner** can offer you a wide range of convenient and flexible options to help your business succeed, whether it be an overdraft or line of credit to ongoing management of your cash flow.

that works like a Venetian blind and can be operated even around heavy objects (with one hand) — is primarily made in Ohio. Over the next year, Boow’s company, Pool Minder Inc., will team up with the current owner, convert it to a Canadian company and distribute to the United States.

“We supply over 220 airports in North America,” says Boow. “Tie Boss is used for tying down the small planes. It’s just phenomenal.”

Along the way, Boow has received support and advice from his local CIBC financial advisor. “Everything I do, I call her up or stop in and we hash it over,” he says.

His advisor and her boss even stopped by during a recent Tie Boss demo at a Canadian Tire location. “They both loved it,” says Boow. And now that Boow is in the purchasing stage of buying part of Tie Boss, he says he will be counting on help from her and others at the bank. “She’s behind us all the way,” he adds.

Much of the money will be spent on advertising, says Boow, because if the product is going to be available across the country, he will have to get it on TV.

Other new products are in the offing as well — including the Tie Boss sling, which is useful for securing Thules or kayaks onto car roofs.

“The company is just going to grow, grow, grow,” says Boow.

## THE POWER OF CONNECTING

Small-business owner Dan Boow credits some of his success to his ability to make connections.

When he was trying to get into Home Hardware with Zak the Pool Minder, he cold-called the owner of Sifto Salt, which sells there. To Boow’s surprise, the owner took his call, watched a video about Zak and liked the product enough to speak to his friend and golf partner, the buyer for Home Hardware. “They loved the product right away,” says Boow. “It was the first breakthrough.”

At a recent meeting at Canadian Tire’s head office in Toronto to discuss Tie Boss, Boow set up a booth on the rooftop parking lot and invited Canadian Tire managers to try out the product with a kayak he had brought along.

“They said, ‘This is a first,’” he laughs, but they told him it was perfect timing to put Tie Boss in every Canadian Tire store across the country.

Being persistent and believing in his products have paid off for Boow. “If you love what you do, never be afraid to reach out, because people will help.”

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