

Michael Duck

May 2011 Honorary Degree Recipient

Doctor of Laws (honoris causa)

Anyone who has ever enjoyed a cup of coffee at Tim Hortons, Starbucks or McDonald's — and counted on a consistent amount of cream, flavor or sweetener to balance the blend — can thank inventor and entrepreneur Michael R. Duck, the founder of SureShot Dispensing Systems.

Mr. Duck is a self-made, high-tech equipment developer who founded A.C. Dispensing Equipment Inc. in Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia. He's also an innovator whose superb mechanical aptitude and intuition combine with a work ethic that lead him to create technologically-advanced solutions for challenging problems.

Leaving school at Grade 10, Mr. Duck began working at Baxter Dairies as an assistant to the maintenance engineer. He wasn't in that position long, however, and eventually rose to become the plant manager. He created his company, SureShot, after his boss at the dairy issued Duck a challenge: to stop complaining about the inconsistent flavor of his morning coffee by doing something about the problem. Working in his garage at home, Mr. Duck researched, designed and developed a sophisticated electro-mechanical dispenser that consistently delivered precise amounts of dairy product, cup after cup, day after day. The rest, as they say, is history.

North America's manufacturing labor rates compare unfavorably with many other parts of the world, and that means new products made here must deliver absolute value to the market. Mr. Duck strives to provide such value. He plays a major role in developing prototypes and solutions. Thanks to a sophisticated series of machines invented, developed, marketed and distributed by his company, SureShot's 70 employees produce over \$15 million of goods that are exported outside Nova Scotia annually. That kind of success gets noticed and Mr. Duck was honored in 1999 as Ernst & Young's Atlantic Canada Manufacturer and Entrepreneur of the Year. A few years later, *Progress Magazine* named him one of the top 50 CEOs in Atlantic Canada.

There's more to Michael Duck's success than his business ingenuity. His company, A.C. Dispensing Equipment Inc., is an equal opportunity employer and a minority-owned business.

The Black Business Initiative presented him with the Hector Jacques Award of Business Excellence in 2005. Mr. Duck serves as an inspiration to young Nova Scotians of African descent, especially those pursuing careers in engineering and applied science. He has been described as a beacon of hope and an example of success for adult learners and creative entrepreneurs, regardless of ethnic background.

Mr. Duck's corporate values, shared by his wife Shirley Dawn, permeate SureShot's working environment. Integrity, innovation, insight and inclusiveness are the hallmarks of his management. He is proud that his company is located in a fledgling business park in his hometown, and that he employs a local workforce.

In the community, Mr. Duck and A.C. Dispensing Equipment have supported many causes over the years, including community recreation facilities and a community health centre. In so doing, he has fostered health and well-being.

He is mindful of the challenges faced by others and has long been a national sponsor of the Tim Horton Children's Foundation. He is also a major contributor to Ronald McDonald House, helping families deal with serious illnesses; and to the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, which provides compassionate care for cancer patients.

Mr. Duck shares his time and expertise with business and volunteer organizations, including the Canadian Association of Family Enterprises, Literacy Nova Scotia and the Canadian Association of Business Incubation. He is particularly proud to work with youth groups, frequently visiting schools and universities to offer life and business counsel.

SureShot has partnered with Dalhousie for more than a decade – engaging with engineering faculty members on research and development, and providing co-op work terms for students in commerce, and mechanical and industrial engineering.

Michael Duck has been described as possessing “an indomitable human spirit.” And we are all the better for that.

For his substantial contributions as a creative innovator, a successful entrepreneur, a caring employer and an inspiring leader; as well as for his commitment to life-long learning and mentorship; I ask you, Mr. Chancellor, in the name of Senate, to award Michael R. Duck the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.

Source: Dalhousie University

https://www.dal.ca/academics/convocation/history_traditions/honorary_degree_recipients/hon_degree_2011/michael_duck.html