

Waterloo-bound web 'whiz kid' honoured again

ROSE SIMONE

LONDON (Jul 27, 2006)

He is the chief executive and design brains behind an internationally successful web development company that has won major industry awards and boasts huge clients such as McDonalds Restaurants of Canada, Rogers Television and the Atlanta Thrashers, a National Hockey League team.

But when Waterloo-bound Keith Peiris began Cyberteks Design from his parents' London, Ont. home in 1999, no one took him seriously.

And no wonder. He was 11 years old at the time.

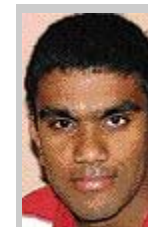
This summer, Peiris, now 18, was named one of Canada's "Top 20 Under 20" young people by the Youth in Motion organization that is focused on developing the skills of today's youth. The award was sponsored by companies such as ING and Bell Canada.

Peiris is also about to move to Waterloo in September, where he is enrolled as a first year student in the University of Waterloo nanotechnology engineering program.

He plans to juggle his duties as president and chief executive of Cyberteks Design along with his university workload.

"I'll have to balance things more. It's going to be a matter of time management," said Peiris, who still handles most of the larger web and software design jobs for the company that now employs three full-time and two part-time people.

Besides web designs and e-business sites using tools such as Macromedia Flash, the company is also now doing custom software work for companies in a wide range of industry sectors.



Keith Peiris of London, Ont., has been named one of Canada's "Top 20 Under 20" young people.

Peiris said the business started when he was playing around on the Internet at the age of 10 during the dot-com boom of the late 1990s.

At the time, the internet was taking off and brand new companies such as Yahoo and Amazon were undergoing phenomenal growth.

"I just loved what I was doing and found it really interesting, so it started almost as a summer job, just for fun," Peiris said.

There was a lot of web development work to go around at the time, and Peiris realized there was potential for growth. Yet as he started the company in his parents' basement, he didn't know if it would amount to much.

As it turned out, it took off like a rocket.

Right off the bat, around 1999 and 2000, awards starting coming in.

Peiris earned an Atlantic Digital Media Festival Award, along with a Webmasters Website Excellence Award, a Golden Web Award and Best of Web Gold Medal award from industry associations in those early days.

As the awards and recognition came in, Peiris began drawing wider media attention, not only in Canada but also on CBS Marketwatch and in publications such as the Washington Post, New York Times and Forbes.

Headlines often referred to him as a "whiz kid" and newspapers and magazines as far away as India, China and Japan took an interest.

Peiris has captured a number of high-level university and other scholarships as he enters the university this year.

He is looking forward to the coming nanotechnology boom, which is why he enrolled in the University of Waterloo program.

Nanotechnology is just like the Internet of the late 1990s, Peiris said.

He describes it as an emerging but still unsaturated, wide open field, full of possibilities.

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