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## SECTION C

## BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2006

INTEREST RATES - C4  
As expected,  
Bank of Canada  
raises key rate

↓ DOLLAR 86.77¢ US -0.24¢	↓ GOLD \$557.70 US -60¢	↑ EURO \$1.4154 CDN +0.04¢	↓ TSX 11,692.35 -41.02	↑ TSX VE 2,465.71 +6.16	↓ TSX 60 657.39 -1.60	↑ DOW 10,712.22 +23.45	↑ S&P 500 1,266.86 +3.04	↑ NASDAQ 2,265.25 +16.78
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## Building a personal brand

Consultant helps business owners articulate what they have to offer

BY ROSE SIMONE  
RECORD STAFF

In high school, Harp Arora had two career paths in mind. One was to run a business. The other was to become a psychologist.

Today, the Waterloo consultant owns a business that also lets her dabble in a bit of psychology.

Her business, Sedona Communications, is a marketing company that she launched after leaving her position as a director of marketing and communications at Clarica in 2003.

She now does marketing and consulting work for businesses — providing services in areas such as finance, insurance, design or health and fitness.

As part of that, she also offers advice on “personal branding,” which is where she gets to engage in the psychology.

“If you were my client, I could sit down and ask you really great questions, like: ‘What did you dream of doing as a kid?’

“So personal branding work allows me to have that one-on-one interaction,” she says.

It may sound like pop psychology, but Arora, who has a master’s of business administration degree, uses it to help her clients stay “sharp and focused” on who their customers are.

“There is a perception that branding is all about the logo, tag line, or the colour or font that you use, but it is so much more than that,” Arora says.

A personal brand is, simply put, what you are offering that is unique and of value. It embodies your vision, your goals and everything you stand for.

A personal brand isn’t just for high-profile people such as Martha Stewart, who have names that become their businesses, she says.

“In a small business, the person who is running the business is the brand,” she says.

“They are the face of the company,” she adds. “It is their values that shape where the company goes and how they respond to customers and what kind of innovation they have.”

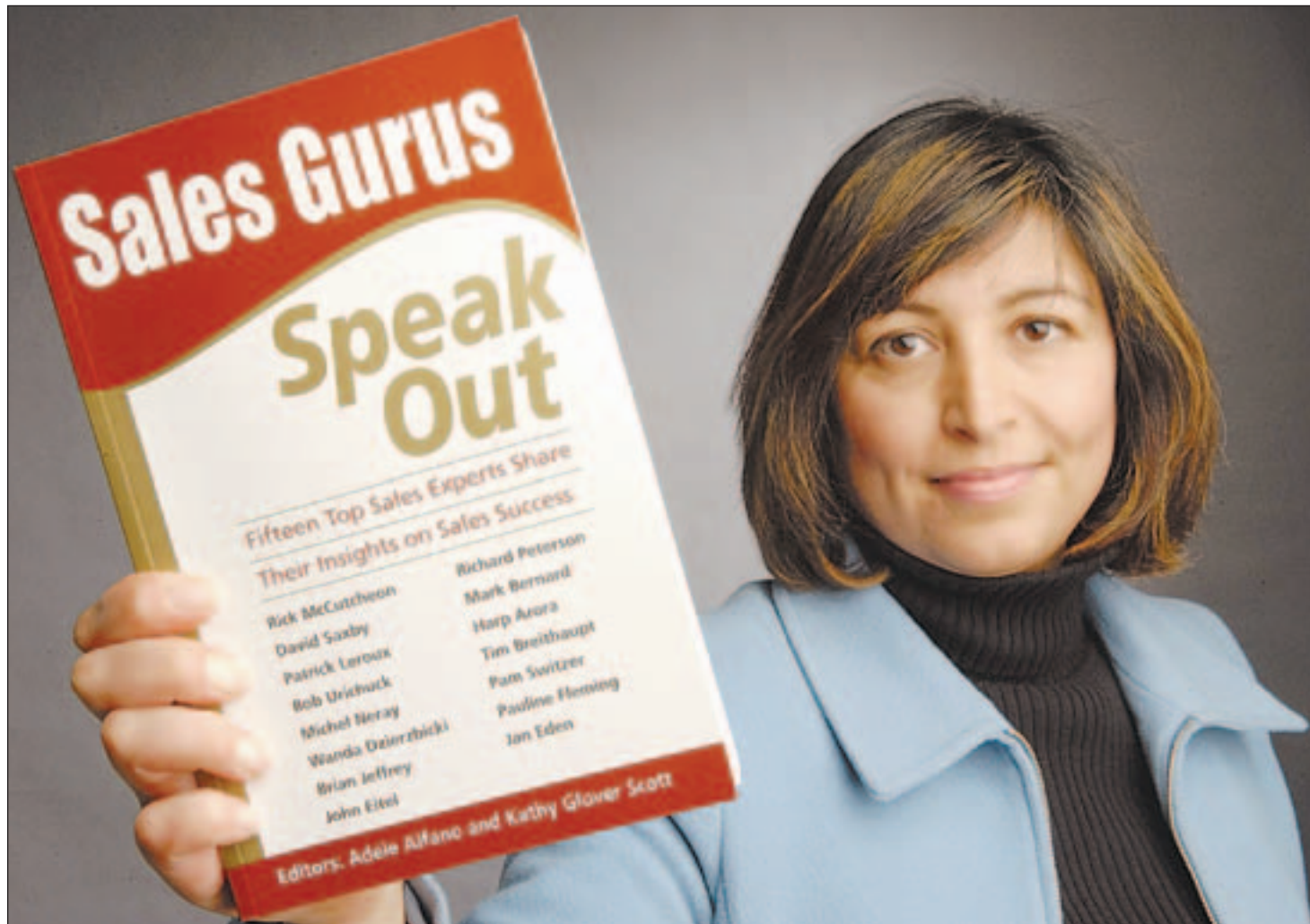
Arora’s business was born after Clarica and Sun Life announced a merger in 2002.

Her own job wasn’t on the line, she says, but she knew some executives at Clarica who were leaving and planning to start businesses of their own. They were interested in becoming her first clients.

So she helped Clarica and Sun Life with the integration for another year, but then she launched Sedona Communications.

The name comes from the Sedona community in Arizona, which has a landscape that has energized and inspired her soul, Arora says.

About a year after starting her company, she became certified as a “branding strategist” through Boston-based Reach Communications Consulting



Harp Arora of Waterloo runs a home business, Sedona Communications, which offers consulting services on marketing and branding. She wrote a chapter on branding for a recently published book called Sales Gurus Speak Out.

MATHEW MCCARTHY, RECORD STAFF

## SMALL BUSINESS

Inc., a company that specializes in branding work around the world.

Arora now uses tools such as surveys and materials from Reach Communication Consulting to help her business clients do personal branding.

Personal branding involves not only asking yourself what your core mission and values are, but also how the rest of the world perceives you.

So, in Arora’s own case, 62 people — a mixture of clients, friends, neighbours and people that she knew through her volunteer associations — answered an anonymous online survey on the Reach company website.

They listed what they saw as her personality traits, strengths and weaknesses. They even answered seemingly funny questions such as: “If Harp Arora was a car, what type would she be?”

That may sound “a little out there,” but it is valuable in branding, explains Arora, who also has a degree in psychology.

“People sometimes can’t articulate what they think you are

all about. But they can compare you to something, and that gives you a good idea of how they see you.”

That’s important because if you want to brand yourself as a team player, for example, but other people see you as someone who works best independently — “then you either shouldn’t promote that part of your personality in your branding, or you have to work to make it true.”

**“In running a small business, the person who is running the business is the brand.”**

HARP ARORA  
SEDONA COMMUNICATIONS

After the survey results were analysed, Arora was able to translate what she learned — that she was seen as enterprising, creative, collaborative and insightful — into a personal brand that she could then use in marketing Sedona Communications.

So a tagline she uses for her business, “discover hidden potential” emerges out of who she is, her goals and what she has to offer.

The key is to zero in on traits that are important to clients, Arora adds.

“I might say that I am compassionate, but do my clients really care about that? Probably not — they probably care more that I am good at analysis.”

So it is equally important to know who the clients are, she says. Does your client base have an average age of 20 or 50? What do they read? Do they watch television? How do they spend their holidays? Finding out about the clients helps you reach them, she says.

But the most important aspect of branding is to be honest, Arora says.

“If you say you are reliable, you have to deliver on time, every time.”

Small businesses that provide services rely heavily on word-of-mouth advertising. So if you don’t deliver what you advertise, that does become known and it undermines the brand, Arora adds.

In marketing, she advises people to stay away from saying things like: “I offer quality and service.”

And don’t use words like “value added,” Arora says.

“Those are words that are over-used. And if you are the consumer, wouldn’t you expect service and quality?”

“It’s fine to talk about service, but you have to say something specific — such as:

“I guarantee you will get a call back within six hours.” Messages that are simple and useful are more likely to get through in today’s world, where people are bombarded with about 3,000 marketing messages of all kinds during a typical day, she adds.

A website has also become an important marketing and branding tool. Many people today will look for your company on the Internet and if they can’t find it there, they will not both-

er to look in a phone book, she adds.

“A website really is a price of entry now. It shows that you are serious about the business and that you are doing this for the long haul.”

It is possible to market a business without a lot of money, but then it will take time, Arora says.

“You can, for example, reach your clients by going to the association meetings they attend,” she says.

But some people make the mistake of thinking that “networking” is about showing up at an event and just collecting business cards.

That won’t cut it. Networking will only work if you are “making a real connection,” Arora says.

“A network is everybody around you. It is your family, Your friends, Your neighbours.”

Arora also makes a priority of getting genuinely involved in community work that she believes in. She also gives seminars and writes articles on branding. And she wrote a chapter on branding for a book, Sales Gurus Speak Out, edited by Adele Alfano and Kathy Glover Scott and published by Experts Who Speak Books.

Arora says discovering her own mission and goals through personal branding allowed her to really zero in on the one-on-one coaching work she enjoys.

“It has really allowed me to hone in on the clients and the type of work that I want. It has given me a clear, sharp focus,” she says.

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• Harp Arora will present a two-hour seminar titled *Is Your Personal Brand Strong Enough?*, at 6:30 p.m. on Feb. 1 in the Waterloo Region Small Business Centre at Kitchener City Hall. The cost is \$35. Phone the centre at 741-2986 to register.

## LOCAL SCENE

## Mario Musso heads K-W Real Estate Board

Mario Musso of Trius Realty in Kitchener is the new president of the Kitchener-Waterloo Real Estate Board.

Joining him on the board of the non-profit organization are Tania Benninger, first vice-president, Karen Shartun, second vice-president and George Lavallee, past president.

Other directors include Sara Hill, Gaye Males, Teresa Osen, George Patton, Ted Scharf, Barry Lowry and Dietmar Sommerfeld.

## First Capital buys Fairway Road plaza

First Capital Realty, a Toronto-based shopping centre owner, has purchased a plaza at 589 Fairway Rd. S. in Kitchener.

The 64,000-square-foot plaza, anchored by a GoodLife Fitness Clubs gym, is next to Fairway Plaza, a 170,000-square-foot box store development First Realty bought last year. Also in the newly purchased plaza are a Kelsey’s restaurant and an HSBC branch.

The company said the plaza, acquired for \$13.2 million, gives it a better mix of tenants and additional opportunities for expansion.

First Capital owns several other commercial developments in Waterloo Region, including the Bridgeport Plaza and Northfield Centre in Waterloo, the Stanley Park Mall in Kitchener and the Delta Centre in Cambridge.

Across Canada, it has an interest in 134 retail properties in major urban centres.

## Business students try real-life challenges

More than 75 first-year business students at Wilfrid Laurier University will get a chance to put their ideas into practice Saturday during a day-long case conference.

The conference will include workshops and a case competition, which allows students to simulate and solve a real-life business problem.

The conference, which will run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Schlegel Centre for Entrepreneurship, is sponsored by XLeRate, a Laurier campus business club that has grown to more than 200 members.

Several local businesses have donated prizes for the competition winners and judges from the community will decide the winners.

## RDM Corp. appoints chief financial officer

James Merwin is the new chief financial officer of RDM Corp., a Waterloo company that develops software and hardware for electronic payment processing.

Merwin previously was a financial consultant to BTI Canada, a corporate travel management firm.

Before that, he held various financial and operations roles with Mayne Logistics Loomis and was a senior audit manager with the accounting firm Price-waterhouseCoopers.

He succeeds Jim Kopperson, who left RDM to become the chief financial officer of the ATS Automation Tooling Systems solar products group in Cambridge.

## ThyssenKrupp Budd has new chief executive

The U.S. owner of Kitchener-based ThyssenKrupp Budd Canada has a new chief executive officer.

Robert Soulliere of Tecumseh, Ont. is taking over as president and CEO of ThyssenKrupp Budd Co.

Soulliere, who previously was chief operating officer of the Troy, Mich.-based auto parts supplier, succeeds Dietrich Zaps, who is moving into an executive post with ThyssenKrupp’s parent company in Germany.

ThyssenKrupp Budd Canada makes automotive frames and employs about 1,300 people. Its Kitchener plant is at Homer Watson Boulevard and Bleams Road.

## Diner cuts heating bills with its own waste oil

WATERTOWN, MASS.

Like every small business owner, Don Levy was eager to escape increases in the cost of energy this winter.

And the owner of Deluxe Town Diner has found a way to slash his fuel bill for heating and hot water to \$0 during some weeks this winter.

It’s a new system that runs on the 130 or so litres of vegetable oil he uses every week for cooking fries — plus oil he collects from a nearby pizzeria and two Chinese restaurants.

While hundreds of Boston-area restaurants sell or give

their used cooking oil to companies that reprocess it into motor and heating fuel, Levy is one of the few who has cut out the middleman and become his own heating supplier.

Besides curbing heating costs, Levy is also saving the \$100 US or more he used to pay a sanitation firm to haul away used oil every month.

A blend of fossil fuel and vegetable oil can be used in many conventional boilers.

To burn his diner cooking oil, diner owner Levy bought a special burner made by Econo Heat Inc. of Spokane, Wash., which cost \$20,000 US, including

the cost of installation.

In the basement of his 86-seat diner, he first pours the waste vegetable oil through a big sieve into a 200-litre drum to catch food fry remnants.

The used oil is then passed through a special filter that can trap particles as small as 5 microns — the period at the end of this sentence is about 300 microns in diameter.

To keep from clogging, the system also requires pre-heating the oil before burning it, using heat from the boiler after it has been manually warmed and started.

But after that, residual heat

from the boiler keeps oil flowing.

Maintenance requires more attention than a standard burner. Levy has to change the \$4 filter roughly every week.

He also has to worry about coming up with his own steady supply of vegetable oil.

So far this winter, Levy has had to buy more than 350 litres of fresh cooking oil at about 75 cents a litre to supplement the diner’s used oil supply, which has not kept up with his burner’s needs.

But overall, Levy is satisfied he will recoup his investment within five years.

And he will feel like a good citizen of the world in the meantime.

The 800 or 900 diners who come through his restaurant every Saturday or Sunday will never have any reason to know that the cosy warmth inside the 1947-vintage diner is coming from the oil that cooked last week’s hash browns.

“Why should we drain the planet’s resources by burning up expensive heating oil,” Levy said, “when we have our own supply of oil right here in the restaurant?”

• Boston Globe