

# BUSINESS

<b>DOLLAR</b> 95.81 US +0.08	<b>EURO</b> 1.44 Cdn +0.26	<b>TSX</b> 14,625.76 +42.10	<b>TSX VE</b> 3,318.99 +25.65	<b>TSX 60</b> 841.75 +2.59	<b>DOW</b> 14,000.41 +82.19	<b>S&amp;P 500</b> 1,533.08 +6.90	<b>Nasdaq</b> 2,720.04 +20.55	<b>GOLD</b> \$677.20 US +\$4.60 US	<b>OIL (West Tx.)</b> \$76.02 US +\$0.87 US
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## Now he's listening to his own ideas

### Former Gennum design engineer launches technology start-up

BY LISA GRACE MARR

When Philippe Pango had a six-figure salary in a senior position with a big corporation he admired, he did the only thing he could.

He quit. The former senior design engineer with Gennum Corporation in Burlington had often presented company executives with ideas for new products but nothing ever gelled.

"I would bring a cool design idea that after analysis would bring them about \$3, 4, 5 million a year. That's enough for an individual, but not a big company," he said. "Two years after I had the idea, someone else (in a different company) did it — the same product I had initiated. I thought maybe I have it in my blood, maybe I'm an idea guy and maybe next time I have an idea I should take it and do it.

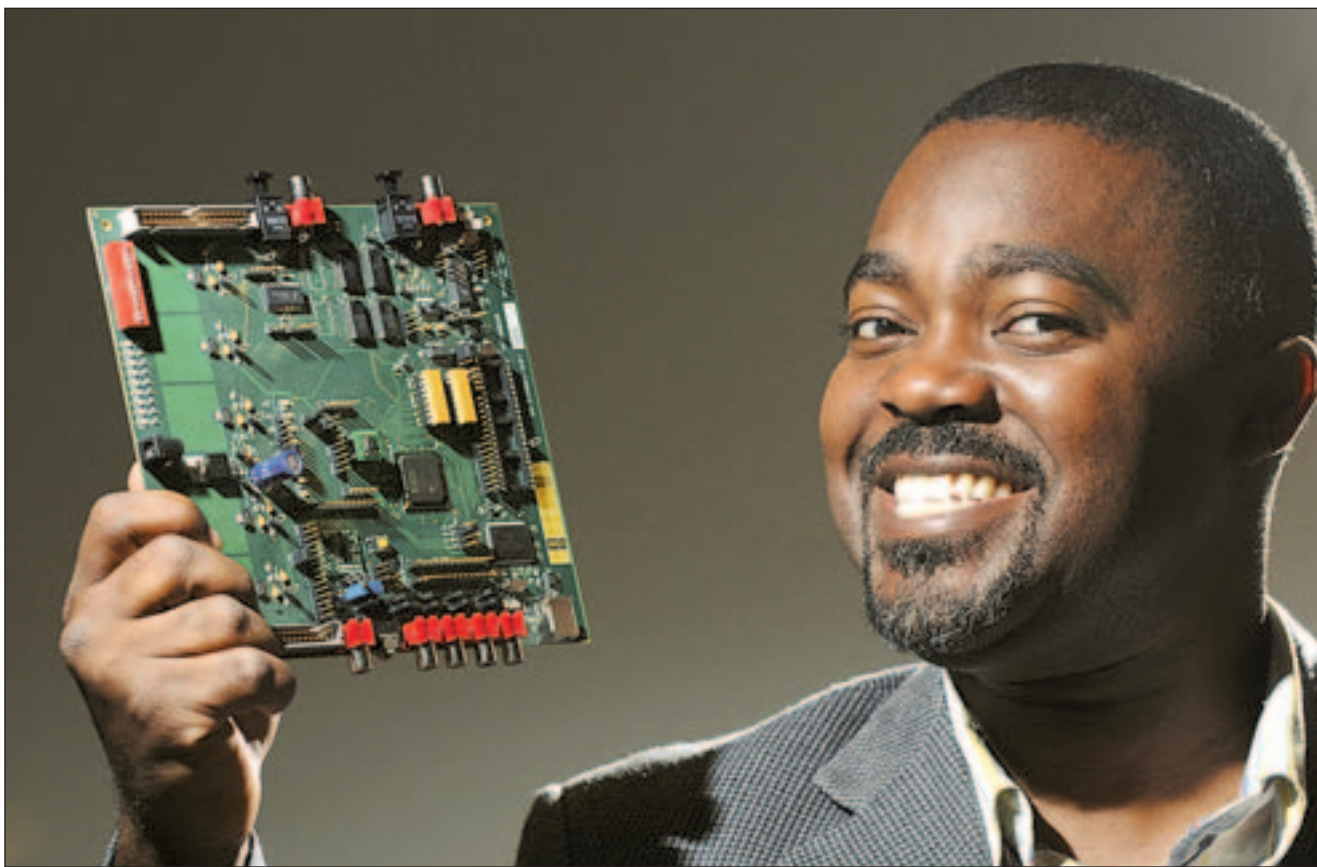
This is exactly what I did." The result is Cayce Medical ([www.caycecorp.com](http://www.caycecorp.com)).

He was inspired to change gears about a year before that when he came across research at McMaster University that has the potential to revolutionize hearing aid technology.

Currently, most hearing aids try to amplify sound for those with hearing loss. Researchers at Mac, led by Suzanne Becker, had developed the NeuroCompensator, software which uses a sophisticated model of an ear to reinforce sound based on what the damaged parts of the ear would normally hear.

"I think this is the next big thing in the hearing aid industry," said Pango.

This year McMaster received a \$100,000 grant from the Ontario Cen-



RON ALBERTSON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

**Philippe Pango has a licence for hearing aid technology developed at McMaster University.**

tres of Excellence to run clinical trials and develop its commercial application.

He took a licence out on the NeuroCompensator technology and has an agreement with Gennum to give them access to the technology once the research and development is complete.

He's confident the market is ready.

According to McMaster, about 10 per cent of people in Canada have a hearing

impairment and of those, 20 per cent wear a hearing aid.

However, Pango said more than 14 per cent of hearing aid users won't use their hearing aids because they're not effective. "That's an incredible number. That means other alternatives need to be investigated."

For now, Pango's office is at home in Stoney Creek.

But he is confident that soon there

will be office space, two or three more staff including design engineers and a bright future.

After all, he has more than one egg in the basket. He has also developed an audio device that can synthesize speech and music in real time in Bluetooth headsets, MP3 players or hearing aids.

The OCE funding has resulted in the hiring of a programming researcher for

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a year — a critical move for the tiny start-up company.

"I am playing role of president, chief technical officer and all that other research stuff," said Pango.

He also hired a business advisor whom he meets regularly along with potential new investors. Cayce is at the point where it needs "fresh, new money?"

So far, the budget is made up of "love money" — money from friends, family, himself.

Pango is newly 40, newly divorced — a single dad who shares custody of his two little girls with his ex-wife.

His life is exciting and stressful all at the same time.

"Once you make a decision like (quitting your job to start a new firm), you really have to enjoy every day after that."

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## Mac researchers develop chip to improve hearing aids

BY LISA GRACE MARR

McMaster University researcher Sue Becker is about to embark on a new journey of discovery — how to take the theoretical and turn it into something practical.

Cayce Medical's president Philippe Pango said as soon as he started talking to Becker and her colleagues, he thought the development of their new NeuroCompensator technology to boost the effectiveness of hearing aids could be the start of an enormously successful business venture.

The research by Becker, Ian Bruce and others at McMaster in the past three years resulted in their application for patents in 2003.

*It uses a sophisticated model of the ear to reinforce sound based on what the damaged parts of the ear would have heard*

"My research mainly focuses on computation models and memory, much more theoretical," said Becker. "This is the first opportunity to work on a practical application of this research. It's very exciting."

It's also exciting for those with hearing loss.

Traditional hearing aids generally amplify sounds which are not heard by the user.

The new NeuroCompensator uses a

sophisticated model of the ear to reinforce sound based on what the damaged parts of the ear would have heard.

The NeuroCompensator, in effect, is software encapsulated in a tiny chip, which trains the hearing aid to compensate for the areas of the ear that are damaged.

In essence, it helps the ear to work as it would have without the damage, rather than just turning up the volume.

The technology aims to take into

account the interference of multiple sound frequencies, to improve hearing aid performance in noisy situations, such as crowds, where traditional hearing aids have difficulty.

Becker said there's really nothing else like it.

"The innovation is making use of these detailed (ear) models so we can train hearing aids to adjust for damage at the neural level," she said.

The leap into commercial application of theoretical research is fuelling more innovation.

Becker said in the future, it may also be possible to create hearing aids specifically tailored to individual patients' hearing losses.

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RON ALBERTSON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

**Sue Becker is now developing a practical application of her research.**

## Renovated winery takes pleasure in its village look

BY DAN KISLENKO

In the business of wine, success is measured by the positive experience you provide your customers.

That was the thinking of John Peller when his company, Andrew Peller Ltd., embarked on a \$3-million, 18-month renovation of Hillebrand Winery.

"We don't just sell you liquid in a bottle, we sell the culture and the experience that transcends the wine, the best food, the best art," Peller said at this week's official unveiling of the project in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The sprawling winery complex is now clad in muted earth tones and natural materials such as stone and wood. The setting is pastoral, with a sculpted back lawn and infinity fountain.

The centrepiece of the development is the two-storey "winemaker's look-out," complete with fireplaces for three-season use. It provides spectacular views of the vineyards and escarpment in the distance. The established restaurant was refurbished and an adjacent vineyard pavilion for private functions built. Below ground, there's a new barrel cellar for aging Hillebrand's flagship Trius red wine. A wide curving driveway from Highway 55 offers visitors a sense of importance upon arrival.

Work on the renovations was overseen by Horne Construction of Burlington.

"When we designed this all, we were looking for the feel of a village," Greg Berti, vice-president of Hillebrand,

*Wine is the showcase but it's not just about wine. We want guests to feel they are in wine country, not just in a retail store, says head winemaker Darryl Brooker, at Hillebrand Winery.*

said. "We wanted to create a beautiful space for people to enjoy wine."

The village feel is pervasive. Private spaces both small and large abound among various buildings. And all that has to do with giving visitors a choice of experiences, from intimate to convivial.

"Wine is the showcase but it's not just about wine," said head winemaker Darryl Brooker. "We want guests to feel they are in wine country, not just in a retail store."

While the renovation was not specifically intended to increase visitor traffic, there will be few complaints in company ranks if it does. Hillebrand currently gets about 200,000 people through its doors every year, the lion's share of them from the Hamilton-Burlington-Toronto corridor, with most of the rest being neighbours in Niagara and American tourists.



HANDOUT FROM HILLEBRAND

**Visitors feel a sense of grandeur upon entering the sprawling complex of the recently renovated Hillebrand Winery.**

Peller said building Niagara's wine country is a collective task for the industry and "is a 30-year journey. We're at a great junction in our adolescence, but we all need to set ever higher and higher standards."

Hillebrand is part of Andrew Peller Ltd., until last year known as Andrew, which is Canada's second-largest wine producer. Other wineries under the umbrella include Peller Estates and Thirty Bench in Ontario, and Peller

Estates, Sandhill and Red Rooster in British Columbia.

Hillebrand is at 1249 Niagara Stone Rd. (Hwy 55) in Niagara-on-the-Lake. [dkislenko@thespec.com](mailto:dkislenko@thespec.com); 905-526-3450