



Michael Brown

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Mike Lazaridis – the founder, President and Co-CEO of Waterloo-based technology giant Research In Motion – understands the value of creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. At a recent gala, he recognized software developer, Michael Brown: “At RIM, we celebrate our inventors. Michael came to work at RIM as a Shad intern in 1995. He has 42 patents granted or pending at RIM. He’s our number three most prolific inventor!”

Michael is a Shad Valley alumnus.

Shad Valley experience: University of British Columbia, 1995

A fine balance

As a musician and a mathematician, Michael Brown has always been aware of the coexistence of his creative and analytical talents. The Shad Valley program provided Michael with one of the first opportunities he had to combine the two.

While participating in Shad at the University of British Columbia, Michael and his peers were encouraged to draw on all their talents to generate new ideas and solve problems. “We were challenged to explore non-traditional solutions. To take our knowledge from one area and use it to explore a seemingly unrelated area of knowledge and create new understanding,” says Michael.

Integration at work

When Michael returned to his hometown near Waterloo, Ontario that summer, he put his new skills to work at RIM, a leading designer, manufacturer and marketer of innovative wireless solutions for the worldwide mobile communications market.

From the beginning, Michael felt valued at RIM for his talents. “Like Shad, my colleagues at RIM encouraged me to tap into the creative and analytical sides of my brain simultaneously. And I got to work with an incredible group of highly motivated and creative people. I learn from them every day,” says Michael.

“You could say my Shad experience at RIM really defined my career direction,” says Michael, smiling because RIM has been his only employer since the summer of 1995. “RIM keeps me challenged. I am still here doing work that I really enjoy.” Michael stayed with

RIM through his co-op program at the University of Waterloo and through a leave of absence as he completed a post-graduate degree. He is now a full-time software developer with RIM who applies his expertise to solving cryptology and security challenges in the wireless world.

The team Michael works with is focused on taking security solutions that have been developed for wired environments and adapting them for the wireless space. “We are driven by customers who have high expectations based on their experience in the wired world and demand the same experience – and the same level of security – on their hand-held. They keep us innovating,” says Michael.

When asked what it takes to be the number three inventor in an organization that thrives on innovation, Michael was quick to say that what he values most about the recognition is that he finds himself among a group of people whose creativity and brilliance he admires.

Making a difference

The integration of creative and analytical talents that began at Shad Valley has become a recurring theme in Michael Brown’s life. Whether he is composing music on his keyboard, tutoring high school students in math or volunteering as an accompanist for a local choir, Michael invokes the spirit of innovation he discovered at Shad Valley.

And he has made it his life’s work to encourage it in others. “I truly believe that there is always a way to improve everything. Yes, you can celebrate when things are good – but that doesn’t mean you’re done!”