

Success redefined



Employees of all ages are starting to rethink what they want from their jobs, discovers

KATHERINE HARDING

Ryan Jennings has a résumé that could make a grown man cry.

The Victoria native is about to graduate at the top of his class from Queen's University's prestigious business school in Kingston, Ont., speaks French, Spanish and Japanese and already has oodles of work experience under his 21-year-old belt.

The world should be kicking down his door. In fact, last fall it was: Several large companies began to fight over him, despite the dismal economy.

When many of Mr. Jennings' classmates weren't even landing interviews, he was being offered hefty signing bonuses and starting salaries.

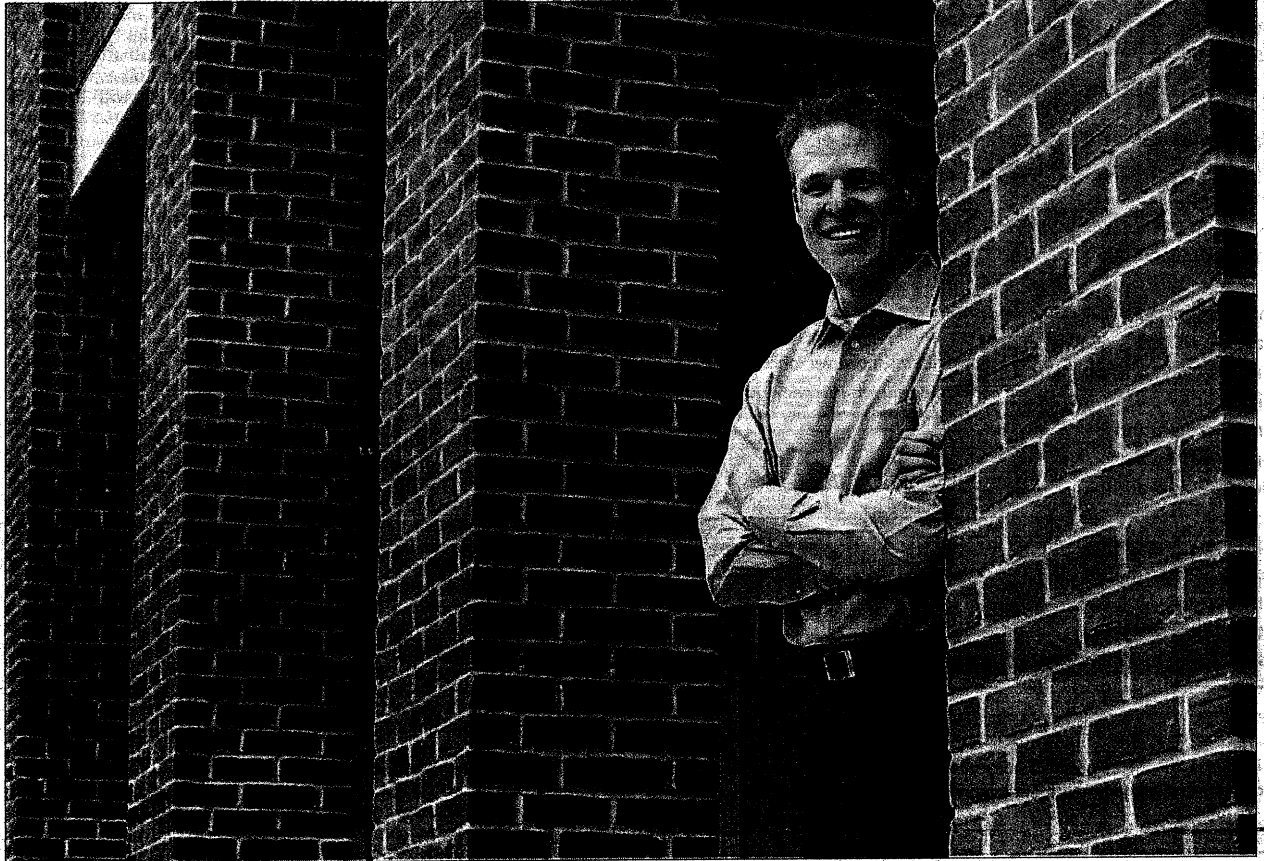
Some even tried to lure him with expensive meals, swish hotel rooms and elaborate gift baskets.

He seemed to have it made. However, Mr. Jennings started to feel trapped and the corporate hunt wasn't even over.

"Just a few months ago, I was heading down the mainstream path of consulting or investment banking. 'Give me the 100 hours a week. I'll do it. I'll do whatever it takes,'" he recalls.

"But then I sat in my room and asked myself: 'What do I want out of life?' And once I made that decision, everything started to fall into place."

He researched employers who offered more than money and



JEFFREY CHIANG/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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power in exchange for a desk with a complimentary ball and chain.

Mr. Jennings calls it a "lifestyle" choice. He wanted one. And not just a massive salary on the road to CEO-dom.

Marilyn Shurtleff, manager of career services at Queen's business school, has noticed a growing number of "Ryan Jennings."

"There has been a lot more introspection into 'What do I really want,' instead of just going for what's on the [job] board. . . .

Three years ago, that happened very rarely," she says, adding the slow labour market has forced many students to think long and hard about what they really want because the search takes more effort.

"Without the buzz or hysteria of the recent labour market, the students are making more personal choices. They are probably being more true to themselves. . . . I'm seeing students pursue things that are more interesting to them."

Mark Hollingworth, a lecturer in the Faculty of Management at McGill University in Montreal, agrees that Mr. Jennings' "cherry-picking" attitude toward reaching workplace success is becoming much more common across the country.

The traditional norm — the straight and furious climb up the corporate ladder — is slowly being replaced by a meandering journey toward a personal definition of success, he adds.

"More and more, people are examining what they are doing, and who they are doing it for," Mr. Hollingworth says.

"People have realized there really isn't a lot of room at the top. They have also benefited from watching their bosses become overly stressed or burnt out. They want more than that. They want a life."

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