

BUSINESS & CAREERS

# Toronto lawyer hopes to slay dragons with biz idea

DONALEE MOULTON

Dragons usually breathe fire. For Michael Carabash, they may spew cold, hard cash. The Toronto lawyer has been invited to pitch his legal business to the experts on CBC television's popular *Dragons' Den*.

This is step one on the road to possible fame and fortune. "There's no guarantee it will air on television. A lot of what is filmed is cut on the production floor, but I have a feeling they're going to like what I'm pitching," said Carabash, founder of [www.dynamiclawyers.com](http://www.dynamiclawyers.com), which brings clients and lawyers in Ontario together via a competitive bidding process.

His pitch, which could net him \$50,000 plus marketing and business support in return for a 20 per cent share, is for online legal forms including wills, small claims, and landlord/tenant issues. "They are lawyer-prepared, downloadable and customizable with a ton of information to go with them," explained Carabash.

"It's not just a form," he

stressed.

To supplement the form — written in "humanese," customers receive a 10-minute video that describes how the form can be adapted for individual use and two complimentary guides that can run up to 30 pages each. The first guide provides information about the specific form; the second explores how contracts can be challenged.

Carabash feels his pitch on *Dragons' Den* will stand out for two reasons. One, it's not a crazy idea. Two, it's not a pitch the dragons have heard before.



Carabash

It is also real.

Carabash's legal forms are available on his website. At present, there are 17 forms accessible online with another 15 in the works. Each form costs approximately \$50. To date, sales have been encouraging but not significant.

"I've sold a few thousand dollars since launching in March," said Carabash.

Interestingly, some of those

sales have been to lawyers. The material lays out what forms and documents will be needed in certain legal situations, for example, when someone dies intestate. "I'm unbundling legal services. I think more and more lawyers will see this as a cool tool — and the public, too," Carabash said

Winning a spot on season six of *Dragons' Den*, which will air this fall, would go a long way to increasing sales, and Carabash's business savvy. "The money is always a nice factor, but if the dragons were to be on board it would be a great platform to push this to the next level," said Carabash. "Their expertise is incredible."

Already the publicity is fueling interest in his products. "The benefits have already started," noted Carabash. "The media is already interested in my story."

"This is part of my strategy to get [the products] out there," he added. "If they don't go for it, I'll develop Plan B."

The pitching process is also helping the 28-year-old entrepreneur learn a thing or two about adding pizzazz to a product. This

See **Dragon's Den** Page 28



PHOTO COURTESY OF CBC

Michael Carabash will face the five dragons at a taping of CBC's *Dragon's Den*.

**Top legal blogs**

Trying to keep up on what's hot in the legal world? Lawyer rating site [avvo.com](http://avvo.com) keeps track of which legal blogs get the most traffic every month. While the list is dominated by U.S. blogs, which serve a much bigger population and thus have more readers than Canadian blogs, one Canadian blog made the cut. [slaw.ca](http://slaw.ca) managed to make the list as the 27th most-read legal blog right now. Here are the top five most popular legal blogs, according to [avvo.com](http://avvo.com):

- 1 [abovethelaw.com](http://abovethelaw.com)
- 2 [volokh.com](http://volokh.com)
- 3 [althouse.blogspot.com](http://althouse.blogspot.com)
- 4 [lawprofessors.typepad.com](http://lawprofessors.typepad.com)
- 5 [talkleft.com](http://talkleft.com)

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## BUSINESS &amp; CAREERS

# Lawyer/entrepreneur hones self-promotion skills

## Dragon's Den

Continued From Page 25

is the second time Carabash has tried to get on *Dragons' Den*. His first attempt—focused on the idea for his website—went nowhere. “They said great idea, but they don't really do concepts, and it's boring.”

“After the [second] pitch, they said it's still boring,” notes Carabash. “I said I didn't know how to jazz it up. I'm a lawyer.”

The CBC producer suggested he and his fiancé, on hand for the pitch, do a skit. They followed that advice and a few days later the call came saying the Toronto native would be going before the dragons.

This may be the first time a lawyer makes it on the show with a pitch. South of the border, only one lawyer is believed to have

gotten air time on *Shark Tank*, the U.S. equivalent of *Dragons' Den*. Earlier this year Jeff and Annie Hughes took their business, Legal Grind—where customers can pick up a latte and legal advice in one visit—before the moguls. They were given a rousing thumbs' down.

“They got hammered,” noted Carabash. One of the comments made by the potential investors was that this idea might be better suited to an online environment. Another comment: why does

“  
I'm trying to balance  
both mistresses—  
business and law.”

someone have to get coffee to get legal advice?

“That made an impression on me,” said Carabash, who graduated with a joint LLB/MBA from York University.

Juggling both passions has been a challenge. “I'm trying to balance both mistresses—business and law. I'm both,” said Carabash.

As such, he has a dual personality: risk-taker and risk-avoider. Those personalities merge in his approach to growing his business. “I would love to expand this across Canada, but I'm taking it slow,” said Carabash.

That is a sound way to build a business—and ensure a quality product. “I would love for there

to be hundreds of [legal forms],” Carabash said, “but not at the cost of shoddiness.”

To be successful in his business, he noted, “you need legal expertise plus technical expertise. You also need credibility in the marketplace.”

The *Dragons' Den* is an ideal place to enhance that credibility. Stay tuned. ■

We want to hear from you!  
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## Recession forces firms to change

Due to increasing financial pressures law firms must shape up or face the consequences, says a new report commissioned by Global law firm Everhsheds LLP, headquartered in London. The report found a number of things happen when a recession hits the legal world, including:

- A recession accelerates change in the legal sector by 10 years
- Inefficient sector starts to put value and efficiency first
- Hourly rate billing gives way to value billing
- Clients hold increasing power in legal supply relationships
- General counsel rise in status
- Mega-firm category becomes increasingly redundant



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