



CDN Controls, Western Canada's **Leader** in E&I Maintenance, Scales Radically

Dean Fraser, CEO | Founder of CDN
grows business 4X with support
from the Lawrence & Co. team.



Who is CDN Controls?

Dean Fraser and Nick Stewart's partnership emerged from the grit of Alberta's oil and gas industry.

After working in the field for 20 years, they saw a need for a premium, high-expertise, full-service Electrical and Instrumentation (E&I) services provider who delivered on what they said they would do.

With the common work ethic, integrity, and ambition that infuses their company today, they harnessed their complementary skills and experience to create CDN Controls, a relationship-built, one-stop shop for E&I services.

While COO Stewart directs the day-to-day operational side of business, CEO Fraser focuses on big-picture strategy and growth.

Today, as Western Canada's leader in their field, they have set their sights on global opportunities.

"Without relentless pursuit and drive, a business doesn't keep growing."



Smart, Strategic Growth



Fixated on the satisfaction of clients, for Stewart and Fraser, 'good' is never good enough.



We are always pushing,” says Fraser. “It’s about becoming more efficient and finding better ways to do things. The goal is always to find opportunities to bring more revenue in and provide more services for our clients.

– **Dean Fraser**, CEO | Founder of CDN

So, in order to solve a number of problems for their clients, and take on bigger projects, that meant rapid scaling.

To do that in a smart way, they reached out to Lawrence & Co. to build a cohesive, highly effective growth strategy and provide the perspective and external insight needed to unleash CDN’s growth to its full potential.

“I was at a point where I could feel that the organization, as a whole, could learn from a coach, and that would elevate us,” says Fraser.





The Solution

A Structure for Success

Growth can be messy. So, after first working with Kevin Lawrence on strategic planning, advisor Dean Ritchey stepped in to provide the disciplines needed to set them up for success.

These included Jim Collins' principles, Topgrading skills to build the right team of committed people, and ongoing leadership training. He also built a structure within the leadership to have debates and discussions to move things ahead and address unforeseen challenges.

"Our work was about creating focus, an accountable, aligned team and to keep the guardrails on the business to allow for the momentum to scale quickly," explained Ritchey.

According to Fraser, Ritchey demanded excellence from the CDN leadership.

"Dean Ritchey has an amazing operational understanding of how businesses run and how our business needed to perform to be successful.

"The team has learned from him that it's 'quarter by quarter and day by day.' They leave quarterly meetings rejuvenated, energized, and ready to really dominate the industry."

Accountability was a significant piece, as Ritchey helped the team to set KPIs, drive business, and maintain accountability for targets.

This support has led to monumental growth. With the support of the team at Lawrence & Co., CDN has, since 2011:

- 7 **Quadrupled their business**
- 7 **Expanded to 11 branches**
- 7 **Increased employee count to 750**
- 7 **Completed 5 acquisitions**
- 7 **748 MW of Canadian solar infrastructure**
- 7 **Diversified financial performance, with the top 20 clients delivering 79% of their annual revenue**
- 7 **A U.S. Expansion**

In addition, with a commitment to an industry-setting Environmental, Social, and Governance Program, they were the only energy services company to voluntarily report their impact on an annual basis.



People-Driven Growth

A “Yes. We Can Do That” Philosophy

Hard work and tenacity are hardwired into CDN's DNA, and a certain doggedness to succeed runs through the seams of an organization full of authentic people who work hard and play hard.

Their ingrained “Yes. We Can do that” mantra is also their differentiation and a core growth factor.

“We don't say no. We figure it out along the way. We always find a way to bring people expertise,” says Fraser. “We're determined people. We love winning. We don't sit around and dwell. We don't sit on our laurels. We're always trying to do better.”

This positive, resilient attitude also matches a tolerance for failure.

According to Fraser, when they drive hard for the wins, there will necessarily be some losses.

“Everybody has good luck and bad luck. It's what you do with it.”

“On the flip side, if we make a mistake and something doesn't go right,” says Fraser, “we don't dwell on that. We dust ourselves off, make sure that doesn't happen again and keep moving forward.”



Partnerships with Purpose

Indigenous & Community Partnerships

In 2016, long before orange shirts, National Truth and Reconciliation Day, and a deepening awareness of Indigenous issues, CDN entered its first partnership with the Halfway River First Nation. Over the years, five additional consecutive partnerships would follow.

“I would definitely say it wasn’t something that a lot of companies were doing.” says Fraser. “It was the right thing to do, and a good opportunity. It benefited both parties then, and continues to do so today.”



CDN Emerging Leaders Program

In partnership with the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, the CDN Emerging Leaders Program was developed from an Indigenous worldview. It was designed to respond to emerging and sustained barriers and to build capacity, opportunities and skills for people from Indigenous communities, especially those seeking supervisory and leadership roles.

In the community investment space, CDN has publicly committed 1.5% of its EBITDA annually to donations and sponsorships.

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Straight-Shooting Advice

When asked how he would advise new entrepreneurs, Fraser's advice is straight shooting.

[1] Be willing to put in the work.

"You've got to buckle down, work hard, stay focused, and be world class. Do it better than anyone else. You will always succeed if that is your mindset."

[2] Start with good people.

"Treat them well and provide them with opportunities so you don't have turnover."

[3] Keep learning.

"Things are happening around you. You always need to be learning and evolving, right? Otherwise, the industry just grows around you and up over you."

[4] Believe in yourself.

"You have to bet on yourself. If you take a chance and work hard, you'll get there, and you have to be willing to make personal sacrifices."

[5] Find time for yourself.

"You've got to make time for your family, stay connected to friends and keep up with sports and other passions. Although you're not doing them six or seven days a week at the early stage of the business."

