

MONT TREMBLANT, Que. – Francois-Charles Sirois grew up on the fast-track of the corporate world and at age 30 he's going full-throttle with a racy new venture for the executive set.

By the time young Mr. Sirois could 'phone home, he could spell telecommunications. When other teenagers were tinkering with Game Boy, he was entertaining ideas of mobile communications and information technology, in part thanks to his father's influence.

"Papa" as Francois-Charles calls him, is Charles Sirois, a titan of the Canadian telecommunications industry. Powerful, prominent and accomplished fathers can be a blessing or a curse. "I love my dad and I only remember positive experiences," says Francois-Charles. "He is a super businessman and he taught me many, many things, perhaps most of all, patience in business."

Further armed with a degree from Hautes Etudes Commerciales, the prestigious business training ground in Montreal, Sirois has founded and led a number of companies, including up2 technologies inc., Microcell i5 Inc. and Masq Inc. This year, he made a sharp detour, succumbing to his passion for flashy sports cars, and created the Trioomph Super Car Challenge. Trioomph is a high-octane corporate getaway in which executives exchange their bespoke suits for flame-proof racing outfits and drive \$1 million worth of sleek cars at speeds up to 200 kph. Participants don't have to be racing aficionados, but Trioomph appeals to people who prefer intense action to spectator sports and the rush of adrenaline rather than a cushy seat in the loge.

Trioomph plays out at Le Circuit Mont Tremblant, the picturesque 41-year-old race track in a Laurentian Mountain resort area north of Montreal. It's a historic site in Canadian racing, host to Formula One Grand Prix races in 1968 and 1970 when legendary drivers such as Mario Andretti, Jackie Stewart and Graham Hill were the gladiators of the day. PARAGRAPH The Trioomph Super Car Challenge is about living well, not simply driving fast. Participants gather at the extravagant, plush Hotel Quintessence on the shores of Lac Tremblant. The camaraderie bubbles during a gourmet dinner fuelled by vintage wines. Pulses quicken during a stimulating how-to video and anticipation builds with talk of pounding pistons and astonishing horsepower.

Trioomph's clients can live out their fantasies about being Jacques Villeneuve or Michael Schumacher, fondling throbbing stick-shifts and calculating G-force while engines roar with the pleasure of being set free. The exhilarating climax is the thrilling test drive of five astounding race cars – a Ferrari F430, a Lamborghini Gallardo, an Aston Martin DB9, a Dodge Viper and a Porsche Turbo. Coached by personal instructors as co-pilots, the drivers-for-a-day emerge from their breakneck rides sweaty and spent, but ecstatic.

"It's everyone's dream to drive the world's best cars," says Mr. Sirois. "But I would not start a business simply because I like cars...we have a great product."

Selling a turbo-charged adventure in a glamorous sport with lots of sex appeal and little risk has serious business potential. Mr. Sirois figures it this way: Trioomph's projected revenue per one-day event is \$75,000, based on 20 participants paying \$3,750. The principal initial investment is the purchase of five world-class cars at \$1 million. Variable costs add up to approximately \$40,000 per event for track expenses, car maintenance, instructors, insurance and a stay at a luxurious country lodge. Additional costs include car depreciation and administrative personnel.

Mr. Sirois plans 10 one-day events in his first year for a projected revenue of approximately \$750,000 against variable costs of \$400,000 plus fixed costs and depreciation. (EDITOR- IF WE MENTION VARIABLE COSTS, WE MUST ALSO MENTION FIXED COSTS AND DEPRECIATION). Next year, he plans to increase to 15 events, with approximate revenues of \$1,125,000. By 2007, he envisions as many as 20 events in Montreal, and if the Trioomph model works well, he will expand to Toronto, Vancouver and a few U.S. cities. He looks forward to adding sponsors with upscale products such as wine or cigars to enhance the experience. As well, Trioomph's 24 hours can be customized to add kinder, gentler activities like golf or massages to balance the daunting hours at the track.

Trioomph is geared to corporate executives who entertain top clients or participate with colleagues as a team-building experience.

"Not everyone likes to golf," says Michel Ostiguy, president of Bos, an advertising agency with \$100 million in sales and offices in Toronto and Montreal serving clients such as Jean Coutu, Fido, Banque National and Loto-Quebec.

"On the race track, you spend hours together doing something exceptional...the feeling is fantastic...you can't imagine the power that you're controlling.

"You build friendship and trust and it's better to do business on that basis," says Mr. Ostiguy who was all smiles after his test drives, although he conceded that he'd be back on the golf course the following week. Art dealer Brian Brisson also was rapturous about the Trioomph experience, personally and professionally.

"The opportunity to drive on a closed track is thrilling – and driving super-cars so fast is definitely a business bonding experience," says Mr. Brisson, the director of Galerie Saint Dizier in Old Montreal and purveyor of upwards of \$1 million worth of works a year by upcoming Canadian artists. "If you share this with your clients, you're away from the business table, so your next conversation is more relaxed, more open."

SIDEBAR — The cost of 24 hours of Trioomph.

Like J. Pierpont Morgan's observation about the upkeep of a yacht, if you have to ask the price of the Trioomph Super Car Challenge, you can't afford it. Five world-class street-race cars burn a minimum of \$1,000 of fuel and \$5,000 of tires and brake pads in this one-day event, not to mention that buying a Ferrari F430 will set you back about \$275,000 and the other cars range from \$125,000 to \$255,000.

Trioomph's fee is \$3,750 per person (plus applicable taxes) for a memorable 24-hour experience, which starts with one night at the top-drawer Hotel Quintessence in Mont Tremblant featuring three gastronomic meals with fine wines, and pool and spa privileges. The cost of Trioomph's spine-tingling race day includes rental of Le Circuit Mont Tremblant; teaching materials and six private instructors as co-pilots; racing suits, helmets and communication devices; car and personal liability insurance; mechanics; photographer and souvenir CD, transportation and trailers, and car maintenance plus depreciation. "VIP tickets to the Montreal Grand Prix cost \$2,500 to \$5,000," says Mr. Sirois, "and you only get to watch – not drive!"