

Kevin O'Leary: the fire-breathing dragon

When Kevin O'Leary speaks, the business world listens. This year's Canadian Manufacturing Technology Show is pleased to offer attendees and exhibitors an exclusive opportunity to hear one of Canada's leading innovators.

Fiercely opinionated — and usually right — Kevin O'Leary is known to millions across Canada and the United States as the ruthless “show me the money” judge on ABC's *Shark Tank* and CBC's *Dragons' Den*. It's O'Leary who often sends a wannabe entrepreneur home in tears. And he's unapologetic and unsympathetic about it. He knows that starting and growing a business demands far more than just having a big idea.

Ironically, O'Leary's success story starts where a lot of those weeping entrepreneurs began: with a big idea and zero cash. In 1986, from his basement in Toronto, he launched SoftKey Software Products to help kids with math and reading. Six years later, he sold it to Mattel for \$3.7 billion, one of the largest tech deals in Canadian history.

As an investor, he grew impatient with his lacklustre money managers, fired them and founded his own mutual fund company, O'Leary Funds. His yield-oriented “get paid while you wait” investing philosophy attracted hundreds of investors and raised millions of dollars.

These days, O'Leary calls himself an “eco-preneur” specializing in investments that are environmentally friendly — and make money, naturally. In 2003, he co-founded Storage Now, a leading developer of climate-controlled storage facilities, then sold it to In Storage REIT in 2007 for \$110 million. He also co-hosts the Discovery Channel's *Discovery Project Earth*, which explores ways to reverse global warming.

As the keynote speaker at CMTS this October, Kevin O'Leary will draw on his encyclopedic knowledge of finance, investing, economics and business to discuss a variety of topics that are key to modern manufacturing. How, will the global recession affect your industry? What can you do to protect your company and come out stronger? Razor sharp and quick on his feet, Kevin O'Leary is expected to pull no punches in his presentation. The dragon known to bring entrepreneurs to tears is sure to bring you to your feet.