

## Calgary photo service Veer added to Bill Gates empire

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Microsoft Corp. founder Bill Gates has purchased a major player in Calgary's creative industries and a world-class presence in visual images and design-related products, Veer Inc.

Gates's Corbis Corp. of Seattle announced that it has purchased Veer for an undisclosed sum, gaining control of the Calgary-based firm that was formed in 2002 by former executives of EyeWire and Getty Images and grew to become the fourth-largest stock photography firm on the globe.



Veer designs and provides visual content for use in print and electronic platforms and caters to the advertising, marketing and media industries.

CREDIT: Reuters

Microsoft founder Bill Gates has purchased Calgary-based Veer Inc. for an undisclosed sum.

Under the deal, Veer and its 170 employees will continue to operate relatively autonomously from Corbis, which Gates serves as chairman of the board.

"Corbis is the perfect partner to help us accelerate our long-term growth goals," said Veer's chief executive, Brad Zumwalt.

"Our companies both have an unmatched passion for the creative community, and by coming together, we bolster our ability to connect with creatives worldwide while innovating our business and providing products to our customers so they can do their best work." Veer is just one example of a vibrant Calgary visual design industry that has gained prominence worldwide while remaining relatively unknown in its own backyard. The company employs about 150 people at its Calgary head office and also maintains offices in New York and Berlin.

"We have a very, very strong digital design base here," said Adam Legge, director of research and business information for Calgary Economic Development. "We have a really unknown digital design and media community that really is doing very well and, in terms of their activities, is scattered throughout the world." Calgary's creative industries employ a substantial chunk of the city's workforce, according to an analysis produced earlier this year by CED. Using 2005 figures, CED found that more than 40,000 people were employed in the sector, or nearly 14 per cent of the city's total employment. That figure had risen by more than eight percentage points over the previous five years.

"There's a lot that's going on from a creative-industries perspective here in Calgary," said Legge. "We have pretty much the world's top digital design firm, Critical Mass, headquartered here in Calgary -- we have a number of other growing ones, like

Suitcase Interactive." Veer spokeswoman Tracy Gauson said the new partnership is expected to allow Veer to grow.

"This will help us get even bigger, globally," said Gauson.

Zumwalt and Veer's chief operating officer, Nairn Nerland, will join the Corbis executive ranks.

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