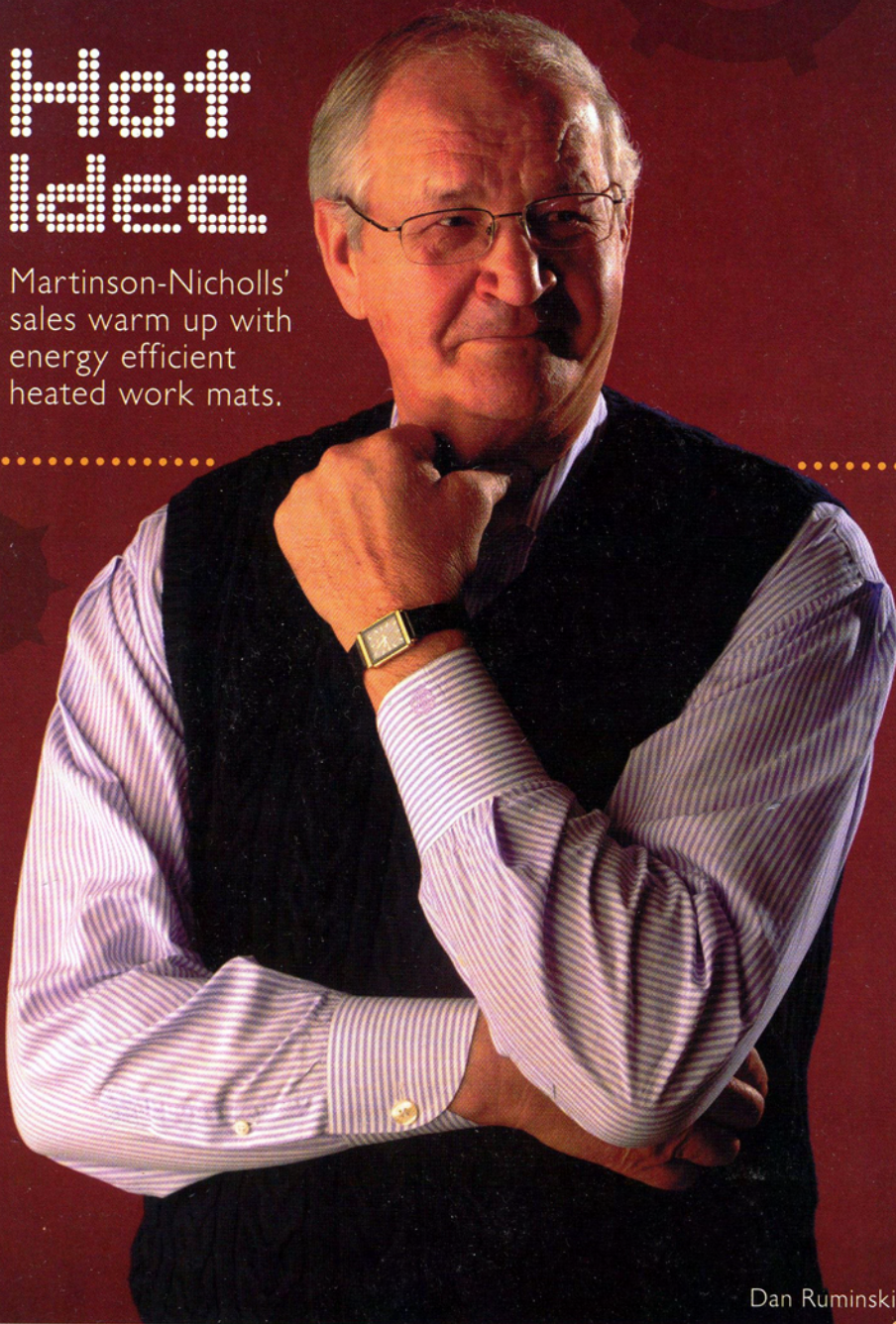


Hot Idea

Martinson-Nicholls' sales warm up with energy efficient heated work mats.



Dan Ruminski

ers, which can be fire hazards and are banned at many workplaces. The mats can even come with timers so they turn off automatically.

"They don't get hot enough to cause combustion. It gives management one less thing to worry about," says Ruminski. "We wanted to make things safer, which is a great motivation. We're not just inventing a hula-hoop here; it has some impact."

The mats are ideal for industrial areas where workers stand on cold concrete floors most of the day, but don't be surprised to find them in office buildings like the one Martinson-Nicholls has, where temperatures near the walls can be dramatically cooler than in the center of the room.

"The center of the room might be 69 in wintertime, and along the wall where a lot of desks are, the floor temperature might be 59," says Ruminski. "So that's an ideal application for our mats."

Problems such as fatigue and dry skin are often associated with using traditional space heaters. And while they don't produce such intense heat, the mats have received rave reviews from customers who have had trouble with blood circulation.

The company once appeared on Robin Swoboda's *That's Life* morning TV show, where one of the mats was given as a prize to a viewer. "The fellow that won it called me and said he gave it to his father who had a stroke," says Ruminski. "His father was elated that the mat was so helpful with his circulation."

"We're not marketed as a medical product," he adds, "but heat and stimulating circulation are a common denominator."

In development for more than four years, the heating mats were released to lukewarm sales. But as word spread, sales took off, too. In 2008, Martinson-Nicholls sold 2,000 units, a new record.

"With any new technology, it takes a while to whet the public appetite," says Ruminski. "They need to know it's out there before they start to look at it, so every year, you keep promoting."

Ruminski attributes the success of his product to keeping an eye on the economy and shifts in customer behavior. "We saw the green movement and people wanting to save energy," says Ruminski. "We saw the banning of space heaters."

Which all means business is really starting to heat up for Ruminski.

- MATT BEARGIE

GREEN INITIATIVE



Martinson-Nicholls' president Dan Ruminski stands by his new eco-friendly heating mats. He also has one sitting on his desk warming his papers and pens.

"First thing I do when I walk in is plug mine in," says Ruminski. "Some people here use a combo of below and on top of the desk."

The Willoughby-based company helps people back away from the thermostat with energy efficient heated work mats. The indoor mats come in three sizes and use, on average, a little

more than 100 watts of electricity or about a tenth of the energy used by an average space heater.

That can translate into big savings. Ruminski recalls a customer who left his heating mat running in his Colorado vacation home for four weeks while he was gone. "He actually called me and said, 'Dan, I didn't even see a blip in my electric bill,'" says Ruminski. "It's like leaving a lightbulb on."

And if saving money isn't enough, these cushioned, black rubber mats are also a safer alternative than space heat-