



## Young Entrepreneur Of The Year

by *Julia Paulus*

Just a few years ago, Mark Pydynowski and his current business partner, Ramos Mays, were playing baseball for Washington University. They found success during their college years when they won \$50,000 in the Olin Cup, Washington University's business plan competition, but they are reaching new heights today.

Two years ago Pydynowski and Mays founded Somark Innovations, a technology company that is working to help ensure a safer food supply.

"We went our separate ways after graduation," says Pydynowski. "I was working in New York when I got a call from Ramos, who was studying for his master's in condensed matter physics in Europe. He told me he had an idea for a new technology and wanted to go into business together."

Mays invented a livestock identification system that uses an ink tattoo with chipless radio frequency identification functionality. His intent was to help solve tracking problems in the livestock industry and diminish trade losses from animal disease scares involving such things as mad cow disease.

Mays advises that all like-minded inventors have a partner like Pydynowski when they go into business. "I wouldn't get anything done without Mark," says Mays. "I am always up in the clouds thinking, and I need to have a leader to go with the artistry of invention. He does what I am not strong at doing. He leads and knows how to get the most out of people."

The two knew each other well before they started Somark, and they were up-front about their expectations as business partners early on. "We knew everything had to be 50-50 since Day One," says Pydynowski. "We share a lot of the same ethics and morals, and we trust each other. We get past the little things, and we are able to have tough discussions."

The strength of their partnership has helped Pydynowski and Mays achieve success and get through rough patches. "Realizing that what we value is not necessarily what investors value has been a hard lesson," says Pydynowski. "It's technology milestones versus revenue and purchase orders. We have had to say 'thank you but no thank you' to investors who want to come onto the team because in the end it's like a marriage."

Mays says Somark would not be successful without Pydynowski.

"Mark deserves any award or recognition he gets," says Mays. "He listens, learns and teaches. When I first started this thing, I didn't call my parents; I didn't call my girlfriend. I called Mark because he has the qualities that I don't."