Meet Matt Stewart!

Founder, Collegio

Matt Stewart always had an entrepreneurial drive, just like his father and grandfather, who are both small business owners from Brookfield, Nova Scotia. Following in the same footsteps, Matt is the founder and co-founder of a few businesses including Collegio and Click2Order.
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Looking back, I don't really know where my interest in tech started. My mother is a teacher and she used to bring a Mac computer home every summer so I would play games on it all day! In school, I liked math, an entrepreneurial course I took, and I was a big sports enthusiast - and still am till this day.

I have an Accounting diploma from Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and a Marketing degree from Cape Breton University. The real interest in technology didn't manifest until university, when I started playing around with websites and programs. I was excited with the fact that every time you made a change, whether small or big, you got an instant result.

My family was the main influence to get into the business world, as my father and grandfather are both small business owners and I've always been interested in following that tradition. My maternal grandfather owned restaurants during his life, and I think that's how my interest in bridging tech and restaurants came to be – I love seeing how technology can transform, and evolve something.

Today, I'm the founder of a few separate companies. The main company I am involved with is called Click2Order, which I'm the CEO of. Click2Order is an online-ordering company, where we power restaurants with their own branded online-ordering systems. We are sort of the opposite of companies like SkipTheDishes and UberEats who try to attract customers to their apps and give you a list of restaurants. My main responsibilities are mostly around business development, working with customers, and working on strategic partnerships.

Interacting with people – that's what I love. I've always had good inter-personal skills and I've never been a shy person.

I think when I first started my business, I was purely focusing on selling, but that soon changed – that's really not what people value in a start-up business.

I finally realized what having a business is truly about – being able to connect with your colleagues, stakeholders, and customers – and I really enjoy that part. We've had customers that we've had for years now that will stop by the office and talk to us about non-business-related matters. I think that openness and personal connection helps our company to create strong, and long-lasting, relationships with customers.

If you want to create something on your own – just do it! Focus on learning as much as you can about your prospective customers, and what you need to provide for them to fix a problem!

We live in a province that has great prospects for growth. There are lots of opportunities and support from both the private, and public, sector. Whatever it is you want to pursue – technology, medicine, etc. - you need to enjoy it. If you are not passionate about it, you will not create a high-quality product.

"We live in a province that has great prospects for growth. there are lots of opportunities, and support, from both the private, and public, sector."

Meet Michael MacMillan!

Principal Consultant & Founder, Michael MacMillan Consulting Inc.

With his father's shared passion for technology, Michael MacMillan knew that tech would play an important role in his life, even if he didn't know exactly what that role would be. He was right - Michael attended NSCC for Interactive Technologies, worked as a web designer, and is currently running his own SEO consultancy, Michael MacMillan Consulting Inc.

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I never knew what my career would be, but I always had an interest in tech and figured, in one way or another, that it would be something that would influence my adult life. Growing up in Halifax (though I did spend a lot of my formative years in Bridgewater) I was a nerdy kid in school. My favourite courses were math and biology.

My biggest influence, and the person who really helped instill my love for technology was my father. He was a Loans Officer for the Business Development Bank of Canada, and was always interested in tech and where it was going. He would often borrow a computer from his work and take it home so we could play around with it -

I used to make simple programs on it. I think that's where my love for tech began.

When it came time for me to enter post-secondary, I went to Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and enrolled in Interactive Technologies, which was a multimedia program with a heavy focus on digital. Since the subject matter in all of my courses at NSCC was relatively ground-breaking at the time, our instructors didn't have the answers to every question we had. This meant that we would often have to find the answers ourselves, luckily we had the internet and high-speed connections. Researching online ended up being a necessity and a skill that I still use daily 20 years later.

After I graduated, I started my first digital job as a web designer. Over the years my roles changed and evolved. About ten years ago, I started doing search engine optimization (SEO) part-time at an agency I was working at, and before I knew it, SEO was my full-time job. Then in 2018, I made the biggest jump of my career, and one that would lead me to where I am today, I decided to leave my job and create my own SEO consultancy.

Michael MacMillan Consulting Inc. is a boutique SEO consultancy that focuses on supporting international companies to increase their visibility and traffic in organic search results. As you may have already guessed by now, technology plays a huge role in my work since it's everywhere in digital marketing. I do still disconnect at times by reading physical books related to business and marketing, as well as flesh my ideas out on a whiteboard. What I love most about my job is that it's ever-evolving, so I am constantly learning. I also love the problem solving involved in aligning my client's marketing efforts with organic search. Since I run a company with a select number of clients, I'm able to build real relationships with each of them.

"I never knew what my career would be, but I always had an interest in tech and figured, in one way or another, that it would be something that would influence my adult life."

"For anyone wanting to start their career in tech, I would suggest talking to people currently working in the industry. whoever you're talking to will appreciate your interest, and maybe that connection will lead to a career opportunity for you someday."

The landscape for the tech sector in Halifax looks very different than it did ten years ago. Today, there isn't just a handful of big corporations doing world-class tech work, there are multiple companies doing world-class tech work - all from right here in Nova Scotia!

For anyone wanting to start their career in tech, I would suggest talking to people currently working in the industry, and simply listen to what they have to say. I know some people that are interested in tech are probably introverted to some degree, and that's ok! If you just ask people who they are, about their work, who they work for, and how they got into the industry, you'll learn a lot. Plus, whoever you're talking to will appreciate your interest, and maybe that connection will lead to a career opportunity for you someday. I know this is easier said than done, but put yourself out there and find your opportunities.

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Meet Anthony English!

VP & Chief Information Security Officer, Mariner Innovations

Originally from New Brunswick, Anthony English holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of New Brunswick. Anthony is a veteran in the security field with a passion for learning new information. Anthony is a Vice President and Chief Information Security Officer at Mariner Security Solutions, and has been in the security space for a number of years – but he does love learning new things every day!

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Like many of my peers, I started my career by using old-school computers. In high school, we didn't have a lot of technology available to us - we had computers labs - but the PCs were quite rudimentary. My computer science class in grade 12 was a really big eye-opener for me – I got to actually apply programming with code and that was amazing!

I still remember that one of the best moments I had in high school was when we wrote our own code – it was actually this moment that led me to computer science courses in university later. My second favourite subject was probably chemistry because I was able to learn the principal of good science and research, and how to apply it in real life.

Almost everyone had a teacher who helped them with career building. I had two teachers in high school who were encouraging me to stay interested in science and technology. One teacher who taught us French loved technology as well - he brought in what was considered cutting edge computer technology in the 1980's, the Timex Sinclair, which was a tiny, high-end calculator and let us use it.

Now, I'm Vice President and Chief Information Security Officer at Mariner Security Solutions, which is based in Saint John, New Brunswick. Working from the Moncton office, I travel frequently to customer sites. My role is to help customers solve security issues, so I get to work with people, processes, and technology all day, every day. Before joining Mariner, I traveled all around the world while I worked in information security and it was really interesting, but it gets exhausting after a few years, so I am really happy to be back to the Maritimes.

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At Mariner Innovations, we are dedicated to doing security work for customers including corporations, startups, and government clients. One day we might be helping a large police force with security in their IT, and the next day we might be helping a provincial government assess security on their products and solutions. We have even worked with banks to help them build entire information security management systems.

If you are going into the security field, be prepared to always be learning and be prepared for the unexpected. In security, we see and do things that other people wouldn't necessarily want to know. For example, we've done work on how to break into systems; we do this so we can document how to break into systems that customers have, so we can secure it correctly – but, of course, we don't share this information with anyone else. We treat this information as extremely confidential, so you must have a strong moral and ethical code built into everything you do in this field. That has to be part of who you are.

> *"The Nova Scotia tech sector has been rapidly growing."*

The Nova Scotia tech sector has been rapidly growing. Nova Scotia is encouraging businesses in the tech field to grow and contribute to the research side of things too. It is really important to grow technology, have the research to support it, have people and clients, and have government encouraging it to be done. For example, Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology is very intense right now – it's expanding quickly and is being applied in new ways every day. There are products now that try to predict the behaviour of hackers. AI is only going to improve and with that comes both benefits and risks if it's not managed properly – so we need smart people in our field to ensure that new technologies like this are built correctly.

For students, I'd say stick with sciences, and be as good in math as you can be because it is very useful in technology. Don't ever discount arts because that is what I have as my foundation, and it has served me very well in my career - it has kept my mind flexible, and my approach to my career flexible. In addition to good universities, I would recommend doing some research because there are tons of online resources right now. There are free resources for both technology and security - just make sure you get the information from a well-known, trusted source.

About Mariner Innovations

Mariner Innovations is located in major cities all across Canada, and has clients throughout Canada, the US and internationally. The company solves problems for businesses and their IT departments – from strategic consulting to implementation and ongoing management and maintenance. Mariner Innovations' professional services are focused on four key areas: IT Professional Services, Technology Advisory, Application Solutions, and Data Analytics.

Mariner's team is made up of experienced IT professionals, many of whom previously held CTO or CIO roles in large businesses. The company has an average of 23 years of industry experience for every person.

Meet Jillian Hill!

Business Analyst,
20/20 Experience Design

A native Haligonian, Jillian Hill has always had an interest in the economic growth of Halifax. After graduating from Dalhousie University and working in Government, Jillian is now able to be an active part of that economic growth as she steps into Halifax's tech sector. Last year, Jillian was hired as the Business Analyst for 20/20 Experience Design, and is loving every moment of it.

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If I'm being honest with you, working in the tech sector is something I never even considered doing before I actually started working in it. In high school, I didn't take computer sciences or a tech-based course of any kind – I was a high school student whose main concern was playing sports and having a social life. Saying that, I was also a high-achiever who cared a lot about my grades. My favourite courses were global history, math, and yoga (which was an actual class offered at my high school). My time in university was a bit all over the place, and again, tech didn't cross my path – I started at King's University in journalism, then switched to Dalhousie University to become an arts students, and then finally, I graduated with

a degree in Political Science. During my last year of university, I realized that I wanted to work with the government, so I began to learn French. I took some courses, and actually did one of my final semesters abroad in France, which was a great experience that helped me grasp the language.

I've always been interested in the economic growth of Halifax and Nova Scotia as a whole, so shortly after I graduated from Dalhousie I got a job with the Global Affairs Canada office. Government is a good spot to start your career because it allows you to have a bird's eye view of everything going on throughout the city. It was actually how I became aware of the tech sector in Halifax. I would read documents or articles about tech companies and tech initiatives going on throughout the city, and the local innovation fascinated me.

As my interest in tech began to grow, a friend of mine from a partner organization mentioned that his friend, Jamie Gerrard, was looking to hire someone for his company 20/20 Experience Design. I was interested and eager, so our mutual friend set up a meeting and we talked about my

potential fit with his company. I was nervous because as I've mentioned, I don't have any real experience in tech other than getting music on my phone and using social media, but Jamie wanted me for the business side of things – which was the perfect fit. So, I took on the role of Business Analyst for 20/20 Experience Design.

20/20 Experience Design is a boutique agency that helps to design, or redesign, digital products. We help our clients to make sure their companies are designing products with their user in mind, and that the product fits the user's specific needs and wants.

> *"My best piece of advice would be simply to try and volunteer with a tech company that interests you."*

I've been with 20/20 for a relatively short time now, but I love it. I love working for a start-up because it gives me the opportunity to wear many different hats. I'm involved in a lot of different projects, events, or initiatives and even if the hat sometimes feels too big, or too small, I'm still wearing it because that's what the company needs from me at that time. I also enjoy the flexibility my work provides for me, and how I am able to work closely with the owner of the company, Jamie. He has become a mentor for me and he includes me in whatever he's working on, so I am able to learn more about user experience design, building a business, and the tech industry as a whole - which is amazing!

Even though I've only been in the tech sector for a short time, I can already see that the industry is booming here in Halifax. I keep discovering more companies throughout the city, and learning more about how successful and global some of these tech companies are becoming.

I feel as though the biggest misconception about the tech industry is that everyone believes that you need to have a tech background in order to work in it. As you've read my story, this is obviously not the case – tech companies still need marketers, creatives, communications specialists, and many other positions that are not tech-based. And, as long as you have an interest in the industry, anyone can learn more about it as they work alongside it.

For anyone that is wanting to work in the tech sector, or has an interest in it, my best piece of advice would be simply to try and volunteer with a tech company that interests you. Just google tech companies in your area, find one that does work that you find cool, and just email them and ask if you can come to the office for a day or two every month to help out. Everyone is going to be appreciative of someone wanting to help out, especially for free, and will respect your ambition.

Other than that, I would suggest seeing if there are any tech-based workshops going on in your area, Digital Nova Scotia hosts many throughout the province, and I would definitely recommend checking them out. Discovering what you like and dislike is honestly one of the hardest aspects in determining a career, so if you can start to narrow it down at a young age, you'll be in a good position in the future.

Meet Kathleen Jay!

VP of Delivery, Maplewave

Kathleen Jay understands that no one's career path is a straight line. Being born and raised in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Kathleen wasn't even really aware of tech careers until she began university and enrolled in an IT degree program. Now, she couldn't imagine where she would be in life without tech. Kathleen has worked in the tech sector for most of her career, and currently works at Maplewave as Vice President of Delivery, where she has over 60 employees in her division.

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In high school, tech wasn't something on my radar. It was the early 90's and it wasn't something I was exposed to in school. Because of this, I leaned more towards business, and gravitated towards courses such as economics and statistics. I initially enrolled in a post-secondary business degree program, but learned of an Information Technology degree program at the same university, and after learning more from the students currently enrolled in the program, I found myself transferring into that program in my second semester. After that, I never looked back.

My career was built brick by brick - I started my career working for a software development company in Halifax as a technical writer. That company shut down after a few years, and after bouncing between a couple of different jobs, I was offered a position to manage the Saint Mary's University IT department. I worked at Saint Mary's for 11 years before leaving for my current position at Maplewave.

I'm in love with my job, as I get to work with brilliant people and solve problems everyday. Maplewave's culture really sets us apart - we've spent a lot of time working on our culture and we are very protective of it. We are fun, relaxed, but extraordinarily professional when we need to be. We also pride ourselves on going above and beyond for our customers. We are extraordinarily proud that even with all that hard work, we find the time to give back in meaningful ways to our community and maintain a strong charitable focus.

Everything in our company that engages clients falls under my area of supervision – from software development and solutions design, to

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project management and client success . I am very fortunate to not only have a brilliant team here in Nova Scotia, but also a team in South Africa that works hard to bring our excellence to that piece of the world. Most of our clients are telcos in the Caribbean, and that sees us travelling to amazing parts of the world. Working for an international company is an adventure everyday.

> *"Get out and get exposure to as many occupations as you can. Everyone thinks of the vet, doctor, lawyer, but few look beyond that."*

At Maplewave, part of my passion is growing other strong leaders, especially strong female leaders, wherever I can. In the next few years, I'd like to have the ability to influence leaders, and help those who want to learn and grow. I've always spent time volunteering with girls in tech initiatives, and recently joined the board for Techsploration, a non-profit organization doing tremendous work in our community to encourage girls to consider occupations in science, technology and trades.

If I were to offer one piece of advice to students, it would be to get out and get exposure to as many occupations as you can. Everyone thinks of the vet, doctor, lawyer, but few look beyond that. Look at all the options available to you. I do believe there is value in education, in whatever form that is. For some, a university degree is their path.

Others, a community college trade program is what you require to do what you love everyday. Most importantly, always ask lots of questions and always be curious.

About Maplewave
Maplewave is the provider of software and retail optimization services for the telecommunications (telco) industry since the early 1990s. Today, Maplewave's software is used in over 40 countries. In certain places, you can't buy a mobile phone without using Maplewave software.

The company products were built for retailers by retailers. Many of Maplewave's earliest customers were pharmacy and general retailers – many of whom they continue to serve today. Headquartered in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Maplewave's global footprint includes major footholds in South Africa and the U.K.

> *"I'm in love with my job, as I get to work with brilliant people and solve problems everyday. Maplewave's culture really sets us apart - we've spent a lot of time working on our culture and we are very protective of it."*

Meet Rohid Sharma!

Client Success Director - Managed Services, Cyber Clan

Born in the Philippines, Rohid Sharma moved to Nova Scotia to attend Saint Mary's University and he's been here ever since. Starting at an entry-level business development position, Rohid has moved up to become the Client Success Director at Cyber Clan, working with clients from around the world.

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Growing up surrounded by nature, I was always interested in ecosystems – with marine biology being one of my favourite subjects in high school. Like many high school students, my love of physical education made me a competitive individual. I played for the national basketball and soccer teams, and I still enjoy both sports today.

I'd say my technology interests came to fruition when I was in my last year at university. Having a double major in Science, I was interested in technology, but I didn't know where I wanted to be - there are so many companies and so many different things you can do. To be honest, when I graduated university, I took a job just to pay the bills.

It's hard to believe it's that job that led me to the tech field and where I work at now. I started up a conversation with someone while I was working in a hotel, and that person turned out to be the CEO of Cyber Clan. We'd never met before, but he thought I was intelligent and liked the way I spoke. We had dinner, and he offered me a job – he said, "decide by tomorrow night". A guy I had never met, and a company I had never heard of, in an industry I knew little about. I took the chance, and here we are today.

That was three years ago. I started at an entry-level business development position, and I've moved up four times since then, and now I'm a Director. My responsibilities include facilitating our Atlantic Canadian operations and participating on our executive team. Looking forward to five years from now, I would say I want to be right here where I am – it's such an exciting sector.

At Cyber Clan, our culture is truly unique – with over 100 employees, there's a great mix of corporate and personal vibes. It feels like we are family

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here, as we all hang out together and have a good time. One of the many great things about my job is the flexibility – I'm not a morning person at all, but I don't necessarily need to work at the office from 9 to 5. In fact, a lot of my job is beyond those hours, which works perfectly for me! Another bonus of my job is the constant learning and participating in the technology space. Technology, especially cybersecurity, is always changing and evolving, as what you're doing today could be changed tomorrow. I'm not the kind of person who likes to do the same thing over and over.

At Cyber Clan, we don't only use technology to do our job, but we use technology to be great at our job. Technically speaking, we break technology – it happens when a company calls and says "hey, can you hack this?" Cyber Clan was founded 13 years ago in Vancouver. Halifax is our newest Canadian office and opened three years ago. We also have three offices in the US, two in Latin America, and we

"It's important to be open-minded. You should accept that things are not always going to be comfortable and familiar you just never know what opportunities are around the corner."

"Having a double major in Science, I was interested in technology, but I didn't know where I wanted to be - there are so many companies and so many different things you can do."

opened an office in London, England just last year. Cyber Clan now operates in 20 countries worldwide!

If I've learned one thing in my career, it's that it's important to be open-minded. You should accept that things are not always going to be comfortable and familiar you just never know what opportunities are around the corner. Education is important, but I think the most important thing is flexibility. I find that the most successful people in the world aren't necessarily the ones that have the most education, but they're the ones that have the ability to continue to test themselves.

About Cyber Clan
Cyber Clan (formally Network Test Labs) was founded in 2006 as a cybersecurity consultancy specializing in online gaming. Today, Cyber Clan has a full suite of cybersecurity services and a global reach, operating in 20 countries. Cyber Clan has worked with organizations such as CSIS and the FBI to conduct key malware research.

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Nea Publicover's passion to learn led her to a career in tech. With an undergraduate degree in Accounting, and experience in Project Management, she'd be the first to say that your path to tech does not have to be a straight line. In her current role as Vice President of Employee Development at MOBIA Technology Innovations (MOBIA), Nea works with technology and technical people everyday giving her a unique perspective on the many career opportunities in tech.

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In high school, I loved every subject I took. I really didn't have a favourite subject which, at the time, was how the guidance counsellors helped you to pick a career. If you were good at sciences, you would take an undergrad in Science and decide from there; if you were good at English, you would go into an arts degree and decide from there. Tech was not presented as an option, which I hope is changing in schools now.

Tech offers so much variety in role types. Computer science, informatics, math – they are all such rich multi-faceted degrees that could appeal to a lot of students if they get exposure to them during their decision process. It is not just coding in a basement; it is problem solving and research, and continuous learning.

I chose to go into a business degree with a major in accounting after high school and eventually, after a few years of working, took my MBA.

After graduating with my MBA 16 years ago, I started with MOBIA as a Project Manager. We were called ARCOM Telecom Ltd. then, and I was the 13th person to join the company. Our owners were local, and the company had a great family feel, and they were always open to letting me try new things. As a new grad, I loved it – if I had an idea, someone would always listen, and if I worked hard, new opportunities would open for me. It was a wonderful environment!

I love it here, and I love what I do. I've had a chance to advance through the years – holding roles from business development, to marketing, to operations management. In my current role as Vice President of Employee Development, my

team and I cover all aspects of human resources, recruitment, wellness and engagement, and employee culture at MOBIA, now a company of 350 people.

MOBIA solves customers' business challenges by applying technology to help them improve their businesses. We have business analysts, project managers, developers, admin resources, network architects, and cybersecurity specialists that all

"Nova Scotia is becoming a great hotspot for technology."

work together to make this happen. What's fun about tech companies is that it doesn't matter what your original discipline was, there is space for everybody. People oriented roles like mine exist in tech, as do the deeply technical roles. The best solutions come from teams with varied backgrounds and perspectives.

The people I work with here are a blast! We don't just hire people for their skills, but we want to know if you are a person who can think outside the box and think critically. That tends to make for very unique personalities, which is why I enjoy the people here so much.

Nova Scotia is becoming a great hotspot for technology. We all know Nova Scotians are fun and down to earth, but our cost of living is good, the pace of life is good, and for new students - it's a chance to be in a slightly smaller environment where your ideas can be heard. It's exciting!

Anything you see has some technology in it now. So, I think you should consider where you want to go and what role technology might play in that particular field. You can reverse engineer your own career! Career planning is a creative art – there are so many options out there for you to explore.

About MOBIA Technology Innovations
MOBIA Technology Innovations is a systems integrator and technology consulting firm with over 30 years of experience working with Canadian service providers, healthcare providers and enterprises through their technology transformations.

MOBIA delivers hardware, software and professional services with a twist – a 360° approach that lets you see the challenges from all sides and deliver ahead-of-the-curve solutions that get results.

"Tech offers so much variety in role types. Computer science, informatics, math – they are all such rich multi-faceted degrees that could appeal to a lot of students if they get exposure to them during their decision process."

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Meet Scott Collens!
Head of Product Development and Project Delivery, Covers

Initially, Scott Collens was intimidated by technology and the tech sector, but after a friend exposed him to a year-long tech program, he was hooked. Building a tech career step-by-step, Collens changed positions several times but finally landed where he wanted to be. He combined his job with his favourite hobby, sports, and is now working at Covers, an online sports betting company, as Head Of Product Development and Project Delivery.

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I graduated from Prince Andrew High School in Dartmouth in 1991, a year when laptops were considered cutting-edge and the first website was built and put online. Technology wasn't really a part of a high school education back then — we're talking a handful of computers in the entire school.

High school technology basically consisted of CD-ROMs, but when I got to SMU, there were entire computer labs. I took an introduction to computers course and I freaked out.

To be honest, halfway through I wanted to drop out. I was completely intimidated by it.

I wound up passing the course and graduated from Saint Mary's in 1995. With my business degree in hand, I dove into sales and marketing, but quickly realized it wasn't for me.

One of my good friends then convinced me to check out the Information Technology Institute (ITI), a now-defunct technology school in Halifax. At ITI, I could take a one-year diploma that would allow me to move into a technical field and into an in-demand industry. I jumped at the opportunity!

After graduating from ITI, I moved to Toronto and worked at an IBM solutions provider for two years. Soon after, I found the opportunity I was looking for back home in Halifax.

I love sports, so when I heard about Covers – a digital media sports company – it felt like a great fit. I had heard good things about the company; they were in business for seven years before I joined and had built the company up to 30 people. It was local Halifax entrepreneurs that started it, and they wanted to build something big. From the

minute I walked in there was an excitement to the place, and there still is. We're all interested in sports here - we're especially big into NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, college football and college basketball.

I worked for 10 years as a programmer and web developer at Covers. I didn't have a computer science degree or possess deep technical knowledge, but I learned every day by asking questions and learning from my colleagues. I think it took me seven or eight years to reach the level of my peers.

I've now been at Covers for 17 years, and am proud to have helped build Covers into the top sports betting website in North America. But staying on top will not be easy as the American sports betting industry enters a period of rapid growth following the reversal of a federal law in May 2018.

Covers is now one of the largest sports betting companies in North America, and a lot of people don't realize that. When you hear people talking about sports there is always a lot of passion, and that translates here. We compete hard, and we want to be number one in our industry. There are a lot of new competitors, including large national sports brands entering our space, but we are still able to maintain our position as a market leader.

I think my story is a good example that it's never too late to change your career path. Just because you didn't start taking coding classes in junior high, doesn't mean you can't have a career in technology.

" People define themselves too early when it comes to tech — it's not too early to decide what you want to do, but high school is too early to write anything off. Anyone can learn anything, and you can learn at any age."

Computer science isn't the only way into the field – one of the first things to do is be curious about the tech around you now. If you like Fortnite, think about how it was built, how it makes money, how it works on your phone, and how they make those types of games. People define themselves too early when it comes to tech — it's not too early to decide what you want to do, but high school is too early to write anything off. Anyone can learn anything, and you can learn at any age.

About Covers NS Sports Media Pros Ltd is a Halifax-based digital sports media company operating and managing web-services for ProSportsDaily.com and Covers.com. ProSportsDaily.com is one of the most visited sports sites on the web, where sports fans come for daily big rumours & news. Online since 1995, Covers.com is a sports information site designed to entertain sports lovers everywhere, providing indispensable information and state-of-the-art statistical analysis. Thousands of people visit Covers.com daily to gather the data and news they need to stay informed. NS Sports Media Pros is wholly owned by Nexstar Media Group.

Meet Andrew Kennedy!

Integration Analyst, League Data LTD

Born and raised in Nova Scotia, Andrew couldn't imagine working anywhere else then by the ocean. Nova Scotia's growing technology sector allows Andrew to build the career he wants, and where he wants. Andrew is now an Integration Analyst at local information technology company, League Data Ltd..

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I went to Kings Edgehill School in Windsor and looking back at my hobbies, I was a stereotypical high school student - I played rugby, hockey, and computer games.

I remember when I was first exposed to the internet, my friends and I were playing text-based games and we had to dial into the server (only one person could dial in at a time), so we would race each other to be the first on the server every morning – it got very competitive. My high school embraced technology and I gained some basic digital knowledge while there, like how data is based and structured in a database. I remember, I actually took part in a weekend workshop that really sparked my interest in computers and tech

When I went on to Acadia University, I initially took computer science but after the first semester, I switched to economics where I found my real interest. I loved that time in my life and my time at university. In economics you can do a lot with data and tech integrates more and more every day with, well, everything. My path towards working in technology is not something I planned. It happened because of the opportunities that continued to open as I progressed through my career.

"To work in tech, you don't need to move to Toronto or a big city - you can stay home, here in Nova Scotia"

It's so important to follow your passion and do what you really love. When I started to work at League Data, I was in a consulting position which I liked but I really saw myself doing more. I

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wanted to enhance my knowledge of what digital is and understand the value of digital transformation, so I could see where I fit. My next career step was into an integration analyst role which is what I do today. My responsibilities involve connecting the different systems and points of data so we can create engaging experiences for credit union members. It's what really interests me. I love data – exploring how to work with data, how to gather it, and how to leverage targeted data. It's exciting for me.

I don't think anybody can deny that digital technology is now a foundation that holds up the business world and I'm proud to be part of the tech sector. At League Data, I'm able to use my mind in a way that really challenges me and allows me to use my problem-solving skills.

We need to predict market trends to maintain successful credit or debit card launches, make sure cards transactions are processed accurately and securely as well as understanding how to use the different points of data to get a complete view of our members. Currently, my job is to connect our different systems to each other and to build connections using a middle layer called an API. APIs allow us to connect new systems to each other easier, increasing the speed that we can launch new services.

There are three things that I really love about my work – understanding data, daily challenges, and staying on the top of trends. However, the people I work with make all the difference – the people at League Data are awesome.

"It's so important to follow your passion and do what you really love."

We are a great family that works together while staying competitive. Everyone at League Data works hard to get the job done.

To work in tech, you don't need to move to Toronto or a big city - you can stay home, here in Nova Scotia. If you are looking to enter the rapidly changing IT world, I would recommend taking some Java courses and gaining as much development skills as you can, even if it's not your major.

About League Data
League Data is the Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the Atlantic Credit Union System. The company provides information technology services and support to the 46 credit unions across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island. League Data's focus is to provide fully integrated technology solutions that credit unions require to deliver a member experience that enables growth while reducing administration and operational costs.

Meet Bradley MacEachen!

Business Analyst,
Concertia

Bradley MacEachen was born in Ontario, but grew up in Nova Scotia. Having experience in IT and business, Bradley found a job that is the perfect fit for him – a Business Consultant at Concertia.

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I didn't gain much IT experience in high school - the most extensive course I took was Advanced Excel training. Looking back on it today, I didn't have a great understanding of IT.

Playing hockey kept me busy during high school, but in addition to that I enjoyed math and French – which actually, ultimately, helped me develop my career in IT!

Ever since I can remember, I was searching for a career path that was right for me. My dad is an accountant and I thought that was something I could be interested in, that was until I took a couple of courses and decided accounting was not for me. I went to Saint Francis Xavier University and studied economics, accounting, and computer sciences. Computer sciences, programming in particular, was

interesting for me, but despite enjoying the courses, the technical aspect was challenging so I decided not to go down the developer path. Realizing I had an interest in technology and general business, perusing IT was the next logical area to explore. I ended up sticking in the field, and graduated with a Business degree and an IT major.

When I was fresh out of school, I worked on Prince Edward Island for over a year. My job was more technical than what I do now. I was doing mapping and some coding – and I asked myself "Is this really what I want to do?"

Back in Nova Scotia, the first meeting with Concertia was a pleasant surprise. The role was described as business oriented, but it was quickly brought to my attention that tech drove the business. I characterize my role as a middle person between one of our clients, Bell and our developers. Bell will come to us with business changes and I transcribe what these will look like in our software. In five years' time, I hope to still be working in IT. I'd like to gain a little bit more technical experience - learn some more coding

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and explore more options.

The people at Concertia are great! I work with really smart people and I'm learning so much every day. Constant learning – that's one of the really great things about where I work. The IT sector is about constantly learning as technologies evolve and that's something I've enjoyed.

We are kind of a small company, with only 25 employees currently. Our President, Ross MacDougall, is directly involved with our clients. If a team member needs advice or assistance, he is right there to help. I don't think a lot of companies have a boss like Ross. Concertia just celebrated its 20th anniversary this summer – which is amazing! The company will continue to grow over the next few years, I'm sure of it.

"As someone in the tech sector, if I could provide advice to anyone, I would say don't be afraid of technology, and don't let the learning curve discourage you. The learning curve is definitely prominent in the IT world, but at the same time, it's something that's manageable and there are always people that can help you."

As someone in the tech sector, if I could provide advice to anyone, I would say don't be afraid of technology, and don't let the learning curve discourage you. The learning curve is definitely prominent in the IT world, but at the same time, it's something that's manageable and there are always people that can help you. Take your education seriously, as the stuff you learn is relevant to the real world. Don't be afraid to ask questions and always do your research!

Once you've done your research you'll see what tech is so much more than coding. I believe the most common misconception about IT is that back end developers sit in the dark and just code all day – but that's not tech. IT includes people, processes, technology and business. It is the way of the future and if it's something you're interested in, you should really consider it, because you will find an interesting career in it.

About Concertia
Concertia Technologies Inc is a professional services organization dedicated to helping clients develop and support their businesses through innovative business and IT solutions. Concertia was founded in 1999 and is primarily an operational decision management-software consulting company. Concertia works with Bell, Nova Scotia Power, IBM, local universities and several Nova Scotia high schools.

Meet Yashar Asheri!

Front-End Developer, Groundhog

Coming from an artistic family, Yashar has always been interested in art and being creative, as well as computers and emerging technologies. He decided to combine his interests and enrolled in the graphic design program at NSCC, and now, Yashar works as a front-end developer at GroundHog.

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Both of my parents are creative – my father's a film director and my mother's a set designer, that's how they met. My parents have been the main influences in my career, and they are also my biggest supporters through this journey.

Looking back at my time in high school, I was a person who was passionate about drawing and art. Like most students, the thought of my future job never left my mind. I was trying to think about doing something serious. So when it came down to making a decision, the most practical application of art was graphic design because it was learning about technology and art simultaneously.

I took the graphic design program at NSCC, and

at the time I thought that committing to a two-year program might be a little less risky. I still loved art, but I didn't know if I was ready to spend four years of my life to get a university degree because I didn't know if it was the right career for me yet.

Currently, I work as a Front-End Developer at GroundHog. For me, this is a great application of my both creative skills and my logical programming experience, so it's a blend of my passions.

GroundHog, is a blockchain company building subscription payments on blockchain. I believe that blockchain is the next wave of big technology. It's akin to the internet, as the way internet can connect all of us together. The internet has a giant wealth of information, and a blockchain does something similar for our society.

When I started at GroundHog, they were the only blockchain company that I knew of in Halifax, but over the years a few more have opened. We are a start-up, and because of that we go through

many ups and downs. There are only four employees at GroundHog but we are a big family that helps each other every day.

If you don't know much about blockchain yet, the main advantage of the technology is that it's more secure, but new technologies are generally hard for people to trust, and this paradox can't really be avoided. I definitely see blockchain as a technology of the future.

For people getting into the tech field, I'm sure that IT will always be in demand. There is always a need for programmers, UX and graphic designers, and I see that the security industry in Nova Scotia is starting to bloom. Everyone can find their own place in the local tech sector. If you are curious about IT, just simply start learning about it – there are so many amazing resources online!

About GroundHog

GroundHog is a crypto-native, fintech company based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The company builds a suite a tools powering the crypto subscription economy. Groundhog is a spin-out of BlockCrushr Labs, an internationally award-winning blockchain development studio. You'll be surrounded by a world class mindset every day. Groundhog is a TechStars company and a ConsenSys Ventures Tachyon company.

"Everyone can find their own place in the local tech sector. If you are curious about IT, just simply start learning about it - there are so many amazing resources online!"

Meet Susan Helliwell!

CEO, Praxes

Originally from Ontario, Susan has lived in Nova Scotia since 1990, and is a passionate supporter of the Nova Scotian lifestyle. At 12, Susan started her entrepreneurial career and has been a founder of five businesses over the past 25 years. Today, Susan helps people in remote locations connect with expert medical advice as the CEO of Praxes Medical Group, and also has two companies involved in real estate.

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My favorite subject in high school was music – I played the French horn, and I still play it with several community groups today. I was also good at math and science, so I really felt I had two options for my career; music and engineering. I love fixing things and finding out how things work. I didn't have any engineers in my family, but I thought that engineering combined my love of math and science perfectly. At that time, the school guidance counsellors were not very encouraging of women going into engineering programs, but I had a very strong friend group of smart women who aspired to go into law, medicine, and engineering. Eventually, I decided

to study engineering, but I kept playing music on the side.

In my mechanical engineering class at the University of Waterloo, there were four women in my class of 100 students. I am glad to see that there are more women going into engineering now, but we still need to encourage more women to pursue careers in both engineering and computer science.

In 1994, I started Renovators Resource with Jennifer Corson. We were the first architectural salvage company in Halifax, as we saved tons of used building materials and saw them reused in many homes and businesses around Nova Scotia.

In 1997, my husband, myself, and five other emergency doctors formed PRAXES to provide medical support to the offshore oil and gas industry here in Nova Scotia.   Right from the beginning, I saw there was an opportunity to use software to remove the administrative tasks from our doctors, which allowed them to focus on providing great medical care. Our software has

changed greatly over the last 15 years but is still designed to make it fast, and easy, for patients in remote locations to connect with our doctors.

We have always focused on being the expert content providers. Whether people connect with us via cell phone, satellite phone, ship-to-shore radio or more recently, by secure messaging or video, we pride ourselves on delivering the best medical care possible. We provide comprehensive medical kits for remote sites, so that onsite personnel can deliver enhanced care remotely, guided by our doctors. By doing this, we help companies to keep their personnel onsite, working, and productive.

"As our company grows, I'm interested in learning about new technologies, and evaluating how they may provide additional value for our clients."

We are one of the few telemedicine providers in North America that record and review our medical consultations and provide feedback to our doctors. We do this to ensure we deliver excellent, consistent and evidence-based medical care. We believe that doctors, just like pilots, can benefit from peer review and constructive feedback.

We have a fabulous team of people here at Praxes! Our company is very accommodating in terms of work-life balance, as we offer flexible work schedules, work from home and remote

work options, unlimited vacation, support for professional development, and other benefits. Everyone has a personal life to manage, and we trust our team to manage their work and home schedules in a responsible manner, which they do every day. We support each other, so that we can provide excellent support for our clients.

My personal view of a good life balance is to eat well, sleep well, exercise, and have other personal interests outside of work, so we really try to infuse that into our company culture. I personally always find time for exercise and play music – for me, music is great because when I play, I can't do anything else. It clears my mind and allows me to come back feeling refreshed.

As our company grows, I'm interested in learning about new technologies, and evaluating how they may provide additional value for our clients. Digital Nova Scotia provides excellent opportunities for this, by offering seminars, presentations and learning opportunities for our whole team. PRAXES is primarily a medical company, but we are heavily reliant on technology, as are most businesses these days. We have recently added an in-house software development team, so we have more capability to innovate.

About PRAXES
PRAXES connects people with unexpected medical needs to timely, appropriate and excellent care, wherever they are, and whenever they need it. We improve health care while simultaneously reducing cost and risk for clients across Canada and around the world.

Meet Jordan Kyriakidis!

Co-Founder & CEO, QRA Corp

Fascinated with predicting the future as a child, Jordan Kyriakidis had no idea this dream would actually lead to his career. A second-generation immigrant, born and raised in Toronto – Jordan is a self-described accidental entrepreneur. After receiving a PhD in theoretical physics and becoming a professor in physics and quantum computing, he started QRA Corp.

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I really enjoyed my time in high school. It was a long time ago, but I still remember those days – sports, music, and I even acted in the school theatre. I was always good at math and I enjoyed it too, but it was in high school that I discovered my real love –- physics.

Once, my high school teacher showed me how to predict something in the future by using mathematics and physics – it was spectacular and I was hooked, it was one of the most spectacular things I ever experienced. I had no idea at the time that predicting the future would become my career.

I had to make a big decision about university after high school – music or physics? Those were my two big choices, and it was difficult. Eventually, I decided to do physics. I figured if I went into physics, I could still do music, but if I went into music, I probably wouldn't be able to do physics.

I only started my career in IT a few years ago! After I received my Ph.D in theoretical physics with a pencil and paper, I eventually switched to using a computer. I really only started to use a computer so I could do research.

When I became a professor, my style was very analytical and creative. Now I run a software company, and build software products. I built this company out of necessity - I saw a problem and used technology to solve it.

Currently, I'm the Co-Founder, President and CEO of QRA Corp. We build enterprise software for early-stage engineering of safety-critical systems software and do design verification. Our team makes sure the robots don't kill us (Hahaha!). Today, self-driving cars and autonomous tools use software to control

machines, so we build tools to make sure machines do what they are supposed to do.

We do language processing, writing requirements, and we find faults and conflicting issues for safety-critical big projects such as aircraft and power plants. We analyze designs, blueprints and build simulations to ensure sure there are no errors. The technology and problem solving we are doing is still very new. Everyone is talking about autonomous systems, but there aren't many people discovering how to prevent issues before they happen.

The diversity in our company not only includes gender, ethnicity, and orientation – we also have cognitive diversity and people from many different backgrounds. One of our lead developers is a specialist in game theory, someone else has a background in comparative religion, we have a philosopher, and someone with a PhD in physics. This provides us with different ways of thinking and that helps us stay innovative.

It took us six years to become an "overnight success" – but we did it."

Our culture at QRA Corp is honest and we trust each other. I'm the CEO, but if staff sees something that's not right, they will tell me. The people here keep me on my toes and keep me young. You can't be lazy in your thinking here – they will tell you. "You can do better than this." I really like how close we are here. Eighty percent

of the company eats lunch together, it's like a family.

The other thing I like is the actual work we are doing. We are solving very important and necessary problems. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning are good things, they will make lives better, but it isn't easy - there will be accidents and mistakes, and we are enabling that to happen in a safe, robust way. It's brand new technology, and we are helping shape that – it's exciting.

Some people think that being in a tech company is glamorous. It's not true – it is hard work – you can't just do what's been done before, you need to keep learning. It took us six years to become an "overnight success" – but we did it. If you don't fail, you aren't trying hard enough in the tech industry - you always need to push the boundaries. If you don't fail, it means you've never made it to that boundary, and don't forget you can make every mistake once.

About QRA
QRA Corp was founded in 2013. QRA builds tools to help engineers in the early stages of systems development. QRA's platform detects errors in engineering requirements and designs. The main QRA focus is complex cyber physical systems like aircraft, automobiles and advanced naval ships. QRA has doubled in size each year since launching, and is poised for even more growth – the world's top 10 aerospace and defence companies spend nearly $90 billion a year on testing their systems.

Meet Lilly Chalupowski!
Malware Research Lead, GoSecure

Born and raised in Nova Scotia, Lilly Chalupowski graduated from Acadia University with a degree in Arts and Music. After years of struggling to find employment, Lilly put down the guitar and picked up a computer and taught herself valuable skills such as coding and programming. Through her self-teaching, Lilly rose up in the tech sector in Nova Scotia and is currently a Malware Research Lead at GoSecure.

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When I was in high school, I was very interested in computers. I would play pranks on my classmates with library computers by running scripts that would cause their mouse and keyboard to do silly things. I still remember the old black and white screen Mac computers from my childhood - you had to press the reset button all the time, and everyone had a paperclip with them to reset the darn thing.

Growing up, I didn't know many people who worked in tech – but I guess video games helped get me into the IT field. But before I started my career in tech, I was looking around for other opportunities - I went to university for computer science, but ended up dropping out after a year because I thought the field wasn't for me. Then, I enrolled in a music program. After graduating, I struggled to find the right job for 7-8 years and had a ton of student debt, so I decided to pick up computers again and try a career in tech .

I quickly realized that I enjoyed teaching myself about computers, as my university experience didn't provide time to practice what we'd learned. By doing it myself, I was able to learn everything I wanted at my own pace and felt like a self-made person. I need something to exercise my mind or I get bored, so if you're staying up at night trying to work out why something works or how it works – perhaps this industry might be right for you.

With technology, the ability to recognize and understand patterns is huge, as it can help you process an entangled code. As I mentioned earlier, I have a bachelor's degree in Arts and Music from Acadia, and I still play the guitar and a tiny bit of piano. Patterns in music, like technology are extremely important. I took four years of music theory and I was at the top of my class. If you play

guitar or piano you'll know the distances of your fingers, majors, minors, etc. – they are all patterns.

Step by step, I was trying to blaze my own path in the tech sector and get into contractual work. I was putting up videos and examples of my code on LinkedIn, with hopes that someone would see the value I could bring to a company. Finally, Travis Barlow, Vice President at GoSecure, saw what I was capable of and hired me. I started as an analyst and worked my way up the ladder at GoSecure.

Here at GoSecure, I get to look at the software that is made with malicious intent and tear it apart to see what makes it work, and find ways to stop it. I enjoy looking at malicious software, as you get to see how creative these bad guys can get. Another aspect of my job that I love is that the company gives us an opportunity to travel a lot, but, perhaps what I love the most about working at GoSecure is the wonderful people here.

> *"In the growing tech sector, we need people all the time and it doesn't matter who you are as long as you do a good job."*

Currently, I am building a malware analysis department here at GoSecure, and that involves writing down procedures for taking apart different types of malicious programs and files. On top of that, I am using our current products to make detections and find solutions in order to attack those malicious behaviors, and find ways to automate it.

At GoSecure, we have a unique take on security, as there is a lot of human aspect to it. A lot of companies will just take care of machines and other technologies, but we actually take a lot of the workload off the company's IT departments and allow them to use our expertise to gain high-value alerts that they can act on.
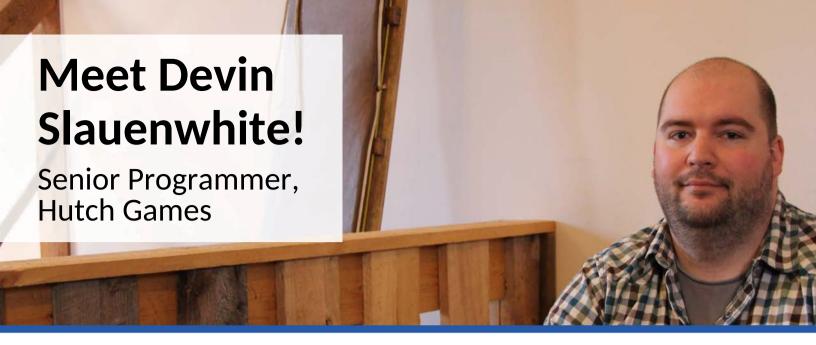
If this is what you want to do, don't be afraid to fail while working on it. Writing and messing around with computer code isn't like operating on someone's brain – if you break something, you can reimage or recompile the program and don't have to worry about the consequences. Keep doing that, take advantage of the Internet and use that to help improve yourself and your skills.

There is a big misconception about women in tech. When I went into computer science, it was all men and I felt out of place. At GoSecure, we are actively hiring women who have good skills. In the growing tech sector, we need people all the time and it doesn't matter who you are as long as you do a good job.

About GoSecure
GoSecure Inc. was founded in 2002, and then merged with CounterTack Inc. in 2018. GoSecure is driving to become the global leader in Advanced Managed Detection & Response (MDR). The company combines different endpoint and network level threat hunting with services and technology that provide highly effective and preventative defense across an organization's entire attack surface. GoSecure offers medical, dental and vision benefits, employer retirement program, and a stimulating work environment with a culture of big ideas and winning.

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Meet Devin Slauenwhite!

Senior Programmer, Hutch Games

A career in video games is something we all dream of, and that's exactly what Devin Slauenwhite gets to do. Devin grew up and went to school in New Germany, and started his journey in tech with his Computer Science degree at Acadia University. Before jumping into tech, he thought about business and accounting – but ultimately he chose IT and couldn't imagine doing anything else – Devin is now a Senior Programmer at Hutch Games.

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In early 2000's, our school still had old Macintosh computers from the early 90's, and I'm not going to lie, our computer courses were pretty boring. I was a stereotypical computer nerd - I enjoyed video games, basic programming, you know, anything techie. I went to university knowing computers were going to be the next "big thing". Not having any clue what to do after graduation, I decided to take a leap of faith. Honestly, the gaming industry wasn't even on my list – but here we are – I'm now a Senior Programmer at Hutch Games Canada, and it's awesome.

Hutch is a mobile games developer based in London, UK – but there is a small team of five here in Mahone Bay. Our focus is mobile racing games. We work with the newest technologies and I'm trying to keep up with it all, as it changes constantly! The newest technologies, flexibility, and problem solving – these are the three things I love most about my job. Getting to play with the latest tech is great.

Hutch has a great company culture. Their views of what work should be like are inline with mine. We can work two days outside of the office and three days in the office. Hutch wants you to be happy at work and happy when you're not working - we have a beer or ice cream on Fridays – depending on the season! We do tech lunches, where we talk about new tech, what we have going on, and share knowledge.

In the next few years, I'd like to be right where I am. My wife and I love living around here, I work at a job I love, and work for a great company. I've been lucky, a lot of people I went to school with moved out west, and are working in Vancouver in

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the games industry, and they want to come back here. I'm skipping that step, and I'm where I want to be right now.

Nova Scotia has changed a lot since I started working in the tech sector – awhile back, there were only a handful of companies I knew about. Now, there are lots of game studios in Halifax. Nova Scotia has become quite the spot.

For high school students who want to get into games development, I loved my time at Acadia University. They specialized in video games and worked with local companies. But university isn't for everyone, it's hard to tell people what route to take because there are so many avenues to get to the same spot. My advice would be to learn about the different companies that are around Nova Scotia, or in Canada – look, learn, and contact them. You have no idea what is around unless you look. You'd be surprised to hear that 80 people are working in Lunenburg on video games. Find something you enjoy, something that interests you – that is the secret.

"Before I chose computer science, I thought about going into business and accounting – I liked business and math - but I'm glad I chose tech."

"My wife and I love living around here, I work at a job I love, and work for a great company. I've been lucky, a lot of people I went to school with moved out west, and are working in Vancouver in the games industry, and they want to come back here. I'm skipping that step, and I'm where I want to be right now."

These days people are spoiled for choice – there is so much available on the internet. There are tons of websites designed to help kids learn about programming - with no shortage of opportunities, you just need to find the one that fits with what you love to do.

About Hutch Games Studio
Hutch is a games studio based in Central London. Hutch creates racing games for mobile. Founded in 2011, the company has released 8 games including Smash Cops, MMX Racing, Hot Wheels: Race Off and MMX Hill Climb with over 150 million players across the world. When Hutch launches a game, it uses player feedback and most critically data to figure out how to make each game the best it can be.

Meet Dawn MacInnis!

President and Principle Consultant, C Dawn MacInnis Consulting Inc.

A Maritimer originally from Prince Edward Island, Dawn MacInnis is a self-driven person who had two options for her future – medicine or IT – she chose IT and she loves it. Now, Dawn is a Principal Consultant at C Dawn MacInnis Consulting Inc., but her career in IT has taken her all over the world.

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Our interests and choices in high school definitely influence our choices in life. In high school I remember gravitating toward English courses specifically Shakespeare, but really, science was my favourite. My high school chemistry teacher, Mrs. Cannon was so passionate about science, it was impossible not to share that same passion. We all loved her as a teacher, so after that I thought decision made, I'll enroll in the BSc. Program in university and focus on chemistry.

Now, if Mrs. Cannon had been my Professor at university, I would have stayed in chemistry for sure. So, after completing my first year of science, I decided that science wasn't for me and switched into the business program. Turns out, I

really enjoyed business and had a natural aptitude for it!

Three years later with my business degree in hand, I had to decide what was next for me – that's when I discovered the Information Technology Institute (ITI). In 2000, IT was in high demand and ITI offered a really unique model – a hands-on, fully immersed, nine-month IT program where you walked out ready to start your career in tech. I'd never coded before in my life and there I was, coding a website from scratch. During the day, we would learn, code, etc. and in the evening, we would work on IT projects for fictitious clients. My first job after that was as a Junior Programmer Analyst with xwave – which was one of the larger IT companies in Canada at the time and was owned by Bell Aliant.

As I continued with my career, I worked with many great companies like BlackBerry, Ambir Solutions, EY (Ernst & Young) and most recently, Sierra Systems, an NTT DATA Company. Actually, when I worked for xwave, I had the opportunity to relocate to our office in Dublin, Ireland. While in

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Europe, I explored other cities over the bank holiday weekends. Paris was amazing and Edinburgh felt like home. So, if you're interested in travel, I highly recommend a career in the tech sector.

For me, getting into tech was something that happened after university, but today, kids grow up with technology all around them. Our younger generation are early adopters of any new technology, so they have a big advantage in the tech sector. If you're a high school student who really loves problem solving, and has an interest in designing apps and websites you should absolutely consider a career in IT. I've given presentations at a few high schools and I always ask them as they are using Instagram or Facebook, do they ever wish it could do something else? Because that's exactly what a career in this field offers, if you get into technology, you can influence that and make things happen.

"In the Atlantic region, we have a great pool of resources supporting the tech sector. We have excellent universities and colleges, and in Halifax, we have an international airport — it's the perfect starting point for any IT company."

"In 2000, IT was in high demand and ITI offered a really unique model — a hands-on, fully immersed, nine-month IT program where you walked out ready to start your career in tech. I'd never coded before in my life and there I was, coding a website from scratch."

In the Atlantic region, we have a great pool of resources supporting the tech sector. We have excellent universities and colleges, and in Halifax, we have an international airport – it's the perfect starting point for any IT company. And even as we're sitting here at the Digital Nova Scotia office, all you need to do is look out to see all the new buildings being developed around us!

This project, the Opening Doors project is actually what high schools need – connections with people in IT. Explore events, check out the Professional Development Summit, Tech Lounge with Third Wednesdays and Digital Nova Scotia, etc. Get involved and ask people what they do, and how they got started in their career - and don't forget to create a good portfolio if possible.

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Meet Katelyn Bourgoin!

Founder,
Katelyn Bourgoin Marketing

A born entrepreneur, Katelyn Bourgoin's passion for people, communications and research-driven results have paved the way for her growing business. Katelyn specializes in customer research and digital marketing, helping businesses learn about their customers, and provide guidance to help their business grow and succeed.

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My career path from high school to now certainly wasn't a straight line. I've always been the kind of person who chases several rabbits at once! I didn't know what way I should choose for my future - English, theatre, and writing were among my main interests in high school.

I went to Dalhousie University for my Bachelor's degree in English and nearing the end of my degree, I realized I didn't want to be a journalist or English teacher. After completing my degree, I worked at a restaurant for a couple of years, but it ended up being a turning point in my life. One day, the owner of the restaurant looked at me and said, "You are really good with people, you should think about doing Public Relations".

To be honest, I didn't even know what PR was, but then found the NSCC Public Relations program nearby. It was actually while I was taking that program that everything changed for me. As part of a school project, I had to put together a website for myself and from that, somebody messaged me on Twitter saying, "I'm starting a new business and I need some support to serve a client. I don't want to hire you as an employee, I want to hire you as a contractor". It was exciting to be recognized for my work, and I viewed it as a great opportunity for me to start a business, which was something I'd always wanted to do.

By age 28, I'd launched two companies — RedRiot (a branding agency) and The Fork Project (a restaurant consulting business). The Fork Project got acquired in under two years and RedRiot was growing quickly. I'd built a rockstar team of creatives and we were reeling in clients like Target and Holiday Inn.

Things were going well, but I wanted to build something more scalable. So, I did something that my friends and family thought was "crazy." I walked away from my safe, growing business to

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launch Vendeve — a high-risk tech startup. The next 18 months went by in a blur. We built an minimum viable product, raised a little venture capital, grew our team, won pitch contests, pivoted our product, and wooed the press. Forbes was calling Vendeve "the next LinkedIn" and they'd named me as an influencer. We were being recruited by TechStars. Even Randi Zuckerberg (Mark's big sis) had her eye on us.

From the outside, everything looked great. But, internally we were struggling. We were great at attracting new users into the network but struggled to keep them coming back. As a network, you need people to log in and use your product every day. You need them to invite their friends, but that wasn't happening. Our marketing was great, but our product had missed the mark. I made the painful decision to shut the business down in 2017.

"I work with companies that are really passionate about making a difference in the world and getting to see the results that they get from our work together is extremely rewarding. That's the main reason I get up every day."

"I've always been the kind of person who chases several rabbits at once!"

I didn't give up after that – I took some time and then built what I do now. To put it simply, I help marketers and product teams to figure out what triggers their customers to buy.

What I learned was that many companies had the opposite problem from what we had at Vendeve. They were great at building products but struggled to predictably attract new customers.

That's where I come in - I basically teach companies how to use customer research to better understand who their target market is and what triggers those customers to buy, so the company can improve their marketing tactics. I've been doing this for roughly a year, and I have approximately 200 clients across Atlantic Canada.

Working with great companies is probably the number one thing I like about my job. I work with companies that are really passionate about making a difference in the world and getting to see the results that they get from our work together is extremely rewarding. That's the main reason I get up every day.

Meet Geoff Miller!

VP of Engineering, Proposify

Geoff Miller didn't know what he wanted to do when he left high school - he loved math, physics, band, and hockey, so the possibilities felt endless. After he and his girlfriend attended a Computer Science Day at Dalhousie University, he quickly fell in love with programming. Now, the VP of Engineering at Proposify, Geoff knows exactly what he wants to do.

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I still remember my first taste of technology - my dad's an accountant so he always had a computer at the house (with dial up internet). My brother and I would play games where monkeys would throw bananas that explode, and we had to code that – we'd play that game for hours and I don't think we really thought much about coding at the time. Thinking back on it - one year, we got an N64 for Christmas and I think that really was the start of my love for technology.

Growing up, I went to Charles P. Allen High School in Bedford. I loved math, physics, and band, I played hockey, soccer, and video games – I guess I was a typical high school student. I

definitely wasn't into programming then… I didn't even look at that until I was leaving high school.

It was actually my girlfriend, now wife, that sparked my interest in tech. She told me about Dalhousie's Computer Science Day, which left me knowing exactly what I wanted to do - there was something about that day that made me want to get into tech.

I think old-school tech stereotypes could scare people away from getting involved in our industry. It's not like you see in the movies, of course there are some people that fit that stereotype in tech, but there are so many who don't.

Until I went into Computer Science, I had no idea what was possible in this industry. Once I learned a little more - I was like, "this is definitely what I want to do!" You might not have that moment but explore all of your options, and know that you don't have to decide right away. Most of my professors did not start in tech, they started in English and I had another that did astronomy. In my opinion, those backgrounds help. If you do law, (one of our developers did that) it doesn't

limit your options – you look at the technical applications of it. Or even going from tech into those industries can open new opportunities – tech is everywhere, literally, everywhere!

My current position is with Proposify, and I love it. After I left my previous job, I was going through several job-searching platforms and I stumbled upon the position at Proposify, and my wife encouraged me to apply for it. The job looked amazing, I just didn't think I had the skills they were looking for – but finally, after some encouragement, I applied. Within a couple of hours, co-owner, Kyle Racki, called me and offered me an interview.

Now, I assist our Chief Technology Officer, Jonathan, on leading the development team. Jonathan leads the strategy and I lead the day-to-day, coordinating regularly with our project manager. I meet with all the departments, often several times a week and explore implementing new products. We do documentation automation software for companies. Proposify is online proposal software – we offer our software-as-a-service to help other companies close sales faster and sleep better. Our goal is to make a smoother deal process for them making it easier for sales teams to create and send sales documents like proposals, and close them faster.

"Always investigate your options, the perfect thing for you could be just around the corner."

"Until I went into Computer Science, I had no idea what was possible in this industry."

Enjoying your job is so important. The people at Proposify are amazing, and that makes me love my job every day. Everyone loves to solve problems here, and everyone loves to come in. Since I've been here, I've never thought: "I don't want to go work." I see myself still being here in 5 years, perhaps doing a bit more of the personnel side of things!

If you're looking to get into tech, online resources are the best! There are so many free online schools where you can learn to code and explore different programming aspects.

Reach out to people like Digital Nova Scotia and Volta too and ask them questions. Always investigate your options, the perfect thing for you could be just around the corner.

About Proposify
Proposify was founded in 2013 by co-founders Kyle Racki and Kevin Springer. Proposify is located in Halifax and has more that 70 employees. Proposify helps sales teams streamline the process of creating sales documents like proposals, contracts, and agreements.

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Meet Tyler Robertson!
Full-Stack Developer, HomeEXCEPT

Tyler Robertson is passionate about technology and he always dreamed about becoming a developer. After high school graduation, Tyler dove head first into creating a career that he knew he would love. His passion, coupled with his drive and motivation, led him to alternative learning avenues that would accelerate his career. Now, at just 19 years old, Tyler is a full-stack developer with a growing company, HomeEXCEPT.

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I'm not going to lie, I didn't enjoy calculus, biology and chemistry in high school; in fact, I wasn't interested in many high school courses. I knew I wanted to learn programming – I was always interested in mobile apps and video games, even long before I started my career in tech.

While my friends moved on to university, I was looking around for other options. Despite the guidance counselors' words about "university, university…" I decided that it wasn't the right path for me. I knew that a degree is not what determines your worth in the workplace and I

don't regret the decision to go a different route. At work, I'm respected not because of letters after my name, but because I know my stuff.

With a general knowledge of programming already, I took my education into my own hands. At first I spent a lot of time taking online courses and then I completed a programming boot camp in Montreal. The boot camp was great because it prepared us to go straight into the programming field. Step by step, my dream was coming true and before I knew it, I joined HomeEXCEPT.

At first, I would consistently work 12 hour days, learning as much as I possibly could. Even now, I always make sure to schedule time for learning new things. This is a career that's ever evolving and staying current is essential for growth. At HomeEXCEPT we build non-intrusive monitoring systems that not only learn the pattern of life in the space being monitored, but do so while maintaining 100% privacy.

My job is leading the development of the actual product and I collaborate with our data scientists

to integrate their findings with user experience processes. We are filling a significant hole in the market for people and businesses seeking risk management solutions, safety, and peace of mind without compromising privacy or dignity – and we're so proud to be doing it right here at home in Nova Scotia. The community of people and office culture make my work environment a really lovely place. When we hire, we don't just look at credentials - it's not simply a matter of education, but rather a combination of experience, skill, and

I knew I wanted to learn programming – I was always interested in mobile apps and video games, even long before I started my career in tech."

personality. We've grown to 14 team members and we all bring something different to the table - we each have our own pieces of work, and when you put them all together, it's a perfect fit.

The only other field I could possibly see myself in is music - or maybe I could have been a chef, I do like cooking so who knows! But in all honesty, I love IT because it's a constant learning curve and it never gets boring. There are some days when I come to work and everything's seamless … then an hour later an unexpected issue pops up and we kick into high gear to find a resolution! That's the main thing for people beginning in technology to remember - you don't have to know everything, you just have to know how to find the answer. It might not sound awesome to

everyone, but I love the challenge and I'm always learning something new!

In the past four years a lot has happened in Nova Scotia's tech sector and people are now realizing that Halifax is a tech-based city. There are a lot of opportunities here. You have to be curious and continue researching and learning on your own. I strongly believe that anybody who puts in the time to learn and has the drive to work hard, can be successful in this industry. If you have a genuine love and interest for the tech sector, it will treat you well!

About HomeEXCEPT
HomeEXCEPT is a Canadian technology company and winner of the 2017 AARP Global Innovation Award for Caregiving. HomeEXCEPT develops non-intrusive monitoring solutions to learn patterns of activity (POA) in private and public spaces. Our platform does not use cameras or microphones. We put privacy first with a 100% anonymous solution.

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Meet Michael Caplin!

Refresh Annapolis Valley & Henry Schein

Mike Caplan cares deeply about the growing tech sector in Nova Scotia. An advocate for tech, Mike has helped introduce young people to digital tech through his work with Refresh Annapolis Valley. He wants parents and teachers to encourage youth to join extracurricular activities that will teach them about computer science, web design and development, programming, and other useful skills in tech. In addition to championing Refresh Annapolis Valley, which helped to promote digital education in Annapolis Valley, Mike manages a software development team for the health care products and services company, Henry Schein.

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Teachers in my high school didn't know much about computer science when I was in school. My interests in digital emerged post-high school – I've always been very community minded and I was regularly involved with different community-based issues. At that point of time, I used online media platforms to describe the issues that we tried to tackle in our community. From there, I became very enamoured with web development, and that was how I first discovered the world of the Internet, and all that is possible within it.

The early era of home-based computing was also a pretty big influence on me. Getting a home-based computer, looking at the source code of games, and being able to reverse engineer how different games were built, was amazing. In the late 90s, those who were getting into web design and web development were mostly kids who were learning by themselves, as that was an acceptable learning trajectory for the field. Being one of those self-taught kids myself, I built my early tech skills by building web applications, and learned as I coded.

Getting into IT wasn't a moment for me, but was more of an evolution. Part of my evolution and commitment to my chosen profession was founding Refresh Annapolis Valley – a professional association that helped grow the Valley's technology industry. We provided community services to encourage the next generation of computer scientists, as well as support our current digital tech sector.

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"These are pretty exciting times, as upcoming ICT companies have greater resources available for them to try and build something for themselves right here in Nova Scotia."

I believe it is important to describe to young people that computer science is an incredibly creative profession for problem solvers, but it is hard for kids to visually see how they can solve a wide range of important problems with computer science. I really enjoy working with the next generation to help them solve problems that are important to them, through the lens of computers science.

In addition to volunteering, I am a Lead Software Developer for a division of Henry Schein, which is a Fortune 500 company based in New York City that focuses on dental and medical services and products. We have a satellite office in Nova Scotia, where we develop software related to the dental industry. Today, the dental restorations industry is becoming increasingly digitized, which is a big change because historically the industry has been about ceramics, chisels, and all sorts of torturous devices. I'm super excited to be a part of the development of these new digital solutions, that are resulting in better health care delivery.

I'm originally from Montreal, and when I moved to Nova Scotia 13 years ago there were not many jobs in my sector. Today, it's completely different,

as Halifax has become a popular place for ICT start-ups in Atlantic Canada. These are pretty exciting times, as upcoming ICT companies have greater resources available for them to try and build something for themselves right here in Nova Scotia.

If students are interested in careers in digital tech, they should look at extra-curricular organizations, like Hoist Halifax, where students in grades 6-12 can learn about all the amazing things you can do with computers.

About Henry Schein
Henry Schein is based in New York City that focuses on dental and medical services and products. The company has satellite offices in Nova Scotia where Henry Schein develops software related to the dental industry. The company also runs Henry Schein Global Innovation Center where they investigate technology currents that have a possible application within dentistry and medicine.