

A journey that led to self employment in IT

by Heidi Riley

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

After finishing high school, **Jason White** found a job at a Charlottetown call centre, a job which he found challenging. It taught him a great deal and formed the basis of his future career.

“Working at a call centre can be stressful, but it gave me excellent experience,” says Jason. “Call centre work teaches you skills that are transferrable to any job. You learn the importance of good customer service, and you gain technical skills and an understanding of how computers and the Internet work. The shift work can be difficult, but then you really appreciate a regular 9 to 5 job.”

When a client of the call centre announced they would be doing their own technical support, Jason called that client and offered to work for them. He was hired as a **Technical Support Manager**. Part of his job involved making service calls to clients, installing computer parts, looking after servers, and solving networking and technical problems.

New job requires more training

“I decided I needed more education,” says Jason. “I wanted to become a **Microsoft Certified Computer Technician**. A friend had taken the **Information Technology** program at **CompuCollege**, and it seemed to offer what I was looking for. I liked the way the program is set up. You take one course at a time, and each course builds on the next.”

Certifications open new doors

Jason earned **Microsoft, Novell, and A+** certifications. He moved to a job as a **Systems Administrator** in the computer science department at McGill University in Montreal.

Coming home to PEI

After two years in Montreal, Jason was ready to come home. “PEI offers a better quality of life,” says Jason. “There is so much less pollution, less traffic, and less crime. Working and living on PEI allows me to have a great life without the stress of a big city.”

“After working in computers for so long, I was feeling burned out,” says Jason. “I came back to PEI without a job or a direction in mind, except that I knew I wanted a change. A former customer of mine saw me on the street, and asked if I would fix his computer.”

I said I didn’t do that kind of work anymore, but he insisted, and I decided to take on just that one client. That client told others about me, and suddenly I was getting more calls.”

Self employment

“I decided to go into business for myself, so I started a company called **J. White Computer Services**,” says Jason. “When I started my own business, I did not want to take a loan or go into debt. I started slowly and invested part of my earnings back into the company.”

“I’ve been self-employed for almost five years. I have a wide range of clients, including lawyers, accounting firms, manufacturing companies, and farmers. I don’t advertise. All my business comes from referrals.”

Future plans for expansion

“In the spring, I am considering opening a retail location in Charlottetown,” says Jason. “I can’t compete with other retailers on price because the profit margin is so small on computers. But I can offer quality service and expertise that is hard to find on PEI.”

Advice from a mentor

“When I was younger, I worked part-time for my uncle. He taught me a lot about business. He advised me to beware of getting into debt. There is no quick way to make a buck, and the only way to get ahead is by hard work. Whatever field you go into, it’s important to have someone knowledgeable to talk to and to learn from.”

Coming full circle

In addition to running his business, Jason is back at CompuCollege, and this time he is teaching modules of the **Information Systems Administrator** and **Computer Service Technician** programs. “I really enjoy teaching,” says Jason. “It’s a nice change. I like helping students learn. Because of my work experience, I can offer students a way to relate what they’re learning to the needs of the real world. I let them know about the practical applications of what they are learning.”

Need for more qualified computer technicians on PEI

“There is a real lack of highly-skilled experienced computer technicians on PEI,” says Jason. “So many have left for jobs out west. Customers here need solutions to their computer problems, and there are few people here who can do what needs to be done. There is plenty of work for computer technicians who are good at what they do.”



Jason White upgraded his IT skills, which paved the way for a job as a Systems Administrator, a teacher, and a business owner.



For more information about **J. White Computer Services**, call 367-9900 or visit www.peihelp.com

For more information about programs available at **CompuCollege**, call 894-5582 or visit www.compucollege.ca