

Attention job seekers and employers

by Gloria Welton

Are you a job seeker looking for a way to go back to school to increase your job skills? Are you looking to build job skills? Do you have the skills to work in a chosen field but can not find a job?



Are you an employer who wants to increase your workforce but needs funding to help with wages during the initial job orientation period?

Do you know an organization that has a project in mind but cannot provide the funding for the staff?

Training and skills development is the focus of **SkillsPEI**. There are many aspects to what they can offer **job seekers, employers and organizations**.

SkillsPEI is a division of the **Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning**. It was established to manage the delivery of training and skills development programs and services previously delivered by Service Canada, also known as Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

Who are the programs and services for?

The programs and services can help clients eligible for Employment Insurance and unemployed people who are not EI eligible to prepare for and obtain employment.

By providing options to both job seekers and employers, SkillsPEI can help PEI's labour force gain skills and experience that will better prepare them for the future.

Some current programs and services:

Employ PEI is designed to encourage employers to hire and provide on-the-job work experience to help job seekers build skills and become employable.

Immigrant Work Experience helps immigrants have a positive work term and successfully move into the labour force on PEI.

Self Employ PEI provides supports to help those interested in opening a business.

Training PEI helps job seekers develop the skills training needed to obtain long-term meaningful employment.

Work Experience PEI helps organizations take on projects that provide valuable work experience that helps job seekers build their job skills.

Workplace Training helps employers provide job-specific training by funding a portion of salaries and other related costs while employees are training.

Funded in whole or part through the Canada-PEI Labour Market Development Agreement and Labour Market Agreement.

For more information, contact a **SkillsPEI** office near you:

Charlottetown, Atlantic Technology Centre ...368-6290
Summerside, Access PEI438-4151
O'Leary, Future Tech West859-8898
Montague, 541 Main Street838-0674

Visit the website at www.skillspei.com



Signs of a business in demand

by Patricia Roy

Small Business

Marie Ford is the owner of **Sign Station Inc.** She purchased the company in 2003 after having been its manager for eight years.

"Sales have more than tripled since 1995," says Marie. "The building was expanded in 2006 to accommodate new, large format digital printing equipment."

Sign Station designs and manufactures such products as dimensional letters and logos, sandblasted and hand-carved signs, vehicle graphics, banners, electrical signs, awnings, brochures and business cards, trade show displays and large format printing.



Marie Ford owns Sign Station Inc., a business in the Summerside Business Park.

Exposure to the field sparked an interest

Marie says her brother was the inspiration to get into this line of work. "He actually worked in the industry back home in Newfoundland and it interested me. I moved to PEI in 1979. I went to a sign shop in Charlottetown and asked if I could work for free to see if I liked it. I loved it and I quickly applied to take the college course."

She took a two-year commercial design program at Holland College. "After graduating in 1985, I worked at a sign shop in the Charlottetown area. I started at the Sign Station in Summerside in 1994 and became the manager a year later. Over the years, I took several business management courses. I also attend trade shows and seminars to stay current with the industry."

Hiring needs

Marie currently employs five people full time and one person part time. There is one administrative position, three work in design and production, and one installs signs and does other jobs.

They hire one or two students during the summer. "We will be looking for students to help in the production area and with installing signs. No specific training is needed, but they should have good work ethics and be able to work in a fast-paced environment.

"We've hosted many students from the Three Oaks and other high school Cooperative Education programs. I have hired several students in past summers after they were here as part of that program."

Skills required

Formal training in graphic design from a recognized post-secondary institution is a requirement. It is also important to be fluent in Adobe Suite software. "We do in-house training for our industry-specific design software and for the production side of the business," says Marie.

"I look for a mix of people with good work ethics, integrity, and who are quality conscious and have good communication and public relations skills. My motto is to treat people the way I would like to be treated."

Advice for entrepreneurs

"Be prepared to work long hours," she says. "It takes a lot of energy and long days, but if you have a goal and you really work hard, you will succeed. Don't be afraid to take advice, and try to learn from your mistakes. You can't expect to go into business and have everything run smooth all the time. It's a long road and you definitely need a solid business plan."

Marie feels it is important to give back to her community. She sponsors many local community events. She is also a mentor for a new business in the Summerside area. "I may not always have the right answer to a particular problem, but I do my best to give others the benefit of my 24 years of business experience."

For more information, call 436-8879 or visit www.signstationpei.com



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May 2010