

Living the Dream

BY BROOKE THORSTEINSON Rewrite Communications
Intake # 105

I'm lucky. Every day I wake up, commute three seconds to my home-based office down the hall, and get to work doing what I love most in the world: writing.

It wasn't always this way. Before I made the wise decision to join the Douglas College Self Employment program, I thought all those years and all those dollars I spent obtaining a formal writing education would amount to nothing more than the smartly framed Bachelor of Fine Arts degree hanging on my living room wall.

Like so many others, I had followed my dreams and ambitions, had worked hard in my chosen field and had grown accustomed to the concept of delayed gratification, only to find myself in a dead-end job that sucked every last bit of the daydreamer out of me, not to mention every ambition I had to produce great writing. That is, until the most fortunate of days when I, like many of you, "lost" that soul-sucking job. I didn't realize then what I had gained, but as I near the end of the fifth month since I finished my business plan development classes and seminars, I can see the gift that is self-employment manifesting in my life.

Now, surely I could have accomplished this all on my own. With a couple more years of preparation, some serious financial risk, and a whole lot of unnecessary failure, I could have struck out on my own and endeavored to start my copywriting and editing business, my dream venture. But I didn't have to do that. Instead, I got support payments, an encouraging-yet-serious Aussie business advisor named Max, a structured, well-written business plan, all-important feedback, seminars designed to answer all of my most anxious queries, all the tools I needed to succeed, and the most valuable gift: a network of instructors and other students I could turn to in a jam.

The sense of community and camaraderie felt as I sat in the seminars with my fellow dreamers was enough to keep me going in those moments of intense self-doubt. Day after day I'd learn something different from my new friends and allies, and as the weeks wore on and I grew more confident in my ability, something unexpected and joyous began to happen to me. I started writing again. Like crazy. I wrote more in a few months than I had in the past three years combined. And I was happy. I had used the opportunity given to me by the SE program and had changed my life for the better.

There have been some difficulties since, but nothing I can't handle. When I feel a little lonely or need someone to talk to, there's always my success circle to turn to. My business is thriving, I'm publishing regularly, and I'm exceeding the goals I set for myself. My SE program completion certificate hangs on my new office wall beside my writing degree. It doesn't have the same prestige as the UBC seal on my BFA, but it's just as important and inspiring to me. And all it cost me was a daydream.

Self Employment Program Winner of Prestigious Award

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) has just announced that the Douglas College Self Employment Program has been selected as the 2005-2006 ACCC Program Excellence Award winner.

The award will be presented at the ACCC annual conference in late May.

This issue of entrepreneurnews is dedicated to personal stories of Self Employment.

How The Self Employment Program At Douglas College Contributed To My Success

FLORENCE HUI, CGA Intake # 95

My dream has come true. In 2004, I started my own accounting practice after working for 12 years in Chartered Accounting firms. Thank you to the Self Employment Program at Douglas College that has helped me build my new business venture, and steer it onto a smoother and more successful path.

Statistics show that entrepreneurs who have prepared a business plan when starting their new business have higher success rates. Before I enrolled in the SE program, I believed that I could build a successful public practice as long as I had the knowledge and experience to help clients build and maintain tax effective businesses. However, after preparing a business plan as part of the SE program, I find that I am more prepared and the business plan preparation process has enforced my confidence in starting my own public practice. My vision of maintaining a good practice has been more focused, and I know that my business is well on its way towards success.

The SE program at Douglas College also provides networking opportunities for graduates. This is a great resource for graduates seeking or providing services. In fact, I have been receiving inquiries from graduates who are looking for accountants.

From the SE program, I also benefited from my fellow classmates. Some of them have become my clients but more importantly I have gained insights from their questions and concerns of starting a business. They have helped me better understand how I can help new entrepreneurs as a professional accountant. I have developed new approaches to help clients organize their financial data, and I have begun writing articles and a New Entrepreneurs Handbook.

The SE program at Douglas College has been a great resourceful program to help my business success and I hope that I can also continue to help other entrepreneurs in their success.

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U P D A T E S

New Business Directory

We are planning to publish a new business directory in the near future.

Please let us know if you have changed any of your information – website, address, email or business name.

You can submit your updates on our website. Only updates received before May 30 2006 will be included in the new Directory.

... Stories Wanted

In future newsletters we are looking for you to share your business expertise, knowledge, and stories about your experiences, your challenges or wins as an entrepreneur. The focus can be either educational or inspirational.

Please contact Carolyn @ 604 777 6013 or email, ccm@douglas.bc.ca.

A Solution For Everybody

MARGARET HARDY Reliable Business Outsourcing

Ruth was an office administrator with an insurance firm until a week after her thirty-seventh birthday. Then she was involved in a serious car accident. Her injuries cut her out of the full-time labour force and destroyed her confidence that she would ever return to work.

We know the dilemma so well," says Margaret Hardy of Reliable Business Outsourcing, "You have skills you want to offer, but a strictly limited amount of energy. You can do an excellent job, but you may not even be able to put in a full day. The ideal answer would be part-time contract work, but how do you develop a customer base when your mobility and pep are so restricted?"

Ruth is one of many entrepreneurs in the Fraser Valley who is performing contract work for businesses through Reliable Business Outsourcing. This innovative service, operated by Community Futures South Fraser, is designed to connect professional contractors/consultants, who have health issues, to local businesses that require outsource work on a contract basis. Other Reliable contractor/consultants include Paul, a researcher, who works out of his home in order to accommodate his epilepsy and Sheila, who provides personal nursing services while coping with fibromyalgia.

Reliable Business Outsourcing, funded by Vancouver Foundation and Vancity Savings, is a solution for everybody that matches skilled contractors to identified administrative, technical, trade or professional business needs. Local small business owners have been pleased with the caliber of work undertaken by Reliable contractors. "We are able to quickly respond to enquiries, find the right person and save you time and money," says Hardy.

Currently operated by Community Futures South Fraser in the Fraser Valley and in Vancouver through ConnecTRA (a division of Sam Sullivan Disability Foundation) Reliable Business Outsourcing provides 'A Solution for Everybody' by addressing the growing trend for outsourcing and providing business owners with top-quality contract service in all sorts of areas. On the other hand, the contractors can control their workload and accommodate their specific health needs.

Reliable is a win-win solution for everybody. For more information contact **Margaret Hardy** or **Suzanne Work** at 604 864 5770 toll free 1 877 827 8249 or at reliable@southfraser.com www.reliableoutsourcing.ca

U P D A T E S

visions of excellence sponsors

We are currently planning for the 2006 Entrepreneur of the Year Awards.

If you know of anyone who would be interested in sponsoring an award, please contact Carolyn at: ccm@douglas.bc.ca.

round table

April 25th, 2006

"Ask The Expert"
Guerrilla Marketing

Remember to bring door prizes, business cards and your questions.

see you there!

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My Journey To Becoming Self Employed

BRUCE CUTAYNE

Blue Moose Promotions
Intake # 94

With The Support Of The Douglas College Self Employment Program

"I am going to work for myself and be my own boss." Boy that sounds great! - working your own hours, setting your own standards, having direct influence and ultimate control over how hard you work and what you get out of it. A direct correlation between effort and reward - excellent! - sign me up.

Somebody forgot to mention though, that working your own hours often meant all 24 of them. It also included the simple challenges of taking basic holidays, not to mention not getting paid for them (statutory or otherwise). In the effort and reward equation, the results are rarely immediate. Hard work and perseverance often take time to see any return and the pay cheques can be pretty skinny, if any, some weeks. Groan! If I could turn back the clock and do it again would I? Absolutely!

I started with Price Waterhouse as a Chartered Accountant, and moved into private industry working as a Controller and CFO. Having operated medium to large corporations with sales in excess of \$100 million, I was a little skeptical about the SE program and what it could offer.

I was just so pleasantly surprised. The SE program is run by an enthusiastic, enigmatic and intelligent core of motivated individuals who made showing up everyday fun! Our course covered the basics of starting your own business from the perspectives of sales, marketing, finance, operations and management. We learned how to take an abstract concept and to turn it into a commercially viable and profitable venture. Business 101. Most importantly, we learned the paramount importance of, and skills necessary to, promote and manage yourself - you are your company's greatest asset.

In September 2004 I started Blue Moose Promotions. Since then, the support I have received from the people at the SE program has been outstanding and ongoing. As well as providing several referrals, they have written letters of recommendation and are also one of my best (and nicest) customers.

About Blue Moose - Briefly, through the effective use of promotional products, the Blue Moose Promotions Group works with organizations in:

- Getting Noticed.
- Getting Remembered.
- Getting RESULTS!

Promotional products are, in short, anything with your name, logo, brand or message on it. Our job is to make our customers' easier - and to make them look great!

Our customers now range from the high profile such as the CIBC, Vancouver Canadians, Mike Weir, UBC, HRDC and IKEA to municipalities, small companies and individuals. Through issues of value, quality, customer service and competitiveness we were recently selected out of several dozens of established competitors as 1 of only 4 preferred suppliers of 2010 Legacies Now. Our focus is, and will always remain, outstanding, personalized customer service.

Thanks Douglas College SE Program!

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Funded by Service Canada and offered through The Training Group at Douglas College. We provide practical training, advice and income support for eligible participants. Our program has provided assistance through training to over 2000 new business start-ups.