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Immigrants do well in Nova Scotia **Pg 24**

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The raw material of the knowledge economy **Pg 28**

# BUSINESS VOICE

HALIFAX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE | MAY 2016 | VOLUME 25 ISSUE 04

## Strategic vision

Chamber Chair Carol MacMillan has a passion for business development

**PAGE 14**

**HALIFAX'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE**





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*"I don't need to be fixed or cured."*  
Michael DeVenney, President, Bluteau & DeVenney

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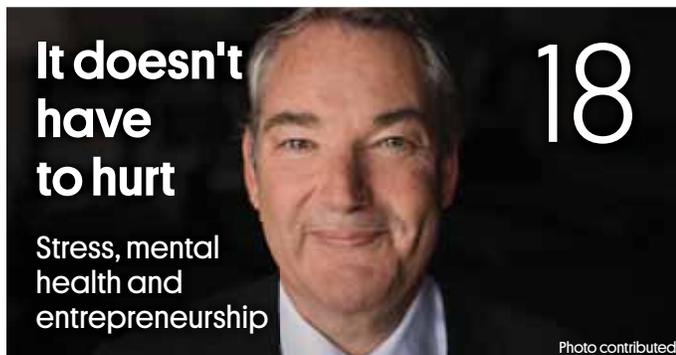
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### Strategic vision

Chamber Chair Carol MacMillan has a passion for business development

Photo by Darren Pittman/ImagesEast



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# CHAMBER EVENTS

For a full and up to date list of our Chamber events, please visit [www.halifaxchamber.com/events](http://www.halifaxchamber.com/events)

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

[Formerly ProSales]  
 DATE: Friday, May 13  
 TIME: 12:00 – 1:30 pm  
 LOCATION: Halifax Chamber of Commerce Building



DATE: Wednesday, May 18  
 TIME: 12 – 1:30 pm  
 LOCATION: Halifax Chamber of Commerce Building

## BUSINESS After Hours

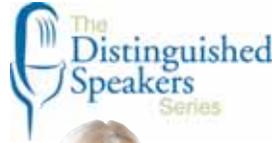
**Daniel Nestor Tennis Center**  
 DATE: Wednesday, May 25  
 TIME: 4:30 – 6:30 pm  
 LOCATION: 50 Verdi Dr, Bedford

## BUSINESS After Hours

**Spryfield Bowlarama**  
 DATE: Wednesday, June 8  
 TIME: 4:30 – 6:30 pm  
 LOCATION: 16 Dentith Rd, Halifax



**3 Day Workshop: Leverage Big Data. Make Better Decisions.**  
 DATE: May 26, 27, 28  
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**SPEAKER: Joyce Carter,**  
 President & CEO, HIAA  
 DATE: Tuesday, June 14  
 TIME: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm  
 LOCATION: Delta Halifax

## CHAMBER 101

DATE: Wednesday, June 15  
 TIME: 12 – 1:30 pm  
 LOCATION: Halifax Chamber of Commerce Building



DATE: Thursday, June 16th  
 TIME: 12 – 8 pm  
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**VALERIE PAYN** PRESIDENT & CEO

## SUCCESSION PLANNING

I've been with the Chamber for over 25 years. In this time, we've become a well-oiled machine and I have been fortunate enough to have been able to build a highly competent team — a team that lets me lead them. We're planning to welcome a new CEO on board in the coming few months. Without divulging any names of the candidates, Chamber staff has been kept in the loop for time lines and what type of candidate we are seeking. This helps keep everyone engaged, feeling part of the future, and hopefully helps mitigate the danger of flight of good team members.

## OFFICE RELOCATION

There's nothing quite like uprooting your team to move to a new location. That's exactly what we did last fall, moving from our 11-year home to our new space at 32 Akerley Blvd. We are proud of our new office and hope that you've been able to visit at a meeting or event. We had to calculate every aspect of our schedules to ensure the service quality, of which we are so proud, wasn't hindered for our many members. Throughout the months leading up to the move, the staff team met regularly and drew out dozens of pages and charts to make sure each and every task was owned and each of us was accountable.

## TURNOVER

As with any organization there will always be turnover. The key to success here is an organization that provides great opportunity and connections that lead to changes in staff. We welcome the chance for new staff, with new experiences



*Embrace the change with grace, planning, trust and proper attitude, and you will see success in ways you could not have expected.”*

and points of view to come through our doors and join the team. Change can be a beautiful thing.

Job openings lead to opportunity for new staff and current staff to transition into different roles. For example, we are happy to have been able to offer the job of Marketing Manager to existing staff member Becky Davison, and Communication Specialist to Melissa MacDonald. We will also have two shiny new people on our team by the time you read this.

Don't get me wrong; turnover is tough. However, it's a necessary and valuable part of doing business. The team

you have will be tested by transition. Some parts will hurt, as growing pains often do, but your team and your business can come out stronger for it. Embrace the change with grace, planning, trust and proper attitude, and you will see success in ways you could not have expected.

As I transition into retirement, I have one more tip to share with you about transition. Appreciation. Appreciate your team, and let them know it, and they will stick with you through the transition. Embrace the change, keep your existing team informed and engaged, and the change and your opportunities are endless.

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**Sylvia Parris**

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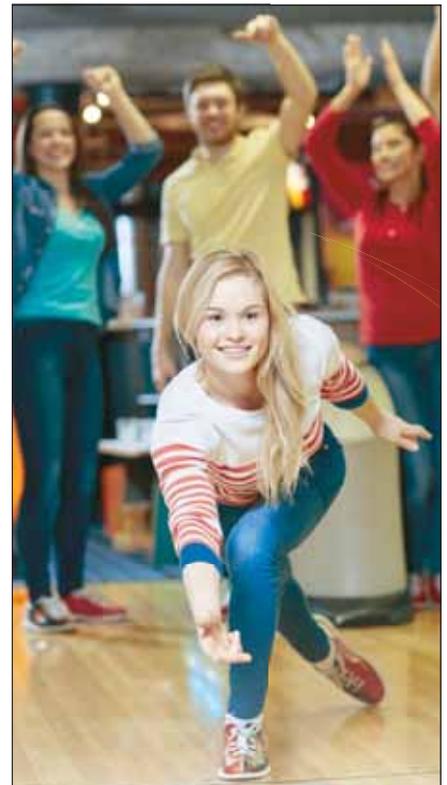
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# MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

How our members are growing Halifax



## ALLEN PRINT LIMITED EXTENDS CONGRATULATIONS

The **Allen Print Limited**, Dartmouth Nova Scotia, extends warm congratulations to Bill Organ, on the occasion of his anniversary marking 55 years of employment with the firm. An extraordinary achievement. Bill's expertise and loyalty helped Allen Print grow to be one of the premier print companies in Atlantic Canada. Bill's dedication and knowledge of the print industry has been invaluable to the success of the business. Allen Print, established in 1944, and owned by the Struthers family since 1970 is dedicated to the growth and the success of its employees, clients and community.

## SIMPLYCAST LAUNCHES FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND SERVICE

**SimplyCast** has recently launched a new service. SimplyCast Hands-Free will allow businesses of all sizes to utilize the power of marketing automation without needing to use the technology themselves. Essentially, SimplyCast will work with clients to determine their marketing goals and then SimplyCast will create their campaigns inside of the SimplyCast 360. "Hands-Free is a great way for us to put our knowledge of automation to work for clients and help them expand their reach easily and effectively," said Saeed El-Darahali, President and CEO of SimplyCast.



## CANADIAN MUSEUM OF IMMIGRATION AT PIER 21 FUND DEVELOPMENT TEAM

**The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21** is entrusted to collect, share and pay tribute to the Canadian immigration story. Donor support helps ensure the Museum can continue to offer a world-class visitor destination and experience. Marie Chapman, CEO, is pleased to announce that Daphne Carter has joined the fund development team of Fiona Valverde, Chief Revenue Officer and Maria Almeida, Donor Relations Manager. Daphne is overseeing special events and building community relationships.

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The 2013 Expedition for the Earth Team in Patagonia

**CENTRE FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS WELCOMED JOANNE THOMAS YACCATO TO LARGEST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION IN ITS HISTORY**

Gender marketing and finance expert Joanne Thomas Yaccato joined the **Centre for Women in Business (CWB)** International Women's Day Breakfast in March. Tanya Priske, Executive Director of the CWB says Yaccato's work aligns closely with its mission to make business resources more accessible to women. "We know there are barriers, and that women still face challenges because they are women. That's why the event, and our ongoing work around the advancement of women through business education and support is so important in 2016." This year, the demand for tickets spiked, making it the CWB's largest International Women's Day event in its 24-year history.

**NEPTUNE THEATRE RECOGNIZES ROB BATHERSON**

**Neptune Theatre** welcomes past President of the Neptune Foundation, Rob Batherson, to the Honourary Director fold for his contribution to the theatre. The title of Honourary Director is given to past board members and presidents who have served the theatre with distinction. Rob has been an exceptional advocate and supporter of Neptune since joining the Neptune Board in 2007. He served as Neptune President for three seasons, from 2012 to 2015. Prior to that, Rob served as Vice-President, and Chair of the Nominating and Government Advocacy committees and has been an active member of the Neptune Endowment Committee since its inception in 2011.

**ADVENTURERS JOIN ICELANDIC TREK FOR LAND CONSERVATION IN NOVA SCOTIA**

Five intrepid explorers have signed on for an adventure of a lifetime with the **Nova Scotia Nature Trust's** second Expedition for the Earth. This unique fundraising trek challenges participants to explore special protected areas in another part of the world while raising funds and awareness to help to preserve land and wild spaces in Nova Scotia. Following the success of the inaugural trek to Patagonia, Chile in 2013, the 2016 Expedition will take up to 16 enthusiastic adventurers on a guided trek to the beautifully remote Fjallabak Nature Reserve, Iceland from September 8-15th 2016. [www.expeditionfortheearth.ca](http://www.expeditionfortheearth.ca)

**LEE HECT HARRISON PARENT COMPANY ANNOUNCES OFFER FOR PENNA**

**Lee Hecht Harrison's** parent company, The Adecco Group, announced an offer for Penna, one of the UK's leading providers of human capital services. Penna's three business units, career transition, talent development and recruitment solutions, will be integrated with the complementary business units of Adecco. The proposed acquisition of Penna will establish Adecco as one of the leading providers in the UK's human capital services market and reinforces our strategy of being one of the industry leaders in key global markets.



**HALIFAX BROKER NAMED 2015 REALTOR® VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR**

The **Nova Scotia Association of REALTORS® (NSAR)** is pleased to recognize member and broker, Neil Black, as the 2015 REALTOR® Volunteer of the Year. As the third recipient of this honour, Black has been acknowledged for unparalleled dedication to both the real estate industry and his province of Nova Scotia. "Neil has always been a committed, hard worker for his community and for so many organizations," writes REALTOR®, Jacob Risk who nominated Black for the prestigious award. He adds, "Neil is always kind, considerate and friendly and leads by example."



**HALIFAX PARTNERSHIP WELCOMES NEW CHIEF ECONOMIST**

The **Halifax Partnership** welcomed Ian Munro as its new Chief Economist in February. Ian comes to the Partnership with over 20 years of experience as an economist, most recently as an independent economic consultant and previously at the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies as the Director of Research. Ian has led numerous economic research projects and has a proven track record in public policy research and development on a global scale. His experience and insight will be an excellent asset in supporting business and economic growth in Halifax.



**EASTER SEALS NOVA SCOTIA  
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On March 10 **Easter Seals Nova Scotia** held its annual Open House. More than 100 guests visited the space, met clients and staff, and learned about our programs. Easter Seals Nova Scotia’s business centre, New Leaf Enterprises, provides an opportunity for Nova Scotians with disabilities to participate in skills and workplace training and social enterprise. Camp Tidnish provides children and adults with disabilities to experience a barrier-free summer camp and our Take Part sports programs provides Nova Scotians with disabilities with an opportunity to participate in recreation and sport programs. Please learn more about their programs here: [www.easterseals.ns.ca](http://www.easterseals.ns.ca)

**THE PRINCE GEORGE HOTEL  
RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR WORK  
WITH REFUGEES**

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Minister John McCallum congratulated the **Prince George Hotel** as one of the winners of the 2016 Employer Awards for Refugee Employment for their outstanding efforts to help refugees settle in Canada by finding jobs and obtaining employment skills in March. “I am very grateful for the leadership role that Canadian employers have played over many years to support the successful settlement and integration of refugees by hiring refugees, and encouraging their organizations to become more directly involved in the settlement process,” said Minister McCallum. “We always hire the best person for the job, no matter where they come from. We have been very fortunate so far,” insists Carol Logan,

Director of Human Resources for the Prince George Hotel. “We are always working on how to best train the staff we have and part of that includes an initiative we call ‘English in the workplace’ for refugees and any newcomer we hire. Part of their workday is dedicated to learning English in class and at work.”

**e3 OFFICE FURNITURE  
ANNOUNCES NEW OFFICE  
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**e3 Office Furniture** is pleased to announce that Greg Priddle has joined our team as an Office Furnishings Consultant. Greg has over 11 years of experience in providing both private and public sector organizations with their office furniture requirements. Greg is native of Carbonear, Newfoundland, and currently resides with his wife Amy Sonja Crowell in Grand Lake, Nova Scotia. Greg’s extensive product knowledge and account management skills will be great assets to our customers in addressing and managing their requirements.

**10TH ANNUAL LUNG RUN**

**The Lung Association of Nova Scotia** (LANS) is celebrating its 10th annual CUA Lung Run at the Halifax Seaport on May 7, 2016. Over the past 10 years the CUA Lung Run has been a significant community event with a goal of raising funds and awareness for lung health in Nova Scotia. This year LANS is looking forward to welcoming families and individuals of all ages to run or walk the 5km adult route or the 1.5 km kid route. Come celebrate 10 years of making Nova Scotia a healthier place to live and breathe with us by registering at [www.ns.lung.ca](http://www.ns.lung.ca).

**NEWFOUNDLAND CHOCOLATE  
COMPANY OPENS TWO NEW  
LOCATIONS**

**The Newfoundland Chocolate Company** is proud to be part of Halifax Chamber. We are a fast growing company, we have two stores now open in Nova Scotia, in Mic Mac Mall and our newest store in Sunnyside Mall, and a third opening soon (early summer) at Halifax Shopping Centre. The Newfoundland Chocolate Company is a proud Atlantic Canadian Company making great chocolate the old fashioned way — by hand with pure, fresh ingredients, artisanal. We’re a company that takes our chocolate seriously, but not ourselves. Our stores are little chocolate wonderlands, fun, experiential places where you can watch chocolate being made in front of your eyes while a chocolate train chugs through the leaves of cocoa trees and a chocolate waterfall fills the air with the wonderful aroma of rich, creamy chocolate.

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NEW CHAIR  
OF ATLANTIC  
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**Prostate Cancer Canada** Atlantic celebrated the appointment of Ken Power as Chair of its Atlantic Region Advisory Council. Mr. Power has served as a member of the Advisory Council since its inception in 2011, and succeeds Fred MacGillivray as Chair. Ken Power is Regional Vice President, Atlantic Canada - TELUS. Mr. Power is a National Director with Prostate Cancer Canada, Vice Chair of the TELUS Atlantic Canada Community Board, and volunteers with numerous charities in Atlantic Canada. Prostate Cancer Canada Atlantic is the leading foundation dedicated to the elimination of the most common cancer in men through research, advocacy, education, support and awareness.



### FBC WELCOME NEW STAFF

FBC is Canada's Small Business Tax Specialist. We are the alternative to the traditional accounting approach. We work proactively to help our members keep their money in their pockets. All of us at FBC and our Director of Sales and Expansion, Norm Verrinder, are pleased to welcome Raebeka Wilson and Ryan Kucey to our team. Raebeka has a BSc in Agriculture from Dalhousie Agriculture Campus. Ryan is a recent graduate with a Commerce degree from Saint Mary's University with a focus in marketing. For your free tax consultation, please give Raebeka or Ryan a call at 902.334.0117.

To make a submission to Members in the News please contact Melissa MacDonald, Communications Specialist at [Melissa@halifaxchamber.com](mailto:Melissa@halifaxchamber.com) or 902-481-1238. Deadline for submissions is six weeks before publication, on the 15th of each month.

### GRANT THORNTON LLP ANNOUNCES THE APPOINTMENTS OF REGIONAL MANAGING PARTNERS: MICHELE WILLIAMS, FCPA, FCA FOR ATLANTIC CANADA AND NORM RAYNARD, CPA, CBV, FOR WESTERN CANADA.

"It is a time of change for **Grant Thornton** as we welcome our new regional managing partners," said Kevin Ladner, CPA, CBV, CEO elect, Grant Thornton LLP Canada. "Both Michele and Norm exude strong leadership qualities and their knowledge and skills will help our firm achieve new heights of success going forward." Currently Managing Partner, Nova Scotia, Michele successfully led the firm's Nova Scotia practice for the last ten years, serving as a member of the firm's senior leadership team during this period. Michele and her team strengthened the Grant Thornton brand in the Nova Scotia marketplace. In her new role Michele will oversee 27 offices and a team of 600 people across Atlantic Canada. "I bring a strong passion for creating an exceptional work environment and ensuring an exceptional client experience — as a result, our firm in Nova Scotia has had consistently strong performance year over year," said Michele Williams. "This is something I'm proud of and I look forward to my new role with the same pride and enthusiasm." Michele is currently serving on several Boards including the Board of Governors of Dalhousie University, the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, the Atlantic Chapter International Women's Forum, and Chair of the Accounting Education Foundation of Nova Scotia. She earned her CPA designation in 1990 and was awarded her FCPA in 2014.



### LET'S TALK ABOUT RX

According to a new survey of seniors, nearly one-fifth of those taking five or more prescription medications have experienced challenges in managing their medications, including keeping track of which medications they have taken and when. This type of unintentional medication misuse can often lead to devastating consequences. To help families have this critical conversation with their senior loved ones, **Home Instead Senior Care** has launched a new public education program called Let's Talk about Rx. The program offers families resources and tips, as well as insight into potential medication pitfalls facing seniors. For a copy of the complimentary solutions guide, call 902-429-2273 or visit [www.LetsTalkaboutRx.ca](http://www.LetsTalkaboutRx.ca).



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# Strat visio

## Chamber Chair Carol MacMillan has a passion for business development

One of Carol MacMillan's tasks during her term as Vice Chair for the Halifax Chamber of Commerce last year was to judge the Halifax Business Awards. She recalls taking home a massive collection of applications and worrying about how she would ever give them all the attention they deserved. She opened the first one on a Friday evening and became so captivated by the entries that she didn't stop until she'd finished the last one on Sunday.

"That experience for me was absolutely amazing. I wish everyone who loves business would have a chance to feel what I felt," she says. "To be honest I was blown away by the level of entrepreneurship, the tenacity and the drive to a dream that these people had in just taking an idea of their own and driving it to the finish line."

MacMillan is the new Chair of the Chamber and comes to the role with a passion for business development and a successful career in finance

and accounting. She's also an active community volunteer, currently serving on the King's College Investment Committee and, in recent years, she was on the boards of YMCA and Phoenix House. The two latter organizations allowed her to champion opportunities for youth to be involved in sports and fitness, activities that she thinks have played a role in her own success.

"I'm a big believer that there's a connection between kids and fitness — to show them that you can set goals, and you can successfully achieve them," she explains. "You can establish that if you work hard you can obtain things, and then you can be successful and contribute to the world in the way that you want."

MacMillan grew up in Bathurst, New Brunswick which set the foundation for her lifelong love of outdoor activities, especially winter ones, and she jokes that she's probably one of the few people in Halifax who wishes we received more snow.

**“** *I think if you don't set up any preconceived barriers that you're fine to move ahead the way that you normally do, and you receive the respect and recognition that you deserve for your contribution the same as anyone else would.*

— Carol MacMillan,  
Chair, Halifax  
Chamber of  
Commerce

# egic n

Photos by Darren Pittman/ImagesEast

## By Heidi Tattrie Rushton

“I love Halifax, but I do miss winter,” she laughs. “I love being outdoors. When I’m not at work I try to be outdoors doing something; snowshoeing and skiing and just walking in the woods.”

Her love of fitness extends all year round with yoga, gym workouts and cycling. She recently added kayaking the lakes of Nova Scotia to her list of interests after attending a training course in British Columbia a couple years ago.

MacMillan’s professional life has been a steady climb up the ladder of finance, regularly pushing herself out of her comfort zone in order to reach her goals. She earned a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of New Brunswick and spent a decade in public practice accounting in New Brunswick before making a conscious decision to switch to industry accounting, where she hoped she could make a larger impact on the business development side.

“I wanted to have an opportunity where I could contribute to the strategic



“That will be a key item for the board as a whole; to make sure that we’re doing what we need to be doing to support the onboarding of the new person, as well as to celebrate Valerie’s accomplishments over a large number of years, we always say the Chamber of Commerce is the voice of business, but certainly Valerie has been the face.”

— Carol MacMillan,  
Chair, Halifax Chamber of Commerce

vision of a company and really drive the success,” she explains.

Her first role in industry was a long shot for her; one in land development, an industry that she says she “didn’t have a clue” about.

“I sort of landed here by accident,” she says. “I didn’t know how much I would love the land development business and The Shaw Group in general.”

In 1998 she took a contract with Clayton Developments, a subsidiary of The Shaw Group in Halifax, and agreed to stay on after her contract was finished. She ended up working with Clayton Developments for eight years as a Controller before moving to the corporate office in 2006 as a Corporate Controller. Three years later she was named the Chief Financial Officer, the role she is in today, making her the first female shareholder in the company. In 2008 she was also the winner of a Progress Women of Excellence Award.

When asked about working in the traditionally male-dominated industry of land development and construction, she says she simply approaches it from an attitude that she belongs there as much as anyone else, regardless of gender.

“I think if people feel that you’re not intimidated by the business in general then I think you’re perceived that way,” she explains. “I think if you don’t set up any preconceived barriers that you’re fine to move ahead the way that you normally do, and you receive the respect and recognition that you deserve for your contribution the same as anyone else would.”

She’s been with the company eighteen years now and says there isn’t a lot of staff turnover. She attributes the dedication of their team to the core values and the mission of the organization, which is what drew her to it in the first place. The CEO at the time, Allan Shaw, had a strong vision for the company and she found he genuinely cared about his staff.



*“ Sometimes we all work in our little worlds and industries and we don’t really get out enough to see the bigger picture or have the opportunity to meet people in very different businesses. The Chamber can expand your scope and understanding of the total business community that we work in.”*

— Carol MacMillan,  
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When she started with Clayton Developments she found mentors in two senior staff members, both of whom are now retired. The Vice-President of Development, Michael Willett, and the President, Richard Miller, both spent time above and beyond what was needed to help her be successful at her job.

“Richard Miller was a person that made you believe you could learn it all and you could be successful at it. He was one of those real mentors that, frequently, would come in on a Saturday and just sit down and say ‘Okay, what do you want to learn today,’” she says. “Time wasn’t an issue for him. If he thought you had some interest and potential, he was willing to invest it to really help you achieve your own goals.”

Miller has fond memories of working with MacMillan as she learned the ropes.

“It was actually a lot of fun,” he says. “Carol was a true professional, in every sense of the word. She is a very compassionate person, a dedicated person to her workplace and her family and to the community as well. I think if there were one word that would describe Carol it would be respectful. She’s respectful to all people, no matter what their status. She will listen intently to everybody and their ideas on various

matters, whether it be business or community related.”

As MacMillan enters her term as Chair for the Chamber, she reflects on how having had that positive experience with her mentors will help her in her new role leading the board.

“I learned what real leadership was, and what it took to be a successful leader, just by watching the commitment and the methods and strategies they employed to run a good company,” she says.

MacMillan was originally asked to join the Chamber because of her professional background; but her interests in helping business owners achieve their goals and contributing to the strategic vision of the organization have kept her motivated to continue her involvement.

The Chamber has also provided her with the opportunity to get to know the Halifax business community outside of her own industry.

“Sometimes we all work in our little worlds and industries and we don’t really get out enough to see the bigger picture or have the opportunity to meet people in very different businesses.” she says. “The Chamber can expand your scope and understanding of the total business community that we work in.”

Her chief goal during her term as Chair is to stay the course on the plan that the board set out in 2013.

“The Chamber has a defined Strategic Plan that it focuses on and does that very well,” she says.

This includes a goal to make Halifax “among the top three highest growth city economies in Canada by 2018” through focusing on three pillars, which are defined in the Strategic Plan as:

1. To create a positive business environment to be reflected by being among the top three highest growth city economies in Canada by 2018.
2. To increase the skilled workforce by 20 per cent from 2012 to 2018.
3. To accelerate prosperity of Chamber members by providing first class networking events, benefit programs, advocacy to governments, education, information and by making connections.

One major change that will occur during MacMillan’s term is the retirement of Valerie Payn as CEO and welcoming a new CEO into the role.

“That will be a key item for the board as a whole; to make sure that we’re doing what we need to be doing

to support the onboarding of the new person, as well as to celebrate Valerie’s accomplishments over a large number of years,” MacMillan says. “We always say the Chamber of Commerce is the voice of business, but certainly Valerie has been the face.”

The Chamber is constantly evolving to meet the business community’s needs and respond to the areas that their membership is asking them for help with. As new issues come up she says they will try to address them with the hope of creating new opportunities and continuing to provide value to their membership.

A few of the most critical current issues that MacMillan sees the Halifax business community dealing with are rising tax rates on businesses; trying to maintain a skilled workforce in the region; and getting tangled in red tape for everything from getting a sign hung outside their shop to working collaboratively with other Atlantic provinces.

The Chamber has been actively working on these issues by advocating for lower tax rates in the hopes of making Nova Scotia a more attractive place for business; supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as larger capital projects, that will encourage people to stay; and trying to reduce red tape and regulations for local businesses.

As 85 per cent of the Chamber is made up of small businesses, she believes that it is in a unique position to champion these causes as a united front.

“What the Chamber is able to do, because it does have such a large base of smaller businesses, is to collect all those needs and concerns and be a consolidated voice that is well-known and has a presence in the community in an effort to drive change to meet those needs of small businesses,” MacMillan explains.

MacMillan feels privileged to hold the Chair position and is eager to continue her support of all Chamber members, especially the thriving Halifax community of business owners and entrepreneurs she was so inspired by during the Halifax Business Awards.

“I consider Chamber members to be community builders, and also community changers. I don’t know what our community would be without them,” MacMillan says. “They’re the heart and soul of the Chamber.” ♦



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*\*Tye is the Swahilli word for Board*



Michael DeVenney  
Photo contributed

# It doesn't have to hurt

Stress, mental health and entrepreneurship **By Erin Elaine Casey**

**I**t's probably the biggest unacknowledged business risk of this century."

That's quite a statement. You could be forgiven for assuming it's about taking on too much debt, failing to innovate, or not doing your market research. It's actually about mental health, and the vastly underreported rates at which entrepreneurs experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, and bipolar disorder among other issues.

The quote comes from Michael Kennedy, self-described "owner of the now deceased Canadian Bacon Cookhouse," which shut down in 2014 after two years in business. Today, Kennedy is sharing his story of mental health crisis and recovery, and working to help other entrepreneurs maintain balance.

"It was a seasonal business and a

**“***In talking to hundreds of entrepreneurs, they love the chase. Every opportunity looks like a good one. It's hard to say no, and you don't want to hurt people's feelings, but you're not afraid to hurt yourself.*

— **Michael DeVenney**  
President,  
Bluteau DeVenney

tough market," Kennedy explains. "You put yourself out there, and a good chunk of your personal identity is tied to the business. When it comes crashing down, it definitely takes a toll."

He was officially diagnosed with bipolar II disorder not long ago. "After the failure of the Cookhouse, the tell-tale signs were there, but I've probably had symptoms since my late teens or early 20s. I could manage it, but this pushed me over the edge. Diagnosis provided a ton of retrospective coherence, and a lot of relief."

Most of us have heard the statistic that three-quarters of new businesses fail. But did you know that according to a study by Dr. Michael Freeman at the University of California at San Francisco, 72 per cent of entrepreneurs reported

“After the failure of the Cookhouse, the tell-tale signs were there, but I’ve probably had symptoms since my late teens or early 20s. I could manage it, but this pushed me over the edge. Diagnosis provided a ton of retrospective coherence, and a lot of relief.”

— Michael Kennedy

struggling with mental health issues? Entrepreneurs also reported that their family members experienced a high rate of mental health problems. In other words, entrepreneurs are suffering, and so are the people closest to them.

Michael DeVenney, a close friend of Kennedy’s, knows this firsthand. “I’ve been fully diagnosed with clinical depression for about four years. I have anxiety disorder, panic attacks, all that stuff. I have a cocktail, and a bit of ADHD as well. I’m the perfect entrepreneur,” says DeVenney, referring to the theory that the typical personality traits — and strengths — of entrepreneurs can make them more susceptible to mental illness.

“People who have challenges with attention find it hard to be in a structured job environment,” he explains. “Creative people also like to have a lot of space and room. In talking to hundreds of entrepreneurs, they love the chase. Every opportunity looks like a good one. It’s hard to say no, and you don’t want to hurt people’s feelings, but you’re not afraid to hurt yourself.”

As President of Bluteau DeVenney, a company that helps organizations and entrepreneurs strategically grow their businesses, DeVenney recently shared his story of mental illness in a three-part series in *The Chronicle Herald*. His mission is to reduce the stigma around mental health.

Why start talking about it now? In the last couple of years, it became harder and harder to hide and power through on



Michael Kennedy  
Photo by Paul Darrow

his own. “Everyone was figuring it out, and when I finally talked about it at work, they said, ‘We all knew that and we were waiting for you to talk about it.’ And I wondered how many other people were in the same position and wouldn’t speak?”

Anyone who’s been a business owner or knows one well won’t be surprised. Compromised mental health is an open secret: Everyone knows, but nobody talks about it. Ginny Sterling-Boddie owns Junkery, an award-winning Halifax junk removal business, with her husband John Boddie. “I’ve never been diagnosed with depression, but I know that on any given day I could read a checklist for burnout, stress, and depression and see myself.”

Colette O’Hara joined the team at *The Chronicle Herald* in January after wrapping up Red Balloon, the “inspiration design studio” she and her partner Laura Whitman ran for several years to help organizations innovate and be more creative. “We fundamentally believed in taking care of our own health and mental wellbeing, because we needed that to bring inspiration to other businesses. As an entrepreneur, you’re the product, and if you’re arriving not tuned, you’re not going to bring the best to your clients.” She cites decision-making fatigue as a key reason they wrapped up the business.

Many of the qualities that make us good entrepreneurs can also jeopardize our mental health: Persistence, creativity, divergent thinking, the need to be in charge and in control. And having a

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“ We fundamentally believed in taking care of our own health and mental wellbeing, because we needed that to bring inspiration to other businesses. As an entrepreneur, you’re the product, and if you’re arriving not tuned, you’re not going to bring the best to your clients.”

— Collette O’Hara,  
Strategic Advisor,  
*The Chronicle Herald*

mental health issue, whether it’s officially diagnosed or simply a recognition that you have symptoms, doesn’t mean you won’t be successful.

“I know this is for the rest of my life,” says DeVenney. “This is who I am and I’m not ashamed of that. There’s people that will, with all the right intent, want to fix you or cure you, and I don’t need to be fixed or cured. I want to show that you can have depression and still be creative, productive, and an achiever.”

Dr. Arla Day is a Canada Research Chair and professor in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at Saint Mary’s University. She is also a founding member of the CN Centre for Occupational Health and Safety and chairs the Nova Scotia Psychological Healthy Workplace Program committee. “We’re very good at ignoring ourselves,” she says. “You have to be a very special individual to start a business, and it’s hard for them to admit they need help.” Her work involves shifting the perception that asking for help equals failure. “You wouldn’t say that a top athlete is weak because they have a physiotherapist or sports psychologist. It’s not about ill health, or weakness. It’s about maximizing your potential.”

What destructive messages are business owners getting about what it takes to be successful? First and foremost is the idea that we have to be on 24 hours a day, seven days a week. “There’s a bravado to



Collette O’Hara  
Photo by Michelle Doucette Photography

that — how many hours you put in, how late you stayed up, how much coffee you drank. We have to replace this with, God forbid, slow down,” says DeVenney. “I think this generation coming in is not going to take it. They’ve been raised to talk about how they feel, what’s working and what isn’t working. I hope they’re going to push back and say, ‘I’m having my own business but I’m having it on my terms.’”

“There’s this belief that unless we’re in misery we’re not working hard enough,” says O’Hara. Dr. Day agrees, noting that both the long hours and the intensity of entrepreneurship can be damaging. Many entrepreneurs feel like they have to do everything themselves. “A lot of business owners like that autonomy and flexibility and control, so asking them to give it up is scary,” she says. Ginny Sterling-Boddie has experienced this, saying: “When you own the business, there’s no go-to for you. When I’m sitting here with an accounting, HR,

or supplier problem, there’s no one to turn around to and say, ‘What should I do about this?’ You feel like you have to be an expert in all these things.”

Today’s entrepreneur also spends a lot of time cultivating her or his personal brand, so the pressure to be not only on but up all the time is exhausting. “Leaders today need to start walking the walk, instead of bragging about all the stuff they did,” says DeVenney. “Everyone feels they have to tell the story, and live the story, and we have all this money, but something’s wrong. Taking time for yourself. That is something we simply do not allow ourselves to do, and we have to.”

Combine long hours, constant decision-making, responsibility for employees and families, and creating and maintaining a successful image. Throw in high expectations, a dash of perfectionism, and more than a pinch of exhaustion. What do you get? A recipe for disaster, a lonely place where the person

behind the business — and its most important asset — is last in line for care and attention.

But it doesn't have to be that way. DeVenney believes that self-care and personal development for business owners is crucial. "Entrepreneurs who keep it together and get the most out of their businesses are the people who continually invest in developing themselves."

Colette O'Hara sees that people are hungry for a different way of doing business. "You don't have to sell your soul, it doesn't have to feel awful and miserable," she says. "That belief we have — and it's a Nova Scotia-wide belief — if there isn't blood coming out of your fingernails you haven't earned it. I wholeheartedly disagree. You have to work hard to preserve who you are, how you show up in the world, and how you do the work that you do. We somehow convince people that there is no alternative. I would like people to ask themselves: Is there an alternative? What does it look like? How might I live my life that way?"

Developing leaders who value balance and good mental and physical health is the best thing we can do to break down the culture of work that is making so many of us sick. That, and talking. "More open dialogue, people sharing their stories and not fearing repercussions," says Kennedy. "The pressure of holding your cards close to your chest is probably more stressful than anything."

Kennedy and DeVenney met through a friend who thought they'd connect over their mutual love of cycling, and immediately hit it off. Realizing there was very little research about the link between entrepreneurship and mental health, they created the Mindset Project and are getting ready to launch a Canada-wide survey to find out more about the lived experiences of entrepreneurs, the stress of their businesses, and their individual stories. The plan is to change the way entrepreneurs are supported, and develop programs to help them grow along with their businesses.

Dr. Day's advice to leaders? Share the responsibility, even if it's hard to give up control. "Develop your employees, and that trust, and that competency, so you are allowed to take breaks." It's a less paternalistic model, where the work is shared and everybody wins. And there's more good news: "In small business, the culture change can be much easier. There's less infrastructure, and fewer people to



*If I could go back to my younger self, I would say that at the end of the day it IS just a business. If you make a mistake, be kind to yourself. It's okay. Everyone wants to project success. The smoke and mirrors — we use them to protect ourselves."*

— Ginny Sterling-Boddie, Owner, Junkery

influence. If the business owner is committed to a change of culture, they can do it by choosing — this is the culture I want."

Change is hard, but it's worth it. "Having good relationships is the centre of happiness. I wouldn't have said that even six months ago," says DeVenney, who today is reshaping his life to maintain his health and still do the work he loves.

Sterling-Boddie shares a great analogy: "Starting a business is a piece of cake, but running a business is the 15 failed attempts at frosting," she laughs. "If I could go back to my younger self, I would say that at the end of the day it IS just a business. If you make a mistake, be kind to yourself. It's okay. Everyone wants to project success. The smoke and mirrors — we use them to protect ourselves."

Colette O'Hara says we should pay attention to a new breed of entrepreneurs breaking down old values. "There is an influx of women who fundamentally believe that it can and should be done differently. The value that women bring is that nine times out of 10, we put people first. It's a more profound way of doing business — it's vulnerable, and counterintuitive to everything we've been told."

"Women desperately crave to show up as themselves, but worry if that's an acceptable way to do business," she says. "But the only person I know how to be is me."

Ultimately, that's true for all of us. It takes courage and confidence to stand up for our mental health, but it's becoming more and more clear that we can't afford not to. ♦

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Mayor Mike Savage Emcee as Phantom of the Opera onstage with Women for Mental Health Chorus



# A different stage of mind

Photos by Scott Munn

Benefit show raises funds, awareness for mental health issues **By Carol Dobson**

[www.mentalhealthns.ca](http://www.mentalhealthns.ca)

**E**very February a group of local luminaries step out of their comfort zones, and create new personas for an evening, all in support of the **Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia**. The charity is dedicated to improving the lives of Nova Scotians living with mental illness and their loved ones.

This year's *A Different Stage of Mind* — a variety show like none other — was a salute to Off Broadway held at the Trade Centre on February 19th. While the numbers are still being crunched, it is estimated that the net proceeds will be in the \$150,000 range. Funds raised at this event and others support vital programs and services that help make the foundation's initiatives possible across the entire province.



Matt Burgar as Bob Dylan

"Our top fundraiser was Matt Burgar (a student at Dalhousie) as Bob Dylan," Starr Dobson, the foundation's President and Chief Executive Officer, said. "He did a sensational job."

Other performers included the IWK's Tracy Kitch (CEO) and Jennifer Gillivan (Foundation CEO) as Adele,

with Jimmy Fallon and the Roots (comprised of staff members from the IWK); Sharon Resky, from Atlantic Business Magazine as Stevie Nicks, and the Women for Mental Health Chorus, which is made up of a group of volunteers from the business community. Mayor Mike Savage, took on the emcee duties for a second time this year.

"This year we introduced a new feature, a Spotlight on Mental Health," Dobson says. "Kevin Davison, a first responder, who is a post-traumatic distress advocate, performed a song called *When the Sirens Are Gone*. His performance was different in that he performed as himself."

Dobson says the song reflects how first responders are expected to leave the horror they see as part of their job and

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drive home to their normal lives at the end of the day.

“It explains that they’re not super heroes — they’re regular people,” she said. “Kevin’s performance had a standing ovation. This is a feature we’ve decided to incorporate in our show going forward.”

Plans are already in the works for next year’s performance. The initial thought is to have a Grand Old Opry theme.

“It’s a broad theme, because country music has become almost ‘pop,’” Dobson says. “We’ve already been approached by three people from the Chamber, Barbi Holland, Melissa MacDonald, and Becky Davison, to perform next year.”

Dobson invites those who want to channel their inner Hank Snow, Minnie Pearl, Anne Murray, or Keith Urban for next year’s show, to contact her at the Mental Health Foundation (telephone: 464-6000/email info@mentalhealthns.ca). ‘Stars’ and their teams commit to raising \$50,000 and awareness of mental health issues as they prepare for the show.

“We like to get our stars lined up early so that they can start to be transformed into a singing sensation and also to put their fundraising teams in order,” she adds. ♦



Full cast



Kevin Davison  
Spotlight on  
Mental Health  
performer



Jennifer Gillivan and  
Tracy Kitch as Adele with  
Jimmy Fallon and the Roots

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# A record of success

Immigrants do well in Nova Scotia and provide opportunities for business **By Howard Ramos**

With a rapidly aging population and low birth rate, Atlantic Canadian provinces have turned full force towards immigration. Nova Scotia, for instance, has nearly doubled its allocation of Provincial Nominees and Premier Stephen McNeil has been a vocal supporter of immigration as a solution to the province's problems. This being the case, it is worth asking how immigrants fare here.

A detailed report for Pathways to Prosperity (P2P), by Yoko Yoshida, of Dalhousie University, and Madine VanderPlaat of Saint Mary's University, and myself, in partnership with the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), suggests that immigrants do well in Nova Scotia and they possess much needed skills for the province's labour force.

The report challenges many commonly held negative assumptions about

immigration to the region. For instance, many believe immigrants don't find work in Nova Scotia. This may have been the case a couple of decades ago, however, recent economic immigrants who arrived between 2010 and 2012 out-performed newcomers in other parts of Canada. Immigrants to the province actually have higher rates of employment one year after arriving (76 per cent) compared to Canada as a whole (73 per cent).

Others think that immigrants will be underemployed in Nova Scotia compared to other parts of the country. When this is examined, the report finds that one year after landing in the province, economic principal applicants' average earnings are \$44,000 compared to \$36,000 nationally. Changes in policy and the success of settlement organizations, such as ISANS, have clearly worked at better integrating recent cohorts of immigrants

to province. This is largely because of the work they do in terms of language training, employment and interview coaching, and bridging programs that link immigrants to specific job sectors and the business community.

The report also shows that immigrant spouses and partners also contribute to the economy and have skills and education employers seek. In fact, 96 per cent of spouses and partners who come with economic immigrants and 91 per cent of family-sponsored spouses and partners are of "prime" working age, between 20 and 55 years old and over a third have a university degree. As businesses seek talent, these immigrants should not be overlooked and present interesting opportunities.

Findings of the report show that the federal government's decision to increase the cap on immigrants to Nova Scotia is well justified and that the province is right to continue to ask for more immigrants. The report also shows that it is important for Nova Scotia to continue to invest in researching immigration. It is through investigation and critical-review that strong evidence-based policies can be developed and opportunities can be effectively explored. Such policies combined with quality efforts by settlement organizations and response by the business community have led to the dramatic shift in how immigrants fare in Nova Scotia.

Taken together, Premier Stephen McNeil and Immigration Minister Lena Diab, who is daughter of first-generation immigrants herself, are right to encourage immigrants to come to Nova Scotia. They will likely be successful in integrating into jobs and making meaningful contributions to the province — let's not keep it a secret.

Howard Ramos is a Professor of Sociology at Dalhousie University. His research focuses on issues of social justice including the non-economic elements of immigration and examination of family and non-economic streams of immigration to Canada.



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# NOW!

## NOVA SCOTIA AWARDS 2016

The Now! Awards will celebrate Nova Scotians who are helping to influence an attitudinal shift or are leading the way and showing all of us what an entrepreneurial mindset in action looks like.

Eight awards will be given in November and will recognize individuals and/or organizations from key industries outlined in the Now or Never Report: tourism, exports, start-ups, growth-oriented industries, labour, post-secondary education and training, immigration and renewal of rural industries.

We'll be sharing more details in the coming weeks about how you can nominate someone. In the meantime, stay curious, look for Nova Scotians who should be recognized, and be sure to nominate a worthy candidate when nominations open.

**It's time to reward good news!**  
Get inspired at [Herald.ca/NowNS](http://Herald.ca/NowNS)

# Watching the first budget

Increasing the federal deficit a questionable move

nancy@halifaxchamber.com



**NANCY CONRAD** SENIOR VP  
POLICY, HALIFAX CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE

The 2016-17 federal budget was the new government's first budget since October's election and it represents a major change for Canada. First of all the deficit is being increased substantially, rising to \$29.4 billion in 2016 and only falling to \$14.3 billion by 2020. This will cause the debt-to-GDP ratio to jump to 32.5% in 2016, up from 31.2% in 2015. Expenses as a whole will increase 6.9% and total federal debt will rise to \$646.7 billion in 2016. The Canadian economy is still expected to be soft over the coming years, averaging 1.4% growth in 2016 and 2.2% in 2016 and 2017.

Such a dramatic increase in spending and a lack of any timeline to balance the budget are major causes for concern. We will be watching federal finances closely over the coming years and will be looking for the government to return to balanced budgets sooner rather than later.

Going into the federal budget the Chamber was looking for three things:

1. A reduction in the small business tax rate from 11% to 9% either in this budget or over time
2. Increased investments in infrastructure
3. Continued commitment to the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy.

While the government did reduce the small business tax rate to 10.5%, they have backed away from any further reductions in the years to come. Reducing the tax burden is a key priority for the Chamber and we were disappointed that

**“** We continue to believe that the current political alignment in Atlantic Canada presents an exciting opportunity for our provincial and federal leaders to work together on a better future for our country and our region in a manner that has not been seen in a lifetime.”

the government did not fulfill its campaign commitments.

On the infrastructure side, the budget did include an increase in infrastructure spending of \$11.9 billion over five years and a commitment to provide roughly \$32 million to Nova Scotia to fund transit projects.

The budget did not include any new information on the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy but federal leaders have been highly committed to the project so we are confident that it will continue as promised.

Finally, we continue to believe that the current political alignment in Atlantic Canada presents an exciting opportunity for our provincial and federal leaders to work together on a better future for our country and our region in a manner that has not been seen in a lifetime. We hope to see the Canadian and Nova Scotia governments leverage this opportunity to the benefit of all.

*The Chamber's policy positions and advocacy work are undertaken on your, our members, behalf. I welcome your input and comments on our direction and can be reached at nancy@halifaxchamber.com.*

## MUNICIPAL BUDGET

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce would like to congratulate Halifax Regional Council for keeping the average commercial and residential tax bill flat in their 2016/17 municipal budget. One of the Chamber's top priorities is reducing the tax burden, and we are glad to see that the average tax bill in Halifax will decline this year after inflation.

Municipal spending also declined this year, falling from \$726.7 million to \$724.7 million. We believe that it is important for governments to live within their means and we are glad Council paid such close attention to spending this year. Overall debt is also projected to decline to \$251 million this year, which is part of a long-standing decrease in the city's debt burden.

Overall, the 2016/17 budget is a good news budget for businesses in Halifax as spending and debt also both declined. We fully support the Mayor, Councillors, and staff in their efforts to reduce the tax burden, manage spending, and reduce debt.

The Chamber's top municipal budget priorities this year were:

1. Passing the 2016 municipal budget with no increases to average tax bills
2. Approving the Regional Centre Plan
3. Approving Halifax Transit's Moving Forward Together Plan
4. Reviewing and improving the regulatory burden in Halifax

# New board members

On April 28th the Chamber welcomed four new members to the Board of Directors. As representatives of the membership, they will help lead the Chamber's strategic direction and work towards a being one of the top three growth city economies in Canada by 2018. Take a look at who is new, and say "Hi" to them at an upcoming Chamber event.



**ROBERT DEAN**  
PARTNER, WVBLI

With nearly two decades of experience helping owner-managed businesses realize their growth potential Robert Dean has earned a reputation for asking unique questions and listening attentively for helpful insights. While unconventional by nature, Robert is laser focused on the problems and opportunities of his clients.

Specializing in taxes, business and succession planning Robert has built a practice around tackling complex challenges and delivering results for clients. In 2012 he merged Edwards Dean and Company with WBLI Chartered Accountants, becoming partner at the region's largest independent firm.

A regular speaker and writer on issues related to taxes, strategy and succession planning for small to medium sized businesses Robert intimately understands the pressures and stress that accompany making payroll. Helping his clients means growth and to Robert growth means jobs and opportunities for families like his across the region.



**SAEED EL-DARAHALI**  
PRESIDENT & CEO, SIMPLYCAST

Saeed El-Darahali is the President and CEO of Silicon Dartmouth's SimplyCast: a leading provider of multi-channel communication software.

Saeed holds a Masters of Business Administration, a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, a Certificate of Human Resource Management and Minor in Economics, all from Saint Mary's and brings over 10 years of management experience in the IT industry. He has participated as a speaker at many conferences, including NAWeb, CABI, the 7th World Congress of e-Business, Enterprize Atlantic, and ARCNA.

On top of his business accomplishments, Saeed is very involved in the local community. He is a member of the OneNS Coalition, EduNova, Sobey's Advisory Board, and the Accessibility Board as well as a judge for Junior Achievement and weekend start-up competitions.

Saeed spent five years in the Canadian military before founding SimplyCast where he has mentored over 300 students, co-workers, and entrepreneurs. As a former Y-kid and Junior Achiever, Saeed is a youth advocate. He provides paid co-op and internship opportunities to help keep bright, young workers in the local area.



**R. PAUL BENT**  
CPA, ICA, CD.D

Paul retired in January of 2016 after 37 years in public accounting. At the time of his retirement Paul had completed 25 years as a partner with Grant Thornton LLP, the last four of which he served as Chairman of the firm's National Partnership Board. During his career Paul served a wide variety of both private and public sector clients providing accounting, audit, tax and consulting services in addition to a number of national roles within the firm.

Paul is a graduate of Saint Mary's University, is a CPA, CA (1982) and obtained an Institute of Corporate Directors designation (ICD.D) in 2012 from the University of Toronto Rotman School of Business.

Paul has been an active member of the community throughout his professional life serving first as a Big Brother (Big Brothers Big Sisters), as President of Scouts Canada, Dartmouth Region, Treasurer and Member of the Board of the University of King's College (Honorary Fellowship 2010), Our Saviour's Lutheran Church and currently is Treasurer of Hospice Halifax.

Paul and his wife Margaret have three grown children and currently resides in Dartmouth.



**GAVIN MACDONALD**  
PARTNER, COX & PALMER

Gavin is a partner in the Halifax office of Cox & Palmer. His practice focuses on business law in the areas of organization and financing, business restructuring, insolvency, and banking. A member of the Halifax Executive Committee of Cox & Palmer, Gavin oversees the firm's marketing and business development efforts in Nova Scotia.

Gavin has represented individuals, companies, and other organizations from start-up financing to restructuring and sale. He has also advised financial institutions, insolvency professionals and individuals involved in business restructuring, contested and uncontested insolvency proceedings before the trial and appeals courts of Nova Scotia.

Gavin has been an active Chamber member for many years, promoting the concerns of business on taxation, regulation and economic development.

# Data literacy



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We have at our fingertips more data than ever: business data, customer data, Big Data, open data, social data, mobile data and geographic data. The challenge is making sense of all this data and finding the information and knowledge locked inside: in short, using data to inform decision-making across the enterprise. The natural instinct is to hire a data scientist, or a new commerce/management graduate with business analytics training, to a role dedicated to working with data and let it be their problem. While we certainly need such people, there is a growing realization that this is not enough: we need people across the entire organization equipped to understand, explain, and make thoughtful decisions informed by data, which can involve collecting, evaluating, analyzing, and presenting data.

This set of skills is called data literacy, and there is a growing consensus that everyone from the CEO to the newest intern needs to be data literate. At a recent workshop co-hosted by the Oceans of Data Institute and IBM, a panel of experts issued a Proclamation of Need for data literacy, stating “Our world economy and our jobs are increasingly defined by data and by the knowledge and skills to use it effectively.” A recent Government of Canada report concluded, “Digital data are the raw materials of the knowledge economy, and are becoming increasingly important for all areas of society, including industry.”

Both of those reports identify the need for better training. Despite the need for data literacy across the workforce, we haven’t been teaching data literacy broadly, across disciplines, as a transferable skill. Universities have pockets of excellence in teaching data-related skills, but there is no systemic approach or sharing of best practices. A recent Canadian report suggests there is a “talent gap”,

with an estimated 150,000 more jobs requiring data literacy than people available with that skill in Canada alone, and reports on the continued growth of data consistently call for improved training.

We worked with a team of researchers from many disciplines to assess the current state of knowledge about one core question: How can post-secondary institutions in Canada best equip graduates with the knowledge, understanding, and skills required for the data-rich knowledge economy? We found a variety of best practices for teaching data literacy, including creative teaching approaches and environments; the effective use of technology and modern tool sets; successive/iterative learning where each lesson builds on the last, combined with other relevant skills like project management; mixing theory and background with practical, hands on learning; and increasing engagement with the content by using real world data. You can read our full report on [www.dataliteracy.ca](http://www.dataliteracy.ca).

Today, we want to focus on a few key takeaways relevant to local businesses.

**Adapt.** Data literacy is not something that can be outsourced. How do you prepare your current workforce to operate in a data-intensive knowledge economy? The best practices on how to teach data literacy still apply, though there is little written about this specific question. External training options range from free online courses to three-day workshops to entire degree programs. Anything is better than nothing, but researchers have found that the scope, quality, and availability of resources is a challenge to self-learners, and self-directed learning through trial and error often results in focusing on mechanics rather than concepts.

**Adopt.** Include an interview question to new hires asking about their

ability to work with data. One researcher found that people assessed their own skills as being better than they actually were, so consider asking applicants to complete a data literacy assessment.

**Act.** Don’t let data snowball. Data not effectively managed from the point of collection becomes progressively more expensive to manage: a liability, not an asset. Data management, and the related information and knowledge management skills, helps ensure data is findable and usable by the people who need it, when they need it.

**Associate.** Collaborate, participate, and work together. There is a cycle to data literacy training: as data literate organizations realize the potential of their data, they are able to identify additional skills they require. While post-secondary institutions have a good grasp of the core concepts, we need input from the private sector on what skills are most essential in modern employees. Work with industry associations to define data literacy in your particular context so you can better assess the gap and identify appropriate training opportunities.

**Acknowledge** that data literacy is not a silver bullet: it is necessary but not sufficient. A data literacy initiative is not a rescue operation that will revive a struggling organization; it is one part of a broader strategy for thriving in our modern economy.

## About the authors

Our team included Chantel Ridsdale, Michael Smit, James Rothwell, Hossam Ali-Hassan, Michael Bliemel, Dean Irvine, Daniel Kelly, Stan Matwin, and Brad Wuetherick, all from Dalhousie University, and was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)

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# Going global

Five tips to consider when expanding your business internationally



**BILL REDFERN** CEO AND  
FOUNDER OF A BUYER'S  
CHOICE HOME INSPECTIONS

Once a business owner has established a strong presence within his or her home country, a common next step is to take the concept internationally to broaden its reach. However, there are many factors requiring thorough research to take into consideration before emerging into a new country.

Here are five tips to consider when expanding your business internationally:

## 1. Understand the Culture

It is very unlikely that a business concept will look the same in Halifax as it will in Asia or Europe. While the foundation of a business can remain the same, it's important to adjust to each new culture and the needs of its demographic.

A smart first step in learning more about a new country's culture is to conduct thorough market research in that area. Physically making the trip to the country to explore the culture and business etiquette is a strong way to start. It's also important to connect with industry professionals around the world to gain knowledge about what it's going to take to run a business in their country.

## 2. Learn the Language (Or Find Someone Who Knows It)

When exploring new countries for business growth, it's important to take into consideration the native language. Hire translators to ensure each aspect of the business is being successfully communicated. It's also a good idea to have personal interviews with the translators before connecting with foreign



*It is very unlikely that a business concept will look the same in Halifax as it will in Asia or Europe. While the foundation of a business can remain the same, it's important to adjust to each new culture and the needs of its demographic."*

investors so they completely understand the business concept before communicating it to them.

Additionally, remember that words may translate differently in other languages. For example, with the home inspections concept, the word "inspector" is negatively received in ex-Communist countries. So, in those countries, the name was adjusted from "home inspectors" to "home experts." With instances like these, an open mind and positive attitude will overcome awkwardness and an opportunity to learn from mistakes.

## 3. Consider the Customs

Keep in mind that not all cultures function exactly that way, and trying to do so in another country may rub people the wrong way. Some cultures are friendlier and group-oriented, while others are more formal and self-reliant. Utilize the cultural knowledge of translators to help successfully situate a concept and message into new cultures.

Above all, be sure to do your research before taking action. A brand cannot successfully grow internationally unless specific customs are carefully considered. Home inspections barely existed outside of North America before A Buyer's Choice Home Inspections expanded, but with overcoming the language barriers and learning different cultures, many countries have embraced the concept.

## 4. Find the Right Partner and Hire a Great Team

When expanding to a new country, finding the right partner can make a world of difference. Having someone you trust that is on the ground, understands the local market and is passionate for your brand is key.

Your partner and the team you hire should be well versed in the culture, language and have great local contacts. They must be fully immersed in the local environment, but you also need to be sure they'll be looking out for your interests.

## 5. Identify Target Markets and Develop a Business Plan

Your research will continue as you identify and evaluate market conditions in each region you wish to grow. Consider that you may have to make adjustments with your sourcing, pricing, anticipated revenues and more. Your original business plan in Halifax could be significantly different in another country.

Expanding a business internationally is no simple task, but it is a perfect opportunity to increase your brand's versatility while reaching new heights financially.

## About A Buyer's Choice Home Inspections

A Buyer's Choice Home Inspections (ABCHI) is a franchise business meeting the huge demand for home inspections. The company is rapidly expanding throughout the United States, Canada and worldwide, on a path to become the world's largest home inspection company. By focusing on developing and maintaining local, trust-based relationships with its customers, ABCHI is creating a home inspection business unlike any other. Currently, there are nearly 200 franchises internationally across 15 countries. For more information, please visit [www.ABuyersChoice.com](http://www.ABuyersChoice.com).

# Displays: size does matter

The importance of both size and technology choices when it comes to meeting room displays



**MIKE MCCARTHER** BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT – INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS

In recent years many businesses have migrated towards large format displays, or TVs in their meeting rooms in effort to provide a hightech and modern environment. This adoption is a direct result of consumer electronics in the home but in many cases is an inadequate solution for the meeting room.

This month I had the opportunity to sit down with Carlos Ventura, Branch Manager for EIKI Canada and Jessi Larson, Marketing Manager for Milestone AV Technologies (Da- Lite) to learn about proper display sizing for conference rooms and get insight to what's happening around the industry for displays in meeting spaces.

## From EIKI Canada

When considering a projector there are typically three types of technology to consider:

- 1 – LCD (Liquid Crystal Display)
- 2 – DLP (Digital Light Processing)
- 3 – LCOS (Liquid Crystal on Silicon)

Some Pros of Projectors are:  
**Image Size:** Watching a movie or a sporting event on an 8' to 10' wide screen is much more enjoyable than a TV that is half the size.

**Better Viewing Angle:** Good image when seated directly in front of TV – but move one seat in either direction and it becomes less than perfect.

**Easier on the eyes:** Watching a large image in a dark room on a TV can cause eye strain or headaches because of the extreme brightness, projecting a larger



image and spreading the brightness over more area reduces the eye strain.

**Less Space:** Mounting a projector on the ceiling and using a retractable screen can take less space, when the screen is not in use it is retracted and hardly even noticeable.

Some Cons of Projectors are:

**Ambient Light:** The biggest problem is the light in the room, no matter how bright your projector is too much light will wash out the image, The lights need to be off and the shades drawn for best results.

**Lamp Cost:** Lamp costs are coming down and laser projectors are coming out but at this point the cost of lamps is considerable and should be factored in approx. 1 per year.

**Audio:** If a projector has a speaker, it won't be a good one and some type of audio system needs to be purchased.

## From Milestone AV Technologies

Times and formats change, but projection screens have been around for decades. For years, colleagues have gathered around a large projection screen to collectively view project documents and come up with collaborative solutions. The best way to communicate has always been with a big picture...until large flat panel TVs entered the scene.

Awed by this new technology, people started to try it out in their conference rooms, and the big picture suddenly got a whole lot smaller. The meeting focus went from discussing materials on the screen to not being able to see anything on the screen.

Da-Lite has been designing and manufacturing projection screens for more than 100 years? You may have heard of the term “The Silver Screen?” That phrase originated from Da-Lite’s founder Adele De Berri. As a company with a very long history in AV, Da-Lite recommends taking a thorough look at screen sizing before making any purchasing decisions.

To start, let's look at the math.

A room that is 17' deep needs a 100" diagonal. A room that is 20' deep needs a 120" diagonal. A room that is 25' deep needs a 150" diagonal.

Although flat panel TVs have gotten much larger, they still can't match these numbers while providing a long-term, economical solution.

It's clear from speaking with Carlos and Jessi that there are a lot of factors that need to be considered when designing meeting room space and decision making on type of display to suit the room.

Please join us May 19th from 12-1:30pm with representatives from Da-Lite Screen Company and EIKI Canada. Also visit [VistaCareTech.com/TechTrends](http://VistaCareTech.com/TechTrends) for more information from Milestone AV Technologies (Da-Lite) & EIKI Canada.



VistaCare Communications is a full service commercial communications and security solutions integrator based in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. [www.vistacaretech.com](http://www.vistacaretech.com)

# A growth agenda for Halifax



Picking up the pace for sustainability and prosperity **By Ron Hanlon, President and CEO, Halifax Partnership**

Over the past five years Halifax has seen steady and strengthening economic performance despite our challenges with an aging population and shrinking provincial labour force.

We've done well for a Canadian city of our size, with real GDP having grown 1.5-2 per cent per year. This year the Conference Board of Canada projects that Halifax will have the 2nd fastest growth in Canada, driven largely by major projects.

This is good news. But the fact is, Halifax needs to grow at a much faster rate to support long-term economic sustainability and prosperity in our city and province.

**“***The lifestyle we enjoy attracts new residents, visitors and businesses, and is a valuable lever in growing our economy.***”**

This is why Halifax's new five-year Economic Growth Plan for 2016-21 sets a long-term vision to grow our population to 550,000 and our GDP to \$30 billion over the next 15 years.

Ambitious? Yes.

Impossible? No, not if we're focused, aligned and we work together.

Our job at the Partnership is to lead our community in achieving our shared vision for Halifax. We approached the renewal of the city's economic strategy

with a “one Halifax” philosophy, and it's this philosophy that will enable success. We worked with the private sector and our government, post-secondary, and community partners to develop a plan we are confident will accelerate growth over the next five years and beyond.

By 2021, we are aiming to grow Halifax's GDP to \$22.5 billion, our labour force to 271,000 and our population to 470,000. To achieve this, we will leverage and build upon our natural competitive advantages — our ocean advantage, our educated and innovative community, and our excellent urban/rural lifestyle — while capitalizing on our best opportunities for economic growth.

We will focus on making it easier to do business in Halifax and attracting and retaining more immigrants, international students and recent graduates. We will also work to enhance and showcase our excellent quality of life.

Halifax is one of the few places in the world where you can get from the boardroom to the beach in less than 30 minutes. The lifestyle we enjoy attracts new residents, visitors and businesses, and is a valuable lever in growing our economy. We value Halifax's rural/urban diversity, and look forward to working with residents and businesses throughout the municipality to make Halifax the vibrant, prosperous city we all want.

Alignment and collaboration will be critical to our collective success. There's a piece of this plan that each of us can own, and it will take everyone working together to make progress towards our long-term vision.

We must be driven to succeed, not quietly or passively, but with positive urgency.

The future of our city and province depends on it.

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# Finding the right fit

Key situations in which every company will need legal assistance **By Heidi Tattrie Rushton**

Every business owner will need to hire a lawyer at some point. However, when it comes time to decide who the right person is for the job and for which tasks a lawyer is really needed, it can be overwhelming.

“It’s a really competitive market out there so people should be good consumers,” says Gavin MacDonald, Partner at Cox & Palmer law firm in Halifax.

MacDonald says finding the right lawyer ultimately comes down to the right fit.

“You’re hiring a personal advisor,” he says. “You can have somebody with the best technical skills, but if you don’t feel that they understand you and your business then you may not be getting the right advice, or you may not take the advice because you don’t feel that they’re understanding the issue.”

He suggests starting with referrals from other businesses in your industry,

**“***If the worst case scenario is really bad, then you should probably have a lawyer take a look at it so you know what you’re getting into.***”**

– Gavin MacDonald, Partner, Cox & Palmer

looking into each lawyer’s background and breadth of experience, and considering the overall firm and the service options they provide. Once it’s narrowed to a few, have a conversation with each to see how well you relate to them.

MacDonald understands that many business owners prefer to manage a lot of the details on their own to save costs. But he says there are five key areas where you should call in a professional. These include the initial business set-up (i.e. incorporations, trusts); finance (i.e. raising money for the business, borrowing, investors); commercial agreements (i.e.

sales contracts, leases); governance (i.e. shareholders and boards); and conflict, either internally or externally.

MacDonald says the decision to hire a lawyer ultimately comes down to the impact that the situation could have on your business.

“One thing I always ask clients is: What’s the value of this? What’s the worst case scenario and what would that mean for your business?” MacDonald says. “If the worst case scenario is really bad, then you should probably have a lawyer take a look at it so you know what you’re getting into.”



## Workplace Wellness

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# Innovation is hard

But if a law firm can do it so can you **By Paul V. Sanders**

If you were asked to rank all Atlantic Canadian industries from the most innovative to the least, it's fair to say that law would be near the bottom of the list for most people. Most perceive the practice of law to be in the dark ages with respect to new process solutions and technology. These perceptions are not unfounded based on the experiences most have had working with lawyers over the years, however, this is rapidly changing out of necessity.

Online legal service providers and other alternate business models have emerged which compete for work traditionally done by law firms. These providers now offer viable options for clients, often with greater predictability on fees. Further, many general counsel within corporations were previously lawyers at law firms and are demanding change from an informed and strengthened position.

Being responsive to clients' demands for increased efficiency, transparency and value requires a fundamental shift in how the legal industry has operated since its inception. Law firms at the forefront of this fundamental shift, like Stewart McKelvey, have chosen to embrace a new way of thinking, called Practice Innovation, which borrows tools from other disciplines.

Stewart McKelvey has begun to apply and adapt traditional approaches to new product development, process improvement and project management to law. This offers clients streamlined processes, price certainty and enhanced value. This new initiative has resulted in identifying lessons that can be easily adapted to any industry.

Here are eight essential steps to defining and successfully implementing innovation initiatives in an industry that is adverse to change:

## 1. **Secure Management Engagement**

While buy-in at all levels of your organization is ideal, actual engagement at the upper levels is critical. Note the use of "engagement" and not "support". Support means your leaders will speak favorably of the initiatives in meetings, but real success requires your leaders

to roll-up their sleeves and actively participate in change initiatives rather than just pay lip service to them. To help build engagement, create a committee, composed of influencers throughout your organization, who can champion your cause.

## 2. **Build a Dedicated Team**

Your employees and managers are too busy keeping the lights on to be engaged in change initiatives full-time. Innovation often requires a dedicated team that partners with front-line workers to craft custom solutions to address the unique challenges that they face. It is essential that your people are intimately involved with the solutions being developed or they won't feel that they "own" solutions. Without ownership there is no change.

## 3. **Listen to your Customers**

Any change initiative that does not start with the underlying needs of your customers and is not firmly grounded in satisfying those needs is doomed to fail. But remember to use a broad definition of your customers. Your customers are anyone, both inside and out of your organization, that receive value from your business processes. Be sure to identify their needs in advance and translate them into business requirements before embarking on your project.

## 4. **Think like a Startup**

Start-up companies have vision but with untested ideas they can't afford wasting months building something nobody wants. Successful start-ups often begin by developing a minimal solution that satisfies a basic customer need. They then give it to their customer as soon as possible. Customer feedback then drives iterations of that initial solution leading to a better product. The key is to start small, with bite-size pieces, and to value learning above all else. Established companies can use the same approach when developing untested business ideas.

## 5. **Visualize your Work**

Progress on knowledge work often becomes buried in countless emails and

status reports. It becomes difficult to identify opportunities for improvement and to track progress when there is no single place where progress is visualized. Techniques as simple as using post-it notes on a whiteboard to track work in progress or mapping out existing processes to identify waste offer an inexpensive way to gain visibility on workflow and increase team collaboration.

## 6. **Measure your Progress**

It is critical for an improvement team to justify the resources expended on a project. Strong positive word of mouth, while beneficial, will not win over the naysayers. You need hard data to prove that your work is producing results. Without measurements to bolster your achievements, you may find it difficult to make the business case for further improvement efforts.

## 7. **Embrace Technology (at the right time)**

Technology is capable of doing amazing things, but if you throw it at a problem without proper training and engagement by the people that will ultimately use it, then it will often fail. Once you have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish, your team is on board, and the enabling processes are put in place, then it's time to consider how technology can make that process better, faster, cheaper.

## 8. **Develop a culture of continuous improvement**

As the old business saying goes: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." To effect meaningful long-term change you must change the way people think about their work. Resistance to change on the basis that it isn't the way it's always been done must give way to thinking that there is always a better way. Advise, coach, train and support your people and slowly ingrain in them a desire to always strive to get better at what they do.

Following these eight steps will help any company bring practices from the dark ages into the light for all to see, explore and improve.



## Trailblazer

Okay, his real title is Practice Innovation Partner, but **Paul Saunders** has inspired our firm to think more like an innovative startup than an established law firm.

Paul and his team have implemented client datasites, custom web applications, shared online workspaces, automated document assembly, process improvement, project management and pricing tools that enable our legal teams to collaborate, and forecast requirements to exceed client expectations of service, efficiency, and value.

His official title notwithstanding, Paul's fresh thinking and multidisciplinary approach is inspiring positive change.



# Managing risk

Create a detailed financial continuity plan **By Heidi Tattrie Rushton**

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No business owner wants to imagine what might happen should his or her business suffer an unexpected setback or emergency. However there's a way to prepare for this that many business owners don't consider until it's too late. Creating a detailed financial continuity plan could mean the difference between saving a business and closing the doors for good.

Kelly Johnstone is the President of KLM Financial Halifax. She says the first step towards protecting a business in case of emergency is to start with a strong financial plan that clarifies key performance indicators for the future and a plan for how to get there. Then take the time to ensure the books are up-to-date and accurate by reviewing current financial statements. These should include an income statement, a balance sheet, and a cash flow statement. This information will determine if the current plan is functioning properly.

"Understanding this historic information is critical to know if your plans have been working or if you need to adjust behaviour. It is also critical to understand the strength of your balance sheet — do you have enough equity built into the business to get debt? Do you need any working capital or lending for fixed assets?" she asks. "The ability to borrow is extremely important for financial continuity planning because this is a source of funding you can use

if you want to fuel growth or get yourself out of a jam."

Johnstone recommends business owners have this debt facility approved before it's needed, as once a business owner ends up in a situation where they do need it, many lenders will not approve a loan. If they do they will usually need a personal guarantee, something many business owners are not comfortable doing. She cautions that the decision to take on debt should not be entered into lightly.

"If you are going to take on debt, please make sure you understand that your profits are going to be impacted by the debt servicing costs and know the amount of additional profit you will need to cover this interest cost," Johnstone says.

Another safeguard that can be put in place to manage an unexpected problem is to leave equity in the business.

"Instead of taking out every penny you earn, leave some profits in so you can self-finance working capital and strengthen your balance sheet," she says. "If you are taking dividends and salary, make sure you aren't taking more than your earnings."

Conducting a sensitivity analysis is a good exercise to examine potential negative scenarios and play them out before they occur. Some examples she gives to consider are how the business would be affected if it lost a major client;

if it was unable to meet gross margin targets; or if it was short on cash flow because a payment was delayed or an expected investment was not secured. Any of these could cause a serious setback in any operation that could spell disaster if there's not a plan in place to prepare for it.

Timothy Branson is the National Commercial Lines Director at A.P. Reid Insurance. He agrees that a financial continuity plan is a crucial element of an overall business and financial plan and says he sees too many businesses fail because they didn't plan for the unexpected. He says there are two primary elements that business owners should consider in the process, starting with the sensitivity analysis Johnstone mentioned.

"The first element is the risk management; what each entrepreneur can do themselves to think about and prepare for any kind of potential loss that could harm their business," he explains.

Branson says business owners should ask themselves where they are most vulnerable and remember that it's not just the large businesses that are at risk to lose everything. A home-based web business

could fail if they don't have their information properly backed up and stored or if the owner suffers a medical emergency that affects their ability to work.

"The [continuity] plans don't need to be a manifesto," he says. "They can be short and sweet. It's just really that exercise of sitting down and playing out a worst-case scenario and you really start to learn where the vulnerabilities are and you proceed accordingly."

Once the financial continuity plan is in place, Branson says business owners must then consider how to protect their business should that worst-case scenario occur.

"The second piece of it is the insurance piece; transferring that risk," he says.

It's important to find the right broker to determine what types of insurance are needed to protect a business from its own vulnerabilities. Gathering referrals from other industry professionals is a great way to find brokers who are knowledgeable in the field however choosing the right insurance broker should always involve more than calling around for the best quote.

"There's always a better price

out there but insurance policies are legal documents. The duty of care on an insurance broker professional is very, very high. There is not a large expectation that the client will take their insurance policy and read it from cover to cover — the courts have shown that. It's very important that the broker knows what they're talking about and explains it accordingly," he says. "A good insurance broker acts as a risk manager."

Johnstone urges business owners to ensure all of the pieces are in place to create a strong and comprehensive financial continuity plan to prepare for in case of an emergency. Even when the formal plan is complete though she says the job is not done. Regular checks need to be performed on key vulnerabilities to see if anything may have changed since the last review.

"You should monitor these on a monthly basis to ensure you are on track or to make any modifications that need to be made," she says. "Financial planning should be consistently updated for changes in the business if you want to maximize profits and minimize losses going forward."

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# On the right track

**CYCLONE**  
Group Fitness

Cyclone Fitness marking four years in business **By Carol Dobson**

Since **Cyclone Fitness** was named as one of the top five finalists in the Halifax Business Awards in 2014, the business has been whirling at a furious pace — faster even than the indoor bicycling classes which were the company’s foundation almost four years ago.

“We’re going to be moving into a great new space at 1717 Barrington Street, across from the Grand Parade,” owner Elana Liberman says. “It’s a space designed specifically for us. It has big windows that let in lots of natural light. We’re excited that we’ve outgrown our previous basement space and we’re moving to this space which is very accessible and client friendly.”

The business award was not the only recognition of her business prowess. Two years ago, she was also one of the Progress Women of Excellence winners.

Giving back to the community is one of the tenets of her business. Cyclone is behind “Bare All for the Barre” raise

**“***We’re excited that we’ve outgrown our previous basement space and we’re moving to this space which is very accessible and client friendly.*”

– **Elana Liberman,**  
Owner, Cyclone Fitness

funds for Prostate Cancer Canada, using a combination of strength conditioning, ballet, Pilates and yoga to feel the burn. It’s sponsored by RBC Wealth Management, and more than \$22,000 has been raised, making it one of the charity’s major local fundraising initiatives.

She’s also instituted another program, in which businesses pay it forward by sponsoring fitness classes for groups or communities which might not have access — financial or otherwise — to fitness training. Pending Fitness takes the ideas of “suspended coffees” and applies it to the health and fitness sector. The goals of Pending Fitness include providing fitness classes to businesses within HRM, who will pay it forward, so that a chose group or community, such as Hope Blooms, will receive a fitness class at no charge.

She’s not resting on her laurels and is looking forward to being able to enter the Small Business of the Year category, now that she has been in business for four years. The recognition that she has already received tell her that she had the right idea when she first opened the doors at Cyclone Fitness and that, thanks to the support of the community, her staff, and clients, that she’s definitely on the right track.



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