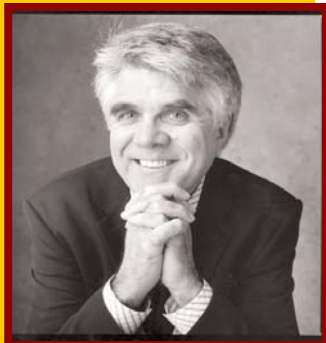


Top Executives Share Their First Work Experience



Andrew Alexander, CEO of Second City

It's never too early for students to start thinking about career goals, but careers these days are more of a journey than a destination. Each work experience helps students build their skill base and direct their career focus. In celebration of Canada Career Week (October 30 through November 5), some of Ontario's top executives shared their first work experience stories and provided advice for students planning their career path.

Andrew Alexander, CEO of Second City, admits that he struggled in school and didn't know what work he wanted to pursue. Mr. Alexander's first job was as a paperboy when he was 11. Getting up early every morning to complete his route taught him discipline and responsibility. "People relied on me to do my job and get the paper to their door," says Mr. Alexander. "It gave me a solid work ethic that translates to every job I do." Now as CEO of a successful comedy theatre company, Mr. Alexander really enjoys the creative side of what he does but recognizes the need to run the business effectively and successfully, much like his paper route. If Mr. Alexander had the chance to do it all over again he would work harder in all the courses he took in school because you never know when you are going to need what you learned. His advice to students planning their careers is to try to keep your options open and do the best you can in all aspects of your education.



Julia Sebastian, Human Resources Manager White Oaks Conference Resort and Spa in Niagara

Julia Sebastian, Human Resources Manager at White Oaks Conference Resort and Spa, thought she would follow in her mother's footsteps and be a teacher. Gaining her first work experience as a hostess at a family-run restaurant, Ms. Sebastian discovered that everything you do is a learning experience and shapes who you are and who you become. Recognizing that she loved working with people and interacting with customers, Ms. Sebastian pursued Human Resources. In her current role, one of the most rewarding aspects of Ms. Sebastian's job is the ability to create a positive work environment for her organization. When asked what she would do differently she replied, "Nothing. I believe every bump in the road is a building block that gets you where you are today." Ms. Sebastian's advice to students who are planning their careers is about attitude, "If you believe that you can do anything, the sky is the limit."

First work experiences don't necessarily translate to a career choice or path, but the values and skills learned are the basis of life-long learning. *Passport to Prosperity* aims to give high school students the opportunity to explore career options and develop workplace skills as part of their high school education.

Every Detail Counts in Event Planning

A few months ago I wouldn't have thought that I would be wearing a suit and commuting downtown every day to work at a public relations firm. When I started my co-op classes, I knew what I liked to do and what my interests were but I didn't know how I could apply that to the working world.

When I was considering co-op, I wasn't sure what to expect. I didn't know what my strengths and weaknesses were and was hoping that co-op might help me with that. Luckily, through the co-op program, I was given aptitude tests and a review of my work history.

Based on these exercises, I learned that I communicate well with others, am energetic, enjoy a fast-paced environment, and enjoy working with technology. These are all skills needed in event planning at a public relations firm.

Getting here was a lot of work. I had to update my résumé, practice my interview skills, and meet with my employer in a formal interview – just what my co-op course taught me.

Working every day has taught me a lot about responsibility and the commitment needed to succeed in the working world. I've had to give up playing for my high school football team and I don't see my friends at school anymore but I've learned a lot of valuable skills. I've had the opportunity to plan an internal event for my co-workers. I learned quickly that you need to be very organized to make sure an event runs smoothly and that every detail counts.

I took co-op because I thought it was the best way for me to figure out what I wanted to do in the future. I'm still deciding whether event planning is for me but I definitely know that what I'm learning now will help me in whatever career I choose.

Paul Belkin, Richmond Hill High School



Co-op student Paul Belkin helps a colleague prepare for an internal company event.

The Ontario Skills Passport (OSP)

The OSP is a bilingual, web-based resource that provides clear descriptions of “essential skills” and “work habits”. It is designed to help employers assess and record the demonstration of these skills and work habits by students and job seekers. The OSP can strengthen partnerships among students, job seekers, teachers, job developers, employment counselors, employers and the community! For more information on the OSP, visit: <http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca>

Essential skills are needed in all occupations. They provide the foundation for learning the technical skills required by specific occupations and are transferable from school to work, job to job, and sector to sector. People who have strong essential skills can both perform the tasks required by their jobs and adapt to changes in the workplace more easily. Good **work habits** are important in the workplace as well. The OSP describes the following skills and work habits:

Skills

Reading
Writing
Use of documents
Use of computers
Money math
Scheduling or budgeting and accounting
Measurement and calculation
Data analysis
Numerical estimation
Oral communication
Job task planning
Decision making
Problem solving
Finding information

Work Habits

Working safely
Teamwork
Reliability
Initiative
Customer service
Entrepreneurship



Essential skills and work habits are required for success in the workplace.

Employers can use the OSP in:

- recruitment practices, by using the descriptions of the essential skills and work habits to prepare a job ad;
- training practices, to record the demonstration of essential skills and work habits and to provide constructive feedback on job performance.

Students and job seekers can use the OSP to:

- identify and understand the skills and work habits that employers want;
- show employers what they can do;
- prepare for their transition to the workforce;
- create a skills-based résumé, and communicate their skills in an interview; and
- plan for ongoing skill development in their career paths.

Experiences in school, cooperative education and other types of work placements, volunteer work, special interests, and jobs all contribute to a person’s skill development. Students and job seekers can ask their employers to record on their OSP Work Plan the skills and work habits that they have demonstrated in their job.

Teachers, job developers and employment counselors can use the OSP to:

- support learning of the essential skills and work habits required for success in the workplace;
- introduce relevant information on skills, occupation-related tasks and careers in the classroom and in training programs;
- identify expanded opportunities and suitable tasks for work placements; and
- match students and job seekers with available work placements.

“Using the Ontario Skills Passport has been great! My co-op students recognize the tasks they complete in their work placements and see the skills that they have. Reviewing the work plan’s checklist together also opens up a new dialogue between student and employer. Students can add the completed OSP Work Plans to their employment portfolios, which shows future employers the skills and work habits that they have developed in their co-op placements.” **Laura Crane, Continuous Intake Co-op Teacher, Toronto District School Board**



An employer uses the Ontario Skills Passport to document a student’s essential skills and work habits, as demonstrated in the workplace.

Engineers Don't Just Build Bridges

Since its formation in 2000 as an advocacy group for professional engineers, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) has been actively working to educate young people about the exciting opportunities that a career in engineering can provide. In particular, the OSPE has embarked upon a campaign to raise awareness and encourage the participation of young women in the engineering profession. Of the 67,000 professional engineers in Ontario, only five per cent are women.

"This is an issue of great concern for the entire profession," says Sharon Glover, CEO, Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. "When you don't have the participation of over fifty per cent of the population, you have a lack of different perspectives, viewpoints and a way of thinking."

To combat this issue, the society works with a group called the Women Engineers Action Committee (WEAC). As part of a new campaign targeting girls in grade seven to ten, WEAC joined with eleven Ontario universities in an initiative called Go-Eng-Girl.

Go-Eng-Girl was designed to give young women and their parents the opportunity to learn more about the profession by listening to women within the field speak about their experiences, while also participating in an interactive engineering session. On October 15, 2005, girls from across Ontario were given the opportunity to do experiments with professional engineers and experience some aspects of the job first hand.

Although the program is in its first year, Go-Eng-Girl sessions held in thirteen different locations were extremely successful and attracted approximately 1200 participants.

"Young people aren't aware of the career choices that are available to them," says Ms. Glover. "Through our work on the Provincial Partnership Council and with programs like Go-Eng-Girl we hope to show students that engineering involves teamwork and is actually a very creative profession that can be highly rewarding."

Ms. Glover says that students who think they might be interested in engineering should take the opportunity to check it out – through school-work programs, summer jobs or by volunteering. Overall, she feels that young people need to increase their understanding of what a career in engineering entails.

In the meantime, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers will continue to support and encourage young people to participate and experience the exciting challenges a career in engineering can offer. After all, engineering is more than just building bridges!



Go-Eng-Girl participants engage in a water filtration engineering experiment.

Partner Profile: TV Ontario

For the past 35 years, TVOntario has been committed to education. TVO, the English-language service, provides educational programming and on-line resources designed to enhance and extend learning at home and in the classroom. TFO, the French language service, is the province's source for Franco-Ontario educational and cultural programs and services. TFO has a unique relationship with francophone schools throughout the province who rely on their materials to enhance the classroom experience. The Independent Learning Centre (ILC), the online service, enables learners of all ages to pursue their high school diploma, upgrade skills or advance their careers through distance education courses and web-based resources. More than 30,000 individuals, institutions and schools use the ILC each year.

The *Passport to Prosperity* campaign is a perfect fit with the TVOntario mandate of inspiring learning for life. Since becoming a *Passport to Prosperity* partner in 2004, TVOntario has been an active member on the Provincial Partnership Council. Not only has TVOntario been able to support the goals of *Passport to Prosperity* by profiling their business and student representatives on the network, but also by promoting co-op and intern opportunities to its own students. *Passport to Prosperity* partners promote student success by helping students to develop skills needed in the workplace, and to find satisfying work experiences and careers – a terrific complement to the goals of TVOntario.

TVOntario's commitment to *Passport to Prosperity* is another example of the dedicated partnerships that make the campaign such a success.

Offering high school students work experience provides employers with an opportunity to gain an understanding of the different work habits and expectations between generations of employees. In this four-part series, **n-gen People Performance Inc.**, a performance consulting company, will explore how employers can achieve greater organizational performance by improving processes and people management strategies across the generational divide. For more information, see www.ngenperformance.com

Your Multigenerational Workforce: A Guide to Understanding Your Employee Groups

Traditionalists

1922 – 1945

Age 60-83

Baby Boomers

1946 - 1964

Age 41-59

Gen Xers

1965 - 1980

Age 25-40

Gen Ys

1981 – 2000

Age 5-24

Why is it so hard to engage most of your employees, most of the time? In part, you may not be looking at your workforce from the right angle – through a generational lens.

The result of looking at your workforce along generational lines is that you will create people management techniques and strategies that are effective and engaging for a multigenerational audience. Analysing your workforce from a generational perspective is not a radical approach. Marketers have been doing it for years - they do not promote cell phones the same way to safety-conscious parents, as to teens, who see them as a social necessity.

Transferring this concept to people management, your organization should be creating reward, recognition and recruitment strategies that will engage both younger and experienced workers. Your organization probably has three, if not four, generations that make up your workforce. Our research shows that each of these generations has different values, expectations, and behaviours that impact team and organizational performance. These differences mean that each generation views life and work from a unique perspective, which often clashes with the other perspectives.

Why care about meeting the needs of or engaging all four generations? As Canada faces an aging workforce and a shrinking labour pool, it is becoming increasingly difficult to get the right person, in the right job, at the right time. Understanding generational identities allows you to recruit, retain, and tap into the wealth of existing knowledge needed to grow your business. We all know that an engaged employee is a more productive employee. Creating policies and strategies that tap into what is most important to each generation allows you to engage more of your employees, more frequently.

In the following three articles, we will: 1) Explain how generational identities are shaped and provide examples of generational specific values, attitudes and behaviours; 2) Explain how generational identities impact your ability to 'get, keep and grow' your people; and, 3) Provide tips on bridging generational gaps.

Nominate an Employer Champion Today

The Provincial Partnership Council needs your help finding Employer Champions. If you know an employer in Ontario who is dedicated to providing work experience opportunities to high school students, please complete a nomination form for the Employer Champion Award by January 31, 2006. Print off the form at www.obep.on.ca or contact Ellen Kalis at (416) 598-5777 or ellen.kalis@avantsc.ca. Include two references to validate the employer's commitment to school-work programs.

Join the Campaign!

For more information about *Passport to Prosperity*, please call 1-800-387-5514 or visit the website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/passport/.

For information on providing a school-work opportunity to a high school student in your community, please contact the Ontario Business Education Partnership (OBEP) at 1-888-672-7996 or visit www.obep.on.ca/en/home.htm OBEP is a province-wide network of 26 business-education councils and local training boards facilitating partnerships with employers and schools in local communities.

The Provincial Partnership Council and the *Passport to Prosperity* campaign are supported by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities. Partners include the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario, Junior Achievement, Landscape Ontario, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Toronto Board of Trade and TVOntario.



A workplace supervisor oversees a student's co-op experience at Spezzo's restaurant in Toronto.