

# Designing a new business

by Heidi Riley

**damien Morris Designs** is a new design company that opened in June 2017. Within a few months, the start-up was featured in *The Guardian*, on CBC, and in *PEI Living Magazine*.

**Damien Packwood**, Owner, is very pleased with the variety of contracts he has secured, from residential to commercial, and with connecting with clients from past work.

Damien is a Certified Interior Designer and Decorator. After graduating high school in his hometown in Newfoundland, he earned a diploma in Interior Decorating. In 2005, he moved to PEI to study Hotel/Restaurant Management at Holland College.

He worked in the restaurant industry for four years before finding work at a local interior design company. "I wanted to learn everything I could, and my end goal was to have my own business," says Damien. He went on to learn a different aspect of decorating at a custom kitchen and bathroom design company.

In May of this year, Damien teamed up with a local construction company to work with their clients to design kitchens and interiors in their new home construction. This was the chance Damien needed to go out on his own. Within a month, he had taken the plunge.

## About the service

Damien does one-on-one consultations with clients at his office in Charlottetown and in their homes. Services include concept and design development, computer generated drawings, kitchen design, and space and furniture planning.

He uses a computer program called 2020 Design to create 3D images of home interiors that help clients visualize the impact of changing paint colours, window treatments, flooring, furniture, and more. Using a virtual reality headset, clients can see potential design features such as furniture placement, new paint colours, and countertop styles.

## Community program helps businesses get started

Damien found some help from the **Impact** program, which offers funding that helps turn a venture into a viable business. For more information, contact **Tania Bernard**, Loans Officer, CBDC Summerside, at 902-888-3793 or email [tania.bernard@cbdc.ca](mailto:tania.bernard@cbdc.ca)



Seen at their grand opening, Damien Packwood, owner, and his wife Alicia, who does the social media work for damien Morris Designs.

## Hiring plans

"As Christmas approaches, I will be really busy offering Christmas decorating packages. I may want to hire someone soon to take over the drawing."

## Future plans

"I eventually want to grow and do TV, design shows, seminars, and build a design community on PEI. There are many designers here, and we need to collaborate and share ideas."

For more information, call **Damien Packwood** at 902-218-0598 or e-mail [damien@damienmorrisdesigns.ca](mailto:damien@damienmorrisdesigns.ca)

Visit [www.damienmorrisdesigns.ca](http://www.damienmorrisdesigns.ca)

For more information on becoming an interior designer and the educational choices in Canada, visit **Interior Designers of Canada** at [www.idcanada.org](http://www.idcanada.org)

For the full interview, visit [www.employmentjourney.com](http://www.employmentjourney.com) and search **damien Morris Designs**.



# Students create virtual technology business

by Heidi Riley

Third-year UPEI business students **Michael Thompson** and **Evan Hawley** have combined their talents to start a new business called **Odyssey Virtual**. This innovative company specializes in creating videos and virtual tours using drones and 360 Virtual Reality cameras.

The videos and virtual tours can be used by realtors to let prospective home buyers use their laptop, tablet, or mobile device to tour every room in a house, and even go outside. "The video of your house interior can also be used for insurance purposes, and we can host it on our secure servers," says Evan. "Hotels and other tourism organizations, rental properties, and car dealerships are markets we are planning to engage."

Michael, who is from Summerside, is specializing in marketing, and has a good knowledge of accounting as well.

Evan is from Halifax. He went to Saint Mary's University for his first year and studied Engineering before switching to Business at UPEI. Evan stays connected with the world of engineering by volunteering with the UPEI Baja team, where engineering and business students team up to design, build, and market an off-road vehicle. Last year, Evan helped with marketing the vehicle, and used virtual reality technology to create a commercial to promote it.

Evan purchased some 360 degree cameras, and built a business plan around applying the technology to real estate and tourism markets. He enlisted Michael's help, and now the business is taking off.

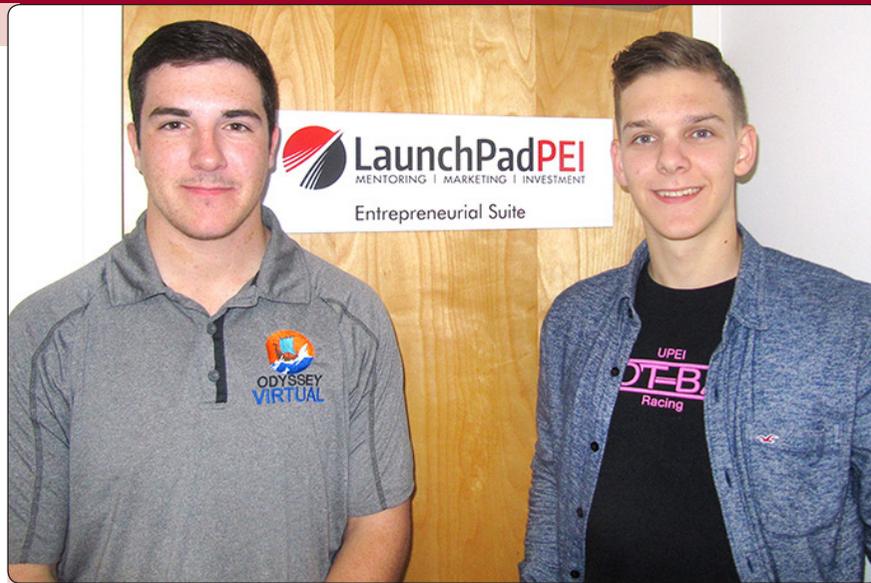
"In addition to keeping up with our school work, we are able to do a job a day, five days a week," says Michael.

"It comes down to planning, having a schedule, and sticking to it. Our sales have been growing, and we expect growth to continue."

"What I enjoy most about dedicating my time to this business is applying the knowledge, marketing tactics and accounting practices I have been learning for the last three years," says Evan. "I also love the interactions with the people we meet and the networks we build."

"The hardest part was learning how to use the technology," says Michael. "We spent hours learning how the system works and aligning the images, and we reduced our turnover time from three days to 24 hours."

So far, the students have financed this venture on their own and with help from their families. "We are marketing our business through our website and Facebook, but mostly it's through cold calling realtors and other business people," says Michael.



From left, UPEI Business students Michael Thompson and Evan Hawley have started their own business, Odyssey Virtual.

## Help from mentors

Michael and Evan are grateful for the advice and guidance from UPEI Assistant Professor Mike Cassidy, Sessional Instructors Allison Ramsay and Ken DesRoches, and Faculty Advisor Jeffrey Bowser. "Mentors help us learn from their experience and get the best information to apply to our own business," says Evan.

For more information, visit Facebook and search **Odyssey Virtual**. Visit [www.odysseyvirtual.ca](http://www.odysseyvirtual.ca)

For the full interview, visit [www.employmentjourney.com](http://www.employmentjourney.com) and search **Odyssey Virtual**.

