Employment in the Information Technology sector on PEI

by Stacy Dunn

Dustin Sparks, left, organizer of the PEI Devs IT panel on hiring practices, chats with Evan Porter, the event's moderator and co-worker at Binary Star.

A recent panel of local IT employers at the Startup Zone in Charlottetown focused on hiring and recruiting practices within the industry.

The first-time event was hosted by **PEI Devs**, an informal group of computer programmers and developers who have met monthly since 2012. They gather in Charlottetown for social events, to write code, and to discuss topics of interest. The group includes students, graduates, developers, entrepreneurs, IT employers, and others interested in this field.

Employers on the IT panel

• Binary Star **www.binarystar.ca**
• silverorange **www.silverorange.com**
• ScreenScape Networks **www.screenscape.com**
• DeltaWare, a MAXIMUS Canada company **www.maximuscanada.ca**
• forestry.io **https://forestry.io**
• resolveHR **www.resolvehr.ca**

Advertising jobs

The job openings the companies advertise most often are for Computer Programmers and Developers.

"We use our own website, social media, and various job search sites like Indeed," said **Dustin Sparks**, Chief Technology Officer at **Binary Star**. This consulting firm specializes in cloud-based software, startup company software and talent reinforcement services in Canada and the US.

Jordan Patterson is a founding partner of **forestry.io**, a website development start-up with eight staff. He has found success in finding the right candidates by posting jobs on IT-specific websites such as Hacker News, TechStars network, and the PEI Devs website portal.

Difficult job to fill

The employers agreed there is a shortage of Developers on PEI. When they hire, they look on PEI first, and then across Canada, and they have had to widen their search to other countries as well.

Ian Morse, a Software Developer at ScreenScape Networks, a digital sign company, says his company found success hiring students who have done on-the-job training with them. "Holland College and UPEI students have great talent."

Finding potential employees

Some employers have found success finding potential employees through **GitHub.com**. It is a code development platform where developers post and collaborate on projects. "We have seen the work of some developers at **GitHub.com** and offered them jobs," says Dustin.

Vivian Beer is the HR Strategy Manager for the PEI BioAlliance, which supports bioscience companies' recruitment strategies, skills development, and community outreach.

"Further to ongoing demand for those with a science/research background, we have noticed more recently companies seeking candidates with software developer/IT backgrounds. I encourage IT professionals to join our mailing list to hear about these career opportunities."

Best way to stand out

All the employers agreed job seekers must go beyond listing their knowledge of computer languages, and describe specifically what they have done and what outcomes were achieved.

"When you respond to a specific ad, make sure your resumé matches what the ad says," says **Patrick Charles** of DeltaWare, a MAXIMUS Canada company. "If you send a resumé looking for future job prospects, explain your skill set in detail and what type of position you are looking for.

"Be honest, be yourself, and be enthusiastic. Tell us how well you work independently and with a team. We also want to see how well you test code in addition to writing it."

What to include on the resumé

"List just the jobs that are relevant to the position you are applying for," Jordan says. "I also like to see personalized cover letters and a portfolio showing examples of their coding work."

Dustin agrees that a portfolio is beneficial to job seekers, and looks for applicants who are engaged, willing to learn, and hard working.

Communication skills are also important. "At silverorange, we talk with co-workers and others working in tech, and also with clients about their projects," says **Michael Gauthier**, Owner. The company hired six people in 2017, and now has 15 full-time and two part-time staff.

Interview process

"Many job applicants have a variety of education backgrounds," Michael says. "Our current staff has a healthy mix of educational backgrounds and there's no difference in the quality of their work. During the interview, we always ask what aspect of their education they found valuable."

silverorange and forestry.io test their applicants by asking them to write code as part of the interview. "We also review applicants' code with them to judge their reaction to criticism," Jordan says.

"As with any job, employers are seeking skills and technical abilities, but candidates have to show that they can also work well with people," says **Wendy MacIntyre** of resolveHR.

"Contrary to the stereotype of the IT sector, hardly anyone works in isolation, so being able to communicate is a skillset employers are also looking for."

Other jobs these IT companies hire for:

• Sales & Marketing
• Graphic Designers
• User Interface Designers
• User Experience Designers

For more information on **PEI Devs**, visit **https://peidevs.github.io**