

Is being in business by yourself the right career path?

Introducing the Solopreneur by Virginia McGowan

Canadians, especially women and individuals over 50, are becoming entrepreneurs in record numbers these days.

Wendy Mayhew, author of *WISER-The New Entrepreneur: The Definitive Guide to Starting a Business Over the Age of 50* and proprietor of *Business Launch Solutions*, notes that Canadians over 50 are the fastest growing segment of business start-ups.

Nearly one million of the 2.6 million self-employed workers in Canada in 2010 are female. Did you know that most are choosing to go into business on their own as solopreneurs (i.e., sole proprietors of a business)?

True solopreneurs are a unique type of entrepreneur. They differ in their mindset—what they want to achieve, their objectives, and their attitude about being in business, and their business practices.

Marcia Layton-Turner, who writes for the online magazine *Business2Community*, describes the solopreneur as “a specific type of entrepreneur who prefers to work alone.”

Writing for *Huffington Post*, Nigel Patel describes the solopreneur as someone who “raises and runs a business single-handedly, making all the decisions, calling all the shots, and playing the entire game alone.”

At first glance, it’s not easy to see the differences between a solopreneur and a conventional entrepreneur. For example, some entrepreneurs work alone until they can expand by hiring staff. But the true solopreneur is more worker than manager. They don’t intend to delegate work to others unless it means contracting out specific tasks such as bookkeeping or digital marketing.

In fact, solopreneurs don’t intend to add anyone to the business. Their long-term plan is to fit a certain lifestyle, pursue a personal passion, and have flexibility and control. I know, because I’m one of them.

Most solopreneurs run home-based businesses where their focus is more on personal professional development. They are simply more interested in increasing their skills rather than business growth.

But being a solopreneur carries with it some real challenges. You are completely responsible for the entire operation, including legal liabilities. Burn out is a real risk. Further, if you don’t do it, it doesn’t get done. There is no one to delegate to. It’s also difficult to separate your personal life from your business life.

Many solopreneurs report that it’s a very isolating experience. And the internal voices that whisper that you are inadequate and not really cut out for the business world can undermine your self-confidence.

“What makes you think you can do this?” I hear this from solopreneurs all the time. The doubt creeps in, hangs on, and stays like a bad smell. Often, they have no one at all saying, “yes you can.”

Working on your own can mean that your social skills deteriorate. You don’t benefit from having different perspectives on your plans, strategies, and ideas. Networking is essential.

That’s where a mentor comes in. The solopreneur needs a mentor to help them, as Nigel Patel puts it, “dodge the risks.”

A solopreneur needs to find the right mentor, one who understands their mindset and business practices, and doesn’t try to fit them into the typical entrepreneurial mold.

Is being a solopreneur the right choice for you, now or ever? If you decide to pursue business on your own, think carefully about the potential pitfalls and, above all, find yourself a mentor to help you navigate your journey.

Virginia McGowan PhD of Charlottetown PEI is the sole proprietor of *The Business Mentoring Solution*, a writing, publishing, training, and speaking venture on all things about mentoring. Her forthcoming books are *Harness the Power of Mentoring: How to Work with the Right Mentor to Save Your Small Business—A Guide for the Solopreneur* (print and e-book formats), *Harness the Power of Mentoring: Top TIPS for Solopreneurs* (e-book), and *How to Harness the Power of Mentoring: A Planner and Journal for the Solopreneur’s Mentoring Journey* (print workbook), among other publications.



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Atlantic Advanced Power Technologies: Hiring practices

by Stella Shepard

Atlantic Advanced Power Technologies (AAPT) operates a modern, well-equipped 30,000 square foot manufacturing and fabrication facility at Poole’s Corner, PEI.

Jason Aspin, an established designer and builder of electrical equipment for marine and offshore oil and gas companies, co-founded AAPT in 2012.

The company works with oil and gas industries, marine, electrical, and manufacturers of food processing equipment, emergency response vehicles, and agricultural equipment.

Jim MacDonald is the General Manager and his career started as a Precision Machinist in 1999. He started with this company as Production Manager

About the staff

AAPT has 15 employees between the ages of 21 and 60. “We just hired a welder who worked in Alberta for 20 years,” says Jim. “He was tired of being away from his family for long periods of time and decided to take a position here with us.”

The company also accepts student placements for on-the-job training in welding/fabrication and precision machinist trades programs.

“We have hired new graduates from Holland College trades programs,” says Jim. “We prefer to hire fully qualified people, but they are not always available. So we also carry out internal training on machines and processes to fill any knowledge or skill gaps that may exist, and bring them up to industry standards, allowing them to earn their Red Seal in the process. The most important thing is to find motivated people with a good attitude that fit well with our team.”

Hiring needs

“If you are interested in building your career with AAPT, send us your resumé. We are always looking for good people.”

Positions in demand include:

- Precision Machinist
- Welders/Fabricators
- CAD/CAM Programmers
- Mechanical Engineers

“The most difficult position to fill is Precision Machinist. Most shops on PEI are challenged with skills shortages, and this trade is one of the major shortages.

“Our hiring needs are project based,” says Jim. “It’s good to have resumé on file even if we are not hiring, to be better prepared for upcoming projects.”

How to apply

“I discourage people from calling because we are very busy,” says Jim. “I prefer applicants to email a resumé.”

“The best way to stand out during the hiring process is to have the skill sets for the job you are applying for, have a good attitude, and be able to pay attention to detail,” says Jim. “Applicants may be required to take a test in the trade they are applying for.”

In-house training provided

“Cross training is available and encouraged, and there are advancement opportunities within the company.”



Jim MacDonald, General Manager of AAPT.

For more information about Atlantic Advanced Power Technologies, email hr@atlantic-apt.com

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