

Helping employers adapt to a changing workforce

by Heidi Riley

Next Level Group (NLG) helps businesses achieve their goals by amending their business plans and guiding them through their accounting and human resource needs.

"Sometimes owners are so busy running their company that they can't move ahead with long-term business goals," says **Andrew Lavoie**, President of NLG in Charlottetown.

An important part of reaching those goals is to hire people with the skills businesses need. NLG helps employers connect with permanent or temporary staff in a whole range of occupations.

"In our experience, the positions we tend to see the most demand for include IT Professionals, Social Media Experts, Accountants, HR professionals, and Labourers," says Andrew.

"Social media is a fairly new area that is very much in demand. We have noticed a significant jump within our clients and prospects who are taking advantage of adding a Social Media Expert."

Many companies are also looking for Software Developers, Quality Assurance, and Penetration Testers. "If I could find 50 IT professionals today, I am confident that we could find work for them right away."

"There is also a huge need for more Electricians, Plumbers, Carpenters, and other tradespeople. So many have moved to higher paying jobs out west or beginning a sole proprietorship that it is near impossible to find anyone to make a move within the Atlantic provinces. This is when we sit with our clients and become creative in determining a viable solution."

Andrew says his firm is so busy that he is forced to think outside the box when searching for his internal staff. "We are looking at our industry with hopes of offering something that is enticing and completely different without lowering our client Quality Control standards."

Changing trends

"As little as five years ago, there were many more job seekers than positions available. Now the opposite is true. Low unemployment numbers mean it is now much more difficult to find the candidates and the skill sets that employers are searching for. This shift forces our clients to think quicker, use a more strategic approach when interviewing, and in some cases alter their work culture.

"We have seen a shift where more employees are less engaged with their jobs and are more likely to move from one opportunity to another for a number of reasons.

"The skills shortage is so serious that sometimes candidates will accept a different position in the middle of a lengthy hiring process requiring multiple interviews and testing."

Andrew says there is an increase in situations where candidates do not show up for scheduled interviews, take time off without approval, or quit without notice, because it is easy for them to find other opportunities, especially with the tightened HR policies and guidelines.

To help with the recruitment and retention of employees, NLG helps ease the sometimes difficult transition to a new job in a number of ways:

- Find out as much as possible about the employer's work culture, pay, benefits, and what separates them from their competitors.
- Conduct detailed interviews and testing with candidates to make sure their skills, needs, and preferences are considered when matching them with job opportunities.
- Meet new employees at the worksite on their first day to help ease the transition to a new position. "Sometimes they don't even know what door to enter," says Andrew.
- Conduct exit interviews to find out how the workplace culture is working well and how it could be improved, and communicate this with the employer.

Employers looking for staff and job seekers may contact **Andrew Lavoie, Next Level Group**, at 902-940-2220 or email AndrewL@nlgrp.com Visit www.nlgrp.com



Andrew Lavoie, President, Next Level Group in Charlottetown.

Longstanding PEI video game company continues to grow

by Stacy Dunn

Video game testing company **Sculpin QA** has been based in Charlottetown since 2007. The company has about 35 staff in Canada and has been hiring steadily in the last few years.

The company focuses on quality assurance and services such as email customer support and community management for its sister company, Other Ocean Interactive, and many other game developers around the world.

"We help game developers who don't have the time to focus on talking to players," says **Max Knechtel**, Business Development Manager. "If they are constantly answering players' emails, then they are not working on a game. It's been a good service for us."

Hiring needs and process

"Hiring is ongoing," he says. "We post jobs on our own Sculpin website, Other Ocean Interactive, the Job Bank and Work PEI, among others."

Sculpin QA has hired people from Holland College's Video Game Art and Animation program and from UPEI's Computer Science program.

"Holland College and UPEI have really helped the PEI video game industry expand in the last 10 years. Our industry experiences are valued by those institutions, and as a result many graduates are working in the industry here."

Applicants for Tester jobs will field situational questions. "We look for technical expertise and personality," Max says. "You can stand out by showing your knowledge, enthusiasm, and passion for the video game industry."

Industry promotion

The company is a founding member of **Videogames PEI**. In March, the industry group will attend the **Island Entertainment Expo** in Charlottetown.

"We like to show the local community that PEI has a thriving game industry," Max says. "Considering the small size of this province, we have some major world-class studios here. It's a real success story."

For more information on **Sculpin QA**, visit www.sculpinQA.com

For the full interview, go to www.employmentjourney.com and search **Sculpin QA**.

For more information about **Videogames PEI**, search Facebook.



Max Knechtel, Business Development Manager.

