



# eye on innovation

Volume Thirty-Seven : January 2009

## The Innovation Centre welcomes new business development manager

The Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Tim Harmar as business development manager. In his new role, Tim will be working with SSMIC's Incubator clients, providing guidance and assistance to technology-based small/medium sized enterprises (SME) in the Sault Ste. Marie region and launching and managing various market development projects and workshops.



services law from the Osgoode Hall Law School of York University. Tim also brings with him 5 years of experience with environmental consulting firm Shelby Environmental Services Ltd. During his time there, he was responsible for capital infrastructure upgrading projects for local area municipalities.

"Tim's experience working with clients, his project management skills and knowledge of business finance will directly benefit SME firms and Incubator clients," said Tom Vair, executive director, SSMIC. "We are very excited to have Tim join the Innovation Centre and assist us in growing

the IT and knowledge-based sectors."

Tim will be based in the SSMIC headquarters located on the campus of Algoma University where seven companies are currently clients of the business incubator.

"What attracted me most to the Innovation Centre was the opportunity to work closely with Sault Ste. Marie SMEs; both in the fields of information technology and biotechnology," said Tim. "I'm looking forward to applying my skills to helping small businesses grow and thrive in our region."

Tim holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Honours Political Science with General Psychology from Wilfrid Laurier University and a Master of Business Administration degree

with specialization in finance and accounting from the University of Liverpool. He is currently pursuing a Master of Laws degree with specialization in banking and financial

## January's TAG Luncheon: Pair Vote

*The story of how one person using the Internet grabbed the national spotlight and grew a movement*

At the start of last fall's federal election, Gerry Kirk wanted to bring attention to the non-sexy [electoral reform](#) issue. He discovered [pair voting](#) had been used in the U.S. but not in Canada. It seemed like a novel idea that might interest and inspire people. After a few hours of effort, <http://www.pairvote.ca> was launched and then Gerry went away for the weekend. Upon returning, there were over 50 people registered to swap votes and national media was asking for interviews.



would have thought one person could use free, online tools to launch a vote swapping service and thrust voting reform back into the spotlight? See how one person using

[Facebook](#), [blogging](#), [Twitter](#), [Skype](#), [Google maps](#) and a [mailing list](#) resulted in thousands of registrants, dozens of media interviews and most of all the growth of a grassroots movement for electoral reform. You'll learn about people like Kris, a person discovered through Twitter who became a key contributor by writing online, giving interviews and devoting

countless hours in the final days.

Walk away with ideas and tips you can use in your own work and volunteer efforts.

For those who cannot attend, this session will (hopefully) be broadcast live online at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/kirk-2.0-enterprise> and archived later at <http://www.gerrykirk.net>.

**What:** Pair Vote  
Free TAG Luncheon

**When:** January 28, 2009,  
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m

**Where:** Sault College  
Multimedia Centre

**RSVP:** [mguzzo@ssmic.com](mailto:mguzzo@ssmic.com)

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# Strategies to land an IT job interview in a difficult market

There's always a need for skilled IT professionals, even when cutbacks affect other business areas. The fact is some companies are conducting interviews. So keep your eyes and ears open, and don't discount any possibilities.

Read the full article, originally published on [ITBusiness.ca](http://ITBusiness.ca)—1/7/2009 7:00:00 AM

by Katherine Spencer Lee

Even when the economy is thriving, landing interviews for IT positions can be daunting. Under [today's challenging conditions](#), it may feel like a distant possibility. While market realities have indeed made it more difficult to secure job interviews, they don't affect every job seeker equally. The fact is that some companies are conducting interviews. The candidates who approach their search in a persistent, strategic and positive way are the ones most likely to be taking advantage of those opportunities.

## Challenge your assumptions

The first mistake many job seekers make is to assume that companies aren't hiring. There's always a need for skilled IT professionals, even when cutbacks affect other business areas. Keep your eyes and ears open, and don't discount any possibilities.

You never know which contact will lead to another contact who ultimately leads you to a promising opportunity. Word of mouth is at its most valuable during turbulent times.

Make a list of people in -- or near -- your network who might be able to provide job leads or move your resume to the top of the pile. Use online tools such as [Facebook and LinkedIn](#) to augment your in-person efforts, and bring people on the outskirts of your network inside it.

Also consider expanding your search. If your area of the country has been hit especially hard, are you willing to search for employment elsewhere?

If so, take some time to identify regions where the economy has remained relatively strong. Sources such as the [Robert Half Technology Salary Guide](#) can help you identify areas where demand

might be higher for your skills and experience.

## Do your homework

Especially during difficult economic conditions, hiring managers are likely to



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

favor candidates who have made an effort to learn about the firm's challenges rather than merely sending out generic pleas for employment.

Before applying for a position, learn about the employer and its needs. Your cover letter and resume should clearly convey how your skills and experience can help meet those needs.

Because most of your competition for a position will also have done at least a little homework about the company, try to find information that isn't widely available. Use your network to gain a more intimate sense of the business from people who have worked there.

## Get face time

IT job candidates who are focused exclusively on quickly landing an offer often neglect informational interviews, which can be set up with a simple call or e-mail.

While you shouldn't approach such

interviews with the express purpose of landing a job, meeting with a hiring manager at a company you're interested in can provide you with a valuable connection and help you identify skills that you need to improve.

An informational interview is one chance to differentiate yourself from the competition -- not only with your skills and experience, but also with your attitude. During tight markets, hiring managers meet a lot of candidates who unconsciously exude desperation or resignation -- hardly the attributes that help a company weather difficult times.

## Why to expect success

A positive outlook doesn't mean hiding your frustration with a smile and a hearty handshake. Instead, it should inform all your actions. For example, if you submit a resume and don't hear back promptly, don't assume that the opportunity is dead.

Follow up to emphasize your continued interest in the position, and reassert how you think you can help the company. This simple step can dramatically increase your chances of being called in for an interview.

Of course, acting as if you expect instant results won't guarantee you a raft of interview invitations or job offers. But if you persist, it will ultimately give you an edge on the competition.

It will also help you maintain your focus on your long-term career growth, rather than on your immediate desires or fears. That way, when a promising opportunity does arise, you'll be in the best possible position to seize it.

*Katherine Spencer Lee is executive director of Robert Half Technology.*

**itbusiness.ca**  
Business Advantage through Technology

## Have a great IT story? Share it with the community and you could win one of two \$5,000 prizes

The **Microsoft Canada Ignite IT Awards** recognizes the top IT stories from Canadian IT Professionals and Developers. If you have—or someone you know has—a great IT story, let the community know! You could win **one of two \$5,000 prizes and a Software Kit valued at \$1,000.**

Maybe your skills and innovation took your company in a new direction, or helped those in need. Whatever your story, share it. Just enter a written submission and—new this year—an optional short video. This March, all submissions will be open for voting by

your peers, Canada's IT community. Submissions are accepted until **February 15, 2009.**

For more information visit: [www.microsoft.com/canada/igniteit-awards/sl/default-sl.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/canada/igniteit-awards/sl/default-sl.aspx)

# Energy-saving techniques for SMBs: HVAC

By [Nathan Eddy](#)

**A recent KRC Research survey commissioned by Microsoft found nearly 70 percent of the 250 small businesses surveyed said environmentally friendly practices were important for their business. Moreover, 63 percent of the IT decision makers in those surveyed companies said they saved money using IT for green initiatives.**

Anyone who has ever paid for heating and air conditioning knows how easy it is to run up a boiler-busting bill, but there's more to HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) savings than keeping the thermostat locked down.

## Medium Cool

For all businesses, employee comfort is a high priority (or should be). Productivity can be negatively affected by stifling temperatures or freezing-cold climates. Programmable thermostats are simple microprocessor-based devices

that offer as much as a 50 percent rate of return on your investment. They can also maintain start-up and shutdown schedules that keep climate levels comfortable and eliminate unnecessary HVAC costs while rooms or the building are unoccupied.

Proper HVAC maintenance is equally important. Some easy steps to ensuring efficient equipment are replacing dirty air filters, which usually require a specialist to inspect and perform the switch. However, DIY projects like cleaning intake screens, supply registers and return grills can cool down overheating energy costs. If your building uses a boiler, ensure it is regularly inspected. If repair and inspection costs are mounting, consider swapping out the old boiler for a new one. If your boiler currently



uses a fuel other than natural gas, consider making the switch to natural gas if you are planning a boiler replacement.

You may also be able to save energy by managing the sunlight that falls on your building. Solar hot water systems and solar heating systems are two potentially economical solar energy technologies you might want to consider.

## Hot Water

Do your employees ever complain about scalding their hands when using the bathroom faucets? It may be because water-heating levels are often set higher than necessary. Adjust the temperature until you reach an

*(Continued on page 4)*

## seA gains another perspective on natural products initiatives

Science  
Spotlight

science enterprise Algoma (seA) recently welcomed Vern Cheechoo, who is responsible for sharing pertinent information on seA's Natural Products Initiatives with First Nations. Vern is also entrusted with the task of acquiring feedback from a First Nations perspective on the issues, concerns and interests of their communities relating to the development of natural products from the forest, including: non timber forest products for natural health application, foods, pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, essential oils etc.

Vern will also investigate potential opportunities for partnerships between seA and First Nations regarding the Natural Products Initiative; including exploring the opportunity for seA to assist First Nations in achieving their own natural products related objectives.

In doing so, Vern hopes to explore key questions such as whether there is interest in research and commercial development in any of these areas and if so, how might it work and if partnerships may be developed. Another key question is whether or not First Nations would be interested in training

opportunities, research or having access to research facilities if a research centre were established for natural products at Algoma University.



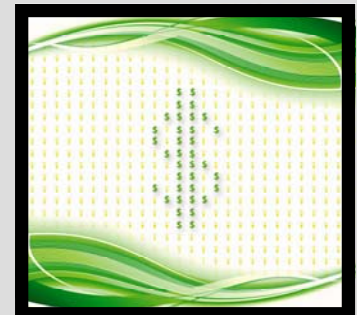
Vern is currently working towards a Community Economic and Social Development (CESD) certificate at Algoma University. Upon graduating in June 2009, his CESD certificate will compliment his past studies in sociology and political science. He will complete his placement with seA in mid-April 2009.

For more information on seA visit: [www.seainnovation.com](http://www.seainnovation.com)

## The Technology Transfer Process

The Technology Transfer Process workshop took place on January 14, 2009 at Algoma's Water Tower Inn. The workshop was held by SSMIC, seA and IRAP and took SMEs, scientists/researchers and entrepreneurs through the technology transfer process in a user friendly way. Renowned experts in the field such spoke about accessing, licensing and marketing new technologies while offering their own valuable expertise and advice from the field. To view their presentations online, visit [www.ssmic.com/s Past Workshops and Presentations page](http://www.ssmic.com/s Past Workshops and Presentations page).

See page 5 for details on the **Finding Funding Workshop in February.**



## Energy-saving techniques for SMBs continued

(Continued from page 3)

acceptable setting. Flow-restrictors and self-closing faucets can also help reduce hot water use. As with heating and ventilation, routine maintenance will ensure leaks are repaired, and an electronic time-of-use controller, available at most large hardware stores, keeps your water heater off when not in use.

### Catch Some Rays

Solar power and solar heating are still regarded as too costly for SMBs, despite incentives offered by some state governments (notably California). However, there are ways to manipulate the sun's power to your advantage. If you live in a hot climate, you can save money

on AC costs by installing awnings and sunscreens or blinds to windows, doors and skylights. You can also replace older windows with better sealing models that offer low-emittance (Low-E) coating (a metallic oxide layer that suppresses radiative heat flow). Even shrubs and trees can be used to effectively block sunlight.

When the weather turns cold, ensure windows are not blocked by office partitions to allow sunshine in. Close blinds at night to keep out the cold, and ensure your windows are properly caulked and weather-stripped. Oftentimes, simply replacing the windows with double or triple-paneled models is the most efficient, long-lasting way to

keep Jack Frost from entering.

### The Big Heat

We've only just scratched the surface when it comes to HVAC cost-saving techniques. SMBs with a mind to go father can also consider options like solar water heaters and solar heating systems. Remember that large, loft-like spaces require more energy to heat, and most of it may be going right over your employees' heads—heat rises. If all these tips seem like something your building could improve with, perhaps it's time to start looking for a more easily manageable workplace. In California, perhaps?

Read the original article on [E-Week.com](http://E-Week.com)

## Biomass project energizing Chapleau

Posted on The Sault Star website by Jessica Young, The Daily Press, Timmins Daily Press  
Read the original article: [ID 1351120](http://ID.1351120) first posted on December 18, 2008

CHAPLEAU — A little town in Northern Ontario is getting a special gift for Christmas. Site plans may start as early as spring for a renewable energy plant in Chapleau, a town that has been hit hard by mill closures and out-migration of workers.

The Chapleau Biomass Project was announced Wednesday December 17, 2008 at Aux Trois Moulins. The project is a \$56-million investment to create a 10-Megawatt power plant using wood-fibre biomass and its feedstock.

"It's the first of its kind in North America," Chapleau Mayor Earle Freeborn said. "This process works and it has been proven. This is going to be sustainable in the future and we're looking ahead to 40, 50 years from now. This is going to happen for Chapleau."

Originating from Europe, this particular biomass system will gasify scrap railway ties and materials from the forest, heat it, and then turn it into a fuel gas that will be reformed and cleaned by passing through a device called a plasma torch.

The plasma torch reconstructs the chemicals in the gas to give it a higher heating value. It then goes to caterpillar gas engine generators to produce power.

"It's exceptionally clean in terms of air



BioProducts commercialization specialist Bill Ivey helped to unveil a new source of energy for Chapleau at Aux Trois Moulins on December 17, 2008. Courtesy: Jessica Young, The Daily Press

emissions," BioProducts commercialization specialist Bill Ivey said.

"In this case, the plasma torch only yields carbon monoxide and hydrogen gas. The carbon monoxide burns to carbon dioxide in the engine, the hydrogen burns to water vapor and that's what is coming out of the engine. It's a very clean technology in that respect."

In addition to being eco-friendly, supporters of the project are talking about

the great economic benefits that will come with its creation.

Project developers estimate 60 construction jobs will be created for the duration of 18 months in addition to 34 permanent positions and roughly 100 spin-off jobs.

An estimated \$2.5 million annually is expected to boost the town's dwindling economy, while the nature of the biomass project will keep local businesses like Tembec, Niska North and CP Rail afloat.

"It's just going to return prosperity to our community that we've seen slip away from us over the years," Freeborn said. "Since March 2005 with the closure of the Domtar Mill, we've been struggling to get by.

"This news is just great for this time of year, especially the Christmas season and especially during a time of economic uncertainty. Chapleau is so lucky to have people who believe in our community and do this for us. I just can't believe it. It's just wonderful."

Partners for the project include Sunbay Energy Corporation in Toronto,

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

# JANUARY

Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre

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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

• **January 1, 2009:**

**New Year's Day - Offices closed.**

• **January 13, 2009:**

**IT Breakfast—7:30 AM at  
Gran Festa Ristorante**

• **January 14, 2009:**

**The Technology Transfer Process  
workshop—8 AM to 5PM at  
Algoma's Water Tower Inn.  
Cost: \$40**

• **January 28, 2009:**

**TAG Luncheon  
Featuring Gerry Kirk—  
11:30 AM to 1:30 PM**

**Sault College Multimedia Room**

For more information about any  
of the events or to RSVP contact  
Marla Guzzo at: 942-7927 X3130  
or [mquzzo@ssmic.com](mailto:mquzzo@ssmic.com)

## Biomass project energizing Chapleau continued

*(Continued from page 6)*

Toromont-CAT, a division of Toromont Industries Ltd., PRM Energy Systems Inc. in Arkansas, Europlasma from France and Chapleau's own M&L Waste Management Ltd.

The two men who brought the biomass project to life hold the top two positions at M&L Waste Management Mtd.: Larry Lacroix and Rene Tremblay.

"We started in 2006 when the economy was in decline (in Chapleau)," Lacroix said. "It's a whole new venture and we're very excited. We wanted to bring something to the table to bring Chapleau to the map."

Two of the local First Nations communities have signed a memorandum of understanding and currently a partnership agreement is under negotiation. Those involved in the Chapleau Biomass Project are now asking for the government to assist in additional funding.

"We are looking for government support that supports these types of new technologies to bring green power to this part of the world," Freeborn added. "It's going to be showcased here. If the government is not there, we'll find investors to do this."

If planning runs as scheduled, the plant will open in 2010.

## Coming Soon: Finding Funding

*Two part workshop series on **Solving the Money Mystery: understanding and accessing funding***

Are you a SME or entrepreneur looking for potential funding opportunities? SSMIC, seA and IRAP are teaming up in February to host a two part workshop series, **Solving the Money Mystery: Understand and access funding opportunities for your SME.** The series will feature advice and guidance from established professionals, as well as an informative panel from featuring representatives from several funding

agencies. Find out what funders look for when awarding their funding. Get an opportunity to ask questions, learn about new funding opportunities and gain useful resources in two 1/2 day workshops.

Keep checking [www.ssmic.com](http://www.ssmic.com) for more information or contact [LVerdone@seainnovation.com](mailto:LVerdone@seainnovation.com).

We're always looking for TAG topics and speakers.

Contact [tharmar@ssmic.com](mailto:tharmar@ssmic.com)

If you are interested in presenting at a future luncheon.

## Modern Resolution

*I'm thinking of setting up one of those standing workstations with a treadmill deals. You know, to help get in shape, and get the ol' heart rate up while working.*



*I think there's better ways to get your heart rate up while staring at a screen.*



*For example, have you played Grand Theft Auto IV, yet?*



By Clark & Vizdos

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Are you an entrepreneur or part of a SME that would like to be profiled in a future edition of Eye On Innovation?  
Contact: [miling@ssmic.com](mailto:miling@ssmic.com)

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