

Software Developer for Major 3D Animation Company Works from the Sault

Mark Alexander lives in downtown Sault Ste. Marie and works out of Toronto. If Mark leaves for work at 11:00 am, what time will he get to work? 11:01 am. Mark Alexander is an Animation Software Developer for Side Effects Software; and for two years now he has worked remotely from his home office.

"It is nice not to have to worry about the commute," Mark said about working out of his home in Sault Ste. Marie, "or pay a fortune just to park your car."

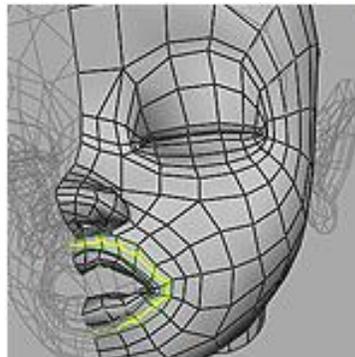
Side Effects Software is a two-time Academy Award honoree for the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences and has two offices

— a research and development office that is based out of Toronto and a sales office, based out of Los Angeles.

Mark works with clients worldwide from his home office in Sault Ste. Marie. "Part of my job is working one-on-one with the clients to help them achieve the best results with the software," said Mark.

Mark has been working for Side Effects Software for more than eight years now. He started working for the company in his co-op placements while he was still a Computer Science Engineering student at the University of Waterloo.

Mark has always been interested in visual graphics and, using his Computer Science Engineering Degree, he was able to tap into the animation industry.



Numerous digital content creation leaders use Houdini, Side Effects Software's flagship product, including: Digital Domain, DreamWorks
(Cont'd on Pg. 2)

Brought to you by the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre

Visit: www.ssmic.com

This monthly newsletter will bring you up to date on all the activities of the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December

| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
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| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

- **December 16** – TAG Luncheon – Sault Instigators - FIRST Robotics Competition – Russ Ramsay Room, Civic Centre
- **December 21** - IT Breakfast – 7:30 am Gran Festa Ristorante

For more information about the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre, or any of our events contact:

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Build IT & they will come.

IT for jobs, IT for growth, IT for SSM,

Merry Christmas!

ITSSM.com Launched to Grow & Serve IT Sector

The Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) recently announced the launch of www.ITSSM.com, an Internet website that focuses on the IT sector of the Sault Ste. Marie region. The website provides useful information for anyone searching for products and services or working in the IT sector. By creating awareness of the region's IT capabilities and providing information useful to the IT sector, the site serves as an essential ingredient to growing a vibrant IT community.

"This type of website is long overdue in the community. It will allow IT consumers to



quickly find local IT companies to service their needs. It will also help increase the awareness of the world class IT talent we have

in our own backyard." Said Tim Lajoie, Corporate Consultant and VoIP Specialist for Microage.

(Cont'd on Pg. 2)



3D Software Developer cont'd...

SKG, Electronic Arts, Namco, Nickelodeon, Rhythm & Hues, Sega, Sony Pictures Imageworks, Walt Disney Feature Animation and Weta Digital Ltd.

Mark has worked on many different facets of animation software development. He has worked on audio synthesis and analysis – synchronizing voice or sound with animation, animation motion capture, and currently he is working on compositing and realtime flipbooking – marrying live action with animation and matching all visual aspects (lighting and textures).

Some of Mark's projects are two-days work while others can take several months to complete. He uses several different programming languages in developing the software including: C++, Java, Shell Scripts, Tcl-TK, Python, and XML, and the end result is software supportive of both Windows XP and Linux platforms.

"I tackle the programming in small projects, usually feature-based," said Mark, "each of which are broken up into steps."

"The infrastructure in Sault Ste. Marie is just as supportive as Toronto's. I have never experienced any difficulties in communicating electronically from my home office," said Mark.

Mark said that any difficulties with intra-office communication is solved by telephone conferencing, email, MSN messenger, and video-enabled presentations.

Neither Mark nor his wife are from the Sault, they moved here last year when his wife accepted a new position in Sault Ste. Marie. One advantage to living in Sault Ste. Marie over Toronto is the ability to stretch the dollar a little further. Mark said, "In Toronto you can buy a condo for \$300,000. Here you can buy a five bedroom house on a one acre property for the same price."

The success Mark has had in working remotely from Sault Ste. Marie is evidence of the potential for IT professionals to pursue alternative work environments. It is also part of a growing trend. Nucleus Research, a global provider of IT research and advisory services, included remote workers as one of the Top 10 IT Trends of 2006. The firm's predictions are based on analysis of thousands of corporate end-user case studies and vendor research.

They cited improved technology applications, increased commuting costs and market conditions as factors that will cause corporations to extend the benefit of working remotely to employees over the next year. They also felt this option will increase the loyalty of the workforce and possibly lower overhead costs for organizations.

"Working from home has given my life a flexibility I otherwise wouldn't have. I tend to get more done in a day, which is good for Side Effects, and it's much easier for me to get everyday tasks done. It's a win-win situation for both of us," said Mark.

ITSSM.com cont'd...

"While under development, this website project was given the internal name of 'IT Come Home'. This served us through the creation of the site as we met with different stakeholders and planned the functionality," said Tom Vair, Executive Director, SSMIC. "The focus was to help retain and bring IT revenue, jobs, projects and companies to the Sault Ste. Marie region."

ITSSM.com has three main components:

1) IT Directory - a directory of IT providers within the region that can be populated and maintained by each company directly through a web interface. Each listing will include an overview of the companies' business, description of products and services, inventory of skill sets (ie, ASP programming, Cisco certification) and contact information.

This directory will enable IT consumers within and external to the region to quickly search local capabilities when products or services are needed. It will also enable IT providers to identify potential partners for collaboration on IT projects.

2) Sault Reconnect – A registration area for migrated technology professionals living outside the region. This section of the website will enable the Innovation Centre to develop partnerships and linkages with local IT providers. Projects, revenue and, potentially, new businesses can be attracted to the Algoma region through regular communication, awareness building and marketing the community and its capabilities.

Until January 31st, the SSMIC is running a **special promotion** where registrants, and those who referred them, can **win a hometown care package**

including a Soo Greyhound jersey and a Mrs. B's pizza.

3) Resources – a number of additional resources will be included on the website to provide further value to the IT community. These include project bidding opportunities, IT events calendar, IT skills development opportunities, information on funding resources, and facility resources available in the community.

Funding for the site was provided by the Community Development Corporation's Local Initiatives Fund and by the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre.

REFER A FRIEND & WIN!!



SAULT RECONNECT
www.itssm.com



Wishing you a bright, safe and very Merry Christmas and New Year!

From your friends at the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre

