

Williams enjoys playing David to marketing industry giants

Sean Williams didn't see himself as an entrepreneur, but when he was "restructured" out of his job with one of the region's larger marketing agencies two years ago, he figured it was a good time to take a leap of faith and start his own independent marketing company.

Williams didn't just land on his feet, he found himself riding a zippy new scooter. With a client portfolio that includes big contracts such as Parks Canada and the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission, as well as smaller firms such as Pinky's Scoopmore Ice Cream, Williams is doing just fine and he has discovered he loves being his own boss.

"I'd always worked for larger companies and never imagined working for myself. I love it. Sure there are challenges, but I enjoy the flexibility. Because of the way my business operates, I can work anywhere, anytime," he says.

His clients love the flexibility as well. Unlike big marketing agencies that smaller businesses simply can't afford to hire on, Sean Williams Marketing offers a lot of experience in a smaller, more manageable package. Instead of having to sign on to a comprehensive — and expensive — marketing strategy, they can just plug his expertise into the area where they need the most help, adding more later on when the time is right or more money becomes available.

"What I've found is that there's a lot of work out there in the lower to mid-level range and there are plenty of opportunities for a company like mine," Williams says. "Smaller businesses want senior experience, but they just can't afford the full deal."

Some businesses or institutions even hire him to act as their marketing director on a short-term basis,



By Joanie Veitch

Sean Williams

either to help bridge the gap while they scout for a permanent employee, or during a particularly demanding time.

"Given the current economic outlook, for a lot of businesses this short-term option really makes sense as they try to figure out how to restructure," Williams says.

Williams, 39, started his marketing career in Toronto. He got a taste for the business by working as a marketing representative for Molson Breweries while studying for a Media Arts degree at Ryerson Polytechnic University.

His next move took him into the thick of the industry at Leo Burnett, an international marketing agency. While he says he loved working at such a large firm, his next role, as marketing director for Nikon Canada, gave him a whole new perspective.

"When I'd first started at Ryerson I was doing photography, so it was nice to get back to that, but it also gave me a different view of the business. Now I was on the client side as opposed to just working for a big agency. I'm glad I got that experience," he says.

When Williams and his wife, who is originally from Newfoundland, decided to move to the East Coast five years ago, he says he had no hesitation. Then, as now, he saw Halifax as a vibrant community with a lot of potential.

Now, along with using his own years of experience in the industry, Williams works with his partner network of other independent companies, such as

Queen Street Studios and Famous

Folks, on marketing initiatives for his clients. This type of collaboration allows independent companies to compete with larger firms, he says,

listing networking organizations

— such as the Atlantic Canada Internet Marketing Association and FUSION Halifax — as great places to meet other like-minded independents.

"My attitude is that it's all about responding to what the client needs. You bring in the right people to do the best job. It works for everyone." ✕