

Robert Skoczen

a high-speed
career connection
to students and
industry



When Robert Skoczen took a Grade 7 computer class, in front of him was far more than a monitor and a keyboard – he saw a tool that had endless potential.

Fascinated with how he could take control of the computer and make it do what he wanted, Sheridan College helped take that passion to new heights.

Now 28, Robert graduated from Sheridan's Computer Science program in 2006, and he's been ridiculously busy (by choice) ever since.

His classes were instrumental in developing his skills, but Robert feels the co-op placements (each four months in length) helped make him immediately employable.

"Obviously the classes are fantastic, the teachers really know what they're talking about," said Robert. "Many instructors have industry experience and some of them still work as programmers."

"But the co-ops were the big game changer," he continued. "There's no substitute for applying what you've learned in a real business environment."

Soon after he had his diploma in his hand, Robert was hired for several contract positions with Sheridan. Those contracts quickly turned into a part-time position as a technologist that he's held for the past five years.

His work ranges from installing new software, to managing and maintaining servers, to getting a new computer lab off the ground.

Robert also runs his own web application business – designing websites, updating content, adding new features and creating functional applications for his clients.

But that's not all. Robert has also been working for the past two years with Sheridan through the FedDev (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario) Applied Research and Commercialization Initiative (ARC).

The ARC initiative matches small- to medium-sized companies with Sheridan faculty and students to conduct applied research, development and innovation activities that help companies become more productive, competitive and ultimately create jobs.

The FedDev projects have enabled Robert to wear several professional hats – project lead, project manager, faculty lead, for example.

The Applied Research projects also took him to the Vancouver Olympics in 2010 where he worked with Spatial View and the Sheridan Visualization Design Institute to develop a Blackberry app that controlled 3D monitors.

"It was revolutionary, very cutting edge at the time," said Robert who was thrilled to attend the Olympics and provide technical support.

Moving from monitors to cafe mochas, Robert recently worked with students from Sheridan's Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology (FAST) on an app called "Geddit" that digitizes the "coffee run."

Expected to be in the market in 2013, this app allows a group of contacts to order and pay for coffee electronically, eliminating the need for gathering change and orders.

A more recent FedDev project has connected him with technology company, Blinkfni. Together, he and a team of Sheridan students are researching technology that will allow users to track children in crowded spaces such as amusement parks or shopping malls.

Though the FedDev-supported technologies differ vastly, one constant is the satisfaction he gets from overseeing the work of other Sheridan students.

"There are often areas of a project that haven't been covered in classes and I'm happy to jump in and fill those learning gaps," he said.

He's modest, but his students look up to him. However, he's quick to point out they usually already have co-op experience and come to a project with the right skills, attitude and ideas.

What does he want to do going forward? Like his career, his aspirations are multi-faceted.

He wants to continue working with Sheridan, and would like to work on more FedDev projects. The applied research with new technologies really gets his blood pumping. He also gets a charge out of helping a company take a prototype to commercialization.

But taking on more projects will depend on his schedule. Completing the student to teacher journey, he has also recently started teaching at Sheridan, leading a hardware/software troubleshooting course.

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