

Jeff Arsenault

B.Sc. Wood Products Processing (2001)

“It’s not Rocket Science, it’s Wood Science!”



Job Title: President & Co-Founder

Company: Human Nature By Design Inc.

Location: Vancouver, BC

Size of the Company: 3-5 employees

Years in Occupation: 10

Education: Bachelor of Science in Biology (Dalhousie University);
Bachelor of Science in Wood Products Processing (University of British Columbia)

After graduating from Dalhousie University with a degree in Biology, Jeff Arsenault worked as a silviculture and forestry surveyor for several years. A pivotal moment in his life came when he met 2 of the 200 Sopron forestry students adopted by UBC during the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary. Unbeknownst to Jeff, working with them on a reforestation project would ultimately inspire him to take his career to the next level – by enrolling in the UBC Wood Products Processing program.

After seeing a job posting on the graduate bulletin board, Jeff landed his first job out of the program at HALCO Software. As a Senior Analyst, he provided detailed consulting and analytical services, and recommendation to clients in the forest products optimization industry. Later, he moved on to Perforex where he worked as a Senior Consultant to develop and implement business management systems for clients across the forest products and other manufacturing sectors. After working as a consultant for ten years and being told he was an expert in his field, Jeff decided to start up his own consulting company; Human Nature By Design Inc. was born.

Key Responsibilities: The primary focus is to provide strategic and operational services to forest products and other manufacturing industries, particularly in the areas of optimization, implementation and strategies, leadership training and development (i.e., building and leveraging intellectual capital), and collaborative problem solving, root-cause and single-variable analysis. Much of the time is spent keeping in touch with people by email and phone, reconnecting with old contacts, and being available for clients when needed.

Skills Required: First and foremost, confidence because it goes a long way in the business world. Second would be leadership, and third, honesty. This job is suited to someone who is creative, open to change, and open to both risk and possibilities.

Work Environment: Jeff spends about 70% of his time working from home, and the other 30% of the time on the road.

What He Loves Most About His Job: The potential!

Previous Employment & Co-op Experience: After working as a silviculture and forest surveyor for 5 years at Pinewood Forestry Consulting Ltd., Jeff enrolled in the Wood Products Processing program. For his co-op work terms, he worked as a Research Assistant at Fortinek Canada Corporation, a Junior Process Control Engineer at Tembec Forest Products, and in the Wood Product Development and Testing department at Canfor Research and Development.

After graduation, Jeff was hired as a Senior Analyst with HALCO Software Systems. After several years, he moved to Perforex Inc. (now a division of PÖYRY Inc.) where he worked as a Senior Consultant.

Most Valued Aspect of the Program: Jeff valued the small class sizes because they allow students to get to know the professors as well as other classmates.

Value of the Degree: The degree has opened doors for Jeff and many of his colleagues. Through the program students learn technical skills, as well as skills that contribute to success in the business world.

Advice for Prospective Students: Be open-minded about the possibilities in the field. Forestry and wood products processing are not just about sawing a log. The industry is crying out for people to fill its managerial positions. Jeff has worked in the industry alongside colleagues who were ex-NASA employees! As he likes to say, "It's not Rocket Science, it's Wood Science!"

Advice for Current Students: Take advantage of opportunities like co-op. Leave home, expand within North America at the very least, if not internationally. This is no longer a North American-based field. Go where you are not comfortable being, and push your boundaries! Most of all, never underestimate what you know, and the *value* of what you know!

Future Prospects: Having co-founded Human Nature By Design Inc. in July 2008, Jeff is in the beginning stages of building it up. In the future, he would like to focus on creating a brand identity. He is also interested in giving back, through volunteering or mentoring (Jeff is currently a mentor in the UBC Faculty of Forestry Tri-Mentoring program). He is also considering pursuing an MBA in the future.