

# Shaun St. Amour

**B.Sc. Wood Products Processing (2003)**

**“It’s a leading edge industry that’s just blossoming, and as people become more environmentally conscious, the industry will grow!”**



**Job Title:** Contractor

**Company:** Say No More Consulting

**Location:** Vancouver, BC

**Years in Occupation:** 2

**Environment:** 75% in the field, 25% at the desk

**Hometown:** Coquitlam, BC

**High School:** Port Moody Senior Secondary

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in Wood Products Processing (University of British Columbia); Building Construction Technology Certificate (BCIT); Project Management with Microsoft program (University of British Columbia)

Imagine starting up your own sustainable housing company from the ground up. That is exactly what Shaun St. Amour dreams of doing.

Five years after graduation, Shaun is working as a contractor to learn more about the construction process and the quality of concrete condos. He will use this knowledge to fuel his passion, which is to start up a sustainable wood homebuilding company called “Footprint Sustainable Housing.” His vision is to build the most innovative, safe, and green communities through the connection of sustainable homes and ecologically responsible minded individuals.

When Shaun applied to UBC, he didn’t even know about the Wood Products Processing program. In fact, he had his heart set on getting into the Engineering program. Unfortunately, there were not enough spaces in the Engineering program for Shaun, instead he got a call from Sandy McKellar, our program’s former recruitment officer. She suggested he consider the Wood Products Processing program since it combines elements from engineering, science and business. At the time Shaun was playing junior hockey, and decided to give the program a shot! Initially he thought he would switch out at the end of first year and go on to study architecture at McGill. A year in the program made all the difference as Shaun realized it was the perfect fit for his interests and goals.

**Key Responsibilities:** As a contractor, Shaun has three main responsibilities: he has to manage the people he hires to do the work; plan, organize and schedule tasks; and perform hands-on inspections.

**Skills Required:** Problem solving skills are of the utmost importance in this position because Shaun constantly has problems thrown at him. It is up to him to figure out the solutions, as well as plan their implementation. It also helps to have a good understanding of quality systems, which Shaun says he picked up through the courses offered in the Wood Products Processing program.

This job would suit someone who enjoys being in a leadership role, is self-motivated, and who can problem solve by themselves. To be a contractor, you have to work well with others, understand the processes, and adapt quickly to changing circumstances. While it was not always a big part of the job, it is now recognized that contractors should have a good understanding of statistics so that they can understand trends and patterns in the building industry.

**Why He Loves His Job:** It allows him to improve his skills while giving him new experiences and opportunities for the future.

**Career Development:** Recent graduates can start out at \$37,000 and work their way up to a managerial role where they would be earning around \$60,000. After that, they can take on an ownership role, either as a Vice-President or part owner, and make upwards of \$80,000.

**Co-op Work Terms:** Shaun's first work term was at an aging sawmill in Prince George where he was involved in performing quality inspections. Shaun remembers it well because it was the first time that he was able to directly apply the knowledge he had gained through the program. Later, Shaun worked at Canwood Furniture, where he found a mentor in the Vice President, Bob Bird. Shaun implemented a quality system at Canwood, and enjoyed it so much that he returned for another work term. Shaun also worked as a Project Coordinator for the UBC Department of Wood Science.

**Previous Employment:** One of Shaun's friends worked at Viceroy for his co-op work term, but that student ended up heading to Penticton after graduation, so Shaun applied for the job. As a Process Engineer at Viceroy Homes in Richmond, BC, Shaun focused on installing new equipment and planning manufacturing processes to cut down on the waste of materials and time. He set up an entire factory, including the distribution area, cabinet factory, wood shop, and spraying area. After that experience, Shaun knew that running his own business would be a piece of cake.

**Advice for Prospective Students:** This degree is more applicable to the real world than most degree programs out there. Shaun says that of the students who graduated with him, most are in management positions at some level or scale. The fact that this degree allows you to hop into a managerial role right after graduation is pretty awesome.

**Advice for Current Students:** Shaun is a big proponent of exploring the industry by going to the industry. While Shaun was an undergrad, he cold-called a number of companies to ask if he could tour their facilities. By going out and seeing 20 different factories, Shaun was able to learn about the various opportunities out there and then use these experiences to focus his interests. As for students in the co-op program, Shaun would recommend that they go out and see the world! His co-op work terms took him to Prince George and Penticton. Going abroad to Australia, Africa, or Japan would just make the experience that much more interesting!