



## College grad's soft skills pave way to career

By Richard Lyall

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Graduates of George Brown College's residential construction program have gone on to work for industry heavyweights such as Great Gulf and Tridel.

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If he hadn't learned to build relationships with T-shirt seekers, who knows if Mandeep Sarna would have been hired to help The Daniels Corporation build condominiums.

The 22-year-old, who was hired by the prominent builder to be a junior estimator at their Eaton Centre head office in Toronto last year after graduating from George Brown College's residential construction management certificate program, attributes his early career success to working for his parents from the

age of 10, selling hip-hop T-shirts by building relationships one at a time as customers sorted through the Sarna family's wares in their Toronto store.

The soft skills he developed as a boy and teenager and an insatiable curiosity made him stand out, says George Brown professor Bill Hawryschuk, who taught Sarna at the college's Angelo Del Zotto School of Construction Management during the 2015 program's 14-week curriculum ahead of a 14-week job-site internship.

When the students graduate, they go on to junior positions such as estimators, residential project managers, project coordinators, site coordinators and superintendents.

"Mandeep stood out from everyone else because he has really good people skills," Hawryschuk said.

"He's very courteous and aware of how he makes other people feel. I'd rather have someone like that than someone with 35 years of experience who is loud and confrontational," he says. That approach just doesn't work. You've got to have some leadership skills to get people's cooperation and develop relationships, including with the trades you deal with. He's a leader."

While Sarna has been a strong hire, Del Zotto School program coordinator Bill Nichols says at least 90 per cent of the graduates in the four years of the certificate program have gone on to work for industry heavyweights such as Tridel, Great Gulf, Menkes, Greenpark, Lindvest, Lakeview, Remington and Arista.

"The certificate program not only gives the students fantastic experience on site, but it puts them in direct contact with the very people who could give them a job at the end of the program," says Bill Nichols, program coordinator. "It's a terrific partnership with the program sponsor RESCON, and it has been a huge benefit for our students to get a leg up to kick-start their careers."

Nichols and Hawryschuk hosted this year's class at a luncheon at the college's lakeshore campus to meet the builders they might place with and eventually work for.

Among the builders in attendance, Peter De Biasio, Lindvest's vice-president of construction, was impressed by this year's class and emphasized that he wasn't worried about their lack of experience.

"I always tell them, 'don't worry about your skills. We'll get you there,'" says De Biasio, whose company has hired two grads previously. "It's your attitude that matters."

For more on the program, please contact me or visit <http://bit.ly/25EPRtn>.

GTA's residential strike update. The strike officially ended June 16th. Trades without agreements will have their remaining issues settled through binding arbitration.

Builders currently are assessing delays noting that the impact of the strike will depend on the status of houses and projects before the strike began.

Contact your builder to find out the status of your new home.