

Employee Profile: Gordon Huntley



Gordon Huntley is an associate software engineer with Lockheed Martin Canada, one of the world's top defence companies. A 23-year old professional and recent graduate of Dalhousie University's computer science program, Gordon is making his mark in the industry and proving that young people with ambition, skill and determination can find and build successful careers in Nova Scotia.

In this interview with NSBI, Gordon gave an inside look into the work he is doing at Lockheed Martin. Delving deeper into his experience both as a student and as a professional software engineer, Gordon answered top-of-mind questions - like 'What will I do with my degree?' - and gave some insight into how he found his dream job out of the gate.

In a time when the economy is tightening and the future seems uncertain, this young and ambitious computer science graduate is proving that finding a job you love is easy when you know where to look and you know how to sell yourself.

Q. Why did you decide to pursue a computer science degree?

A. I knew I wanted to go to Dalhousie University. I was 19 and wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to do. Some people wanted to travel; I was really conservative and stayed local. When I left high school, I was more into the arts. I was really good with math and computers, but I didn't have a passion for them at the time. However, I knew this would be a solid career and I was thinking long-term. A lot of people graduating high school aren't really sure what they want to take, but looking back, I don't think I would have done anything differently.

Q. How did you find your current job at Lockheed Martin? Why did you choose this job over other opportunities?

A. When I graduated last year, there were a lot of jobs available in my field. When I was approaching graduation, I was doing a lot of my own research about what I wanted to do and where I wanted to work. I was looking at different resources, like Careerbeacon.com and other job sites. I knew that I wanted to stay in Nova Scotia, but I was weighing out my options. I looked in to going out west, but I found the salary compared to the cost of living wasn't any more competitive than at home.

I was able to find what I was specifically interested in at Lockheed Martin. In the interview, the company mentioned this position where I could work with audio as a software engineer – something I really liked in school. This position would focus on the Navy's radio simulation used during their

training. That's the job I'm in right now. The company really listened to my interests beyond technology, in arts and music, and offered me a position that was extremely tailored.

Q. What do you do?

A. I am currently a communications expert for the Operations Room Team Trainer (ORTT), which is the name of the project I work on. We do upgrades and manage the simulation facility that shares the ORTT name. This facility is one of a kind and has multiple rooms that simulate various ships at the same time. Naval officers can't always be trained on a ship, so what they do is learn what it's like to be on a team and on a real ship.

My job is to help design the systems we use to simulate the radios and maintain them every day. In some cases, you have 30-year old machines converting information to state-of-the-art machines, so there are a lot of pieces of the puzzle. You have to know how to deal with them and manage any challenges. If something isn't working, I would be the first line of defence to make sure it's resolved – for example, a headset isn't working, or a certain radio isn't functioning properly.

Q. What other kinds of opportunities have you been exposed to in this job?

A. There have been lots of opportunities. They're already talking about putting me in team leadership courses. After my first month in the job, Lockheed sent me just outside of Washington for communications-related training. I became specialized in my field within a very short amount of time.

I've done some recruiting at Dalhousie University as well. In the six months that I have been working at Lockheed Martin, there have been two different times that I have been sent to talk to future graduates. As a former student, I probably would have applied to Lockheed Martin sooner had I met someone who worked here. You get to see what a new graduate like me is doing right now in an entry-level job as opposed to someone who is senior in the company telling you what you could be doing someday.

Q. What other kinds of jobs are offered at Lockheed Martin in Halifax?

A. Everything is done based on a project. If you're hired at Lockheed Martin, you're hired on as a member of a team working on a specific project. I am part of the ORTT project. For that specific project, there can be a lot of code-heavy jobs, the graphical systems, but there are also positions with testers who are working directly with the navy and understand how the system works. There are also people who do software maintenance.

For the Halifax Class Modernization (HCM) project, the positions range from software engineers to computer systems analysts – it really runs the gambit. There will be a lot of hiring going on over the next few years, and Lockheed is actually building a large facility in Dartmouth as part of the project.

Q. Why should people consider a career at Lockheed Martin?

A. For young graduates, Lockheed Martin does a really good job of stepping up and providing specific opportunities that suit your interests; seeking out your strengths. I did other interviews where I wasn't really sure what the job had to offer or if I would even like it. Even after the interview with Lockheed, I knew where I would fit in, and they tailored a position for me that really suited my interests. I also had a sense of confidence leaving the interview knowing there would be job security, which is important now - in this economy. This was important for me and should be important for everyone looking for a job when they graduate.