Name of Business	**Sector of Activity**
Rosenau Transport Ltd.	Information Technology
Community	**Partner Agency**
Edmonton, Alberta	Gateway Association

Gateway Association

ROSENAU® TRANSPORT LTD.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

Jason's passion for computers and technology has been obvious since high school, and no one was surprised that he went on to excel in his Information and Communications Technology program at Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. But when his IT career began, he was quickly confronted with the need for a skill set that he had never been taught – or even been told about – in any of his training. Instead of finding himself in a back office working on hardware as he had imagined and hoped, he was in an entry level role providing customer service. It wasn't just technical skills that he needed in this role, but interpersonal skills; skills such as active listening and communication. How had he gotten this far, without being aware of such an important part of his chosen field?

EXPERIENCE IS A TOUGH TEACHER

Jason did eventually develop these hidden requirements for success in IT, but he learned the hard way. Lacking these skills cost him a position early in his career. Immediately after this disappointment, while searching for his next opportunity Jason took time to reflect and re-evaluate. He was confident in his technical skills, but he realized that in his past role he had failed to take time to get to know the people around him. He did not demonstrate communication skills, and could not honestly say that he had been a strong team member.

In hindsight, it became clear to Jason that his job is as much (if not more) spending time with people communicating the outcomes of work he does on IT systems, as it is spending time on computers

doing that work. What's more, he recognized that the time he spends communicating the work he does, requires him to have what are often called "soft skills": communication, active listening, conflict management. Skills he didn't know he needed. Once he identified this gap in his professional skill set, Jason dedicated time to learn and grow in these areas. Jason became more self-aware and recognized that getting to know people – to learn their goals and approaches – is crucial to being able to communicate with them well and accomplish goals together in a work context.

THE PAYOFF

At his next opportunity, Jason applied his new understanding and skills, and within 6 months he was promoted to team lead. Soon after, he was head hunted for a role in another company. His technical skills, when combined with interpersonal skills, set his career in the IT industry on an upwards path.

THE WHY

No one was there to tell Jason about the importance of soft skills, to tell him what to expect, or explain to him why everyone begins with an entry role in customer service. In fact, he had no mentor for the first 5 years of his career. And while he had managers who would occasionally offer advice, Jason gained these key insights from his own experience, by reflecting on his own setbacks. Jason recognizes that he is not alone in being unaware of the importance of soft skills when entering the IT field; it isn't something that is talked about in Information and Communication Technology programs. Since he is aware of this gap, Jason hosts protégés from the MentorAbility program so that he can share with them what he had wished someone had told him earlier: working in IT isn't just about the hardware and software, it's about the people too.

FILLING THE GAPS

Are you someone who is working in a field with these gaps of awareness? Are there things that you have learned in your profession you wish someone had told you earlier? Reach out to a MentorAbility partner today so that your experience can help a protégé better understand your field.

MentorAbility is a program that pairs an employer and someone seeking job exploration, if you want to learn more, click here.

The Canadian Association for Supported Employment
Association canadienne de soutien à l'emploi