

## ***Finding common ground enhances learning***

For the past two years, Blake Smith has worked as the Marketing Manager with Wilsons Fuel Co. Limited in Halifax. In that time, he's learned a tremendous amount about the industry, client expectations and effective supervision. However, he knew there was more to learn – and more he could share with staff and contribute to his company.

“I wanted to give back to my employees and to my employer,” says Blake. “I wanted to learn new skills and build a better team. I wanted to be exposed to new ideas.”

Blake achieved that – and more – by completing the [Skills for New Managers](#) certificate at Saint Mary's University. In particular, he found the discussions, exercises and information about effective planning to be relevant and helpful. “We all have these plans in our mind,” he notes, “but it's not enough to have a plan in your head. You need to be able to communicate your plan and implement it successfully.”

The two-day course on applying strategic thinking helped Blake see old issues in a new light. “I developed fresh perspectives and innovative approaches. The learning was hands on, and I could easily put into practice what I learned.”

As with all SMU certificate programs, engagement is a critical component. For Blake, it quickly became apparent that even though participants were from different sectors, different industries and held different jobs, the problems they faced were universal. “We got to know one another and one another's business,” he says. “We discovered common ground, and we were able to share solutions.”

That connection, Blake adds, was made easier and stronger by being in the same room together at the same time. “You can't substitute the face-to-face environment. It's enhanced learning.”



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