

hit the region and business fell off. A mother of four who has to stop and tally her grandchildren (she has 11, plus four great-grandkids), Stelkia wanted assurance that if and when she chose to develop, the deal would be on her terms and in her family's best interest.

Van Maren won her over with his willingness to collaborate and pressure-free tactics, including months of meeting face-to-face, with nary a mention of paperwork. "I believe in partnership and as we went along I really trusted Eric; he was really true to his word," Stelkia says. Conversely, Van Maren was surprised by Stelkia's ability to separate emotion from business, which she demonstrated by ending one particularly tense negotiation with the offer of a hug.

Together, the two negotiated a "significant seven-figure sum" for Stelkia and an ambitious \$100-million development, but they also achieved a rare level of trust to complete the sensitive transaction, which eventually gave rise to an unconventional friendship. Due to federal regulations, the Osoyoos Indian Band was required to approve the 99-year lease in a referendum. It did handily, with nearly 70 per cent voting in support. Van Maren credits his bond with Stelkia for bringing the rest of the band on board. "Jane was very outspoken about how this was good, not only for her but for the band as a whole," Van Maren says, adding the band can expect to gain \$1,500 per unit sold plus an estimated \$400,000 to \$500,000 in annual net tax revenue.

As for Stelkia, she's one of the first 30 people to have purchased the first phase of 57 cottages, expected to break ground early this fall and complete next spring. But that doesn't mean she'll be slowing down anytime soon. "I don't know about taking it easy," she says, "but I'll enjoy it."

— Jessica Barrett



SOCIAL CLIMBER:
Christabel Shaler is a Facebook addict who has turned her habit into a career as the online voice of Nature's Path, makers of organic breakfast foods

Professional Friends

Looking for a job? Forget about teachers' college or trade school: work on your social media skills

In her second-floor cubicle in an office with walls painted pumpkin orange, 28-year-old Christabel Shaler is eating gluten-free cereal with almond milk and checking Facebook. A status update she posted a few hours earlier has already drawn 14 comments and 56 Likes from among her 135,991 Facebook fans. She clicks the refresh button and a new comment shows up. "I'm so plugged in I have to make myself take breaks," Shaler explains, whipping through open win-

dows on her 21.5-inch iMac screen with a twitch of the mouse. "I'm constantly online checking."

Facebook addiction is hardly a problem in her position. Shaler was recently hired to fill the new post of social media specialist at Nature's Path Foods Inc. in Richmond, a giant in organic breakfast foods, with more than 400 employees and \$200 million in annual sales.

Hers is a hot job title in today's employment market. "It's not like a tidal wave, but

people are starting to realize that they actually need somebody to specifically handle their social media," says Sandra Miles of Vancouver recruitment firm Miles Employment Group. "What might have been a marketing job is now emerging as its own job because it's becoming such a big part of businesses' agendas."

A casual glance at job search engine Indeed.ca confirms the local demand. In the Vancouver market, 139 job postings include the search term "social media," compared to relatively meager demand for more traditional occupations, such as "teacher" (94 hits) and "carpenter" (56 hits). Locally, Lululemon Athletica Canada Inc., London Drugs Ltd. and the Vancouver Opera have all brought on social media experts in recent years.

Shaler was hired in January to manage

Nature's Path's expanding social media universe, which includes the Facebook Page, a Twitter account with 7,302 followers, a blog, a YouTube channel and promotions on the company website. "There's really no formal training," she explains. "You can't hire someone based on five or 10 years of experience because that doesn't exist."

In addition to an interdisciplinary humanities degree from UBC, what Shaler brings to the job is a mix of technical and human savvy that defines the new generation of social media gurus: equal parts computer geek, social butterfly and spin doctor. "It's this really delicate balance of sharing interesting information, facilitating conversation [and] allowing people to feel heard," she explains.

Shaler boasts of an impressive 60,000 additional Facebook Likes since she started at Nature's Path in January, a boost in engagement (a measure of user-posted comments) of 117 per cent. But is just having hordes of Facebook devotees enough?

"These metrics need to be linked to trial and purchase and repurchase because otherwise people are going to say, 'Well, what did it do for my bottom line?'" warns Paul Cubbon, a marketing instructor at UBC's Sauder School of Business.

At Nature's Path, the touchy question of if and how to monetize social media efforts has yet to be tackled. "Right now, we're not trying to use it as a promo tool," says Maria Emmer-Aanes, director of marketing and communications. "But will we use the 130,000 [Facebook] base someday to help us bring new consumers into the fold? Yeah, we'd like to."

Shaler bites into a piece of a peeled orange sitting on her desk. Below a nearby window, employee vegetable beds soak up the wan Richmond sun. "We'll never prioritize growth over integrity," she says. "But at the same time growth is pretty cool." A computer alert signals that someone, somewhere out in the Twitterverse, has just mentioned a Nature's Path cereal. Shaler fires off a perfunctory Tweet in response: "@insanityworks I love eating cereal for lunch too!!"

— Remy Scalza

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