Boosting Calgary’s technology talent

New government-supported programs to help develop entrepreneurial and tech talent locally

Calgary is well known for a resilient workforce full of business savvy, engineering innovation and entrepreneurial fortitude. However, the city today is struggling to grow a strong technology talent pool. Right now, employers are trying to fill more than 1,000 software engineer and developer jobs locally.

To address that gap, a number of organizations, including all four post-secondary institutions in Calgary (Bow Valley College, SAIT, University of Calgary and Mount Royal University), have recently launched programs and initiatives aimed at helping the workforce be future-proof and adaptable for the fast-moving digital economy.

The Government of Alberta has committed to 3,000 new tech-training spots, and Calgary Economic Development is working with the tech community to support re-skilling. EvolveU is one of the programs helping professionals pivot their careers to work in technology; the not-for-profit program is supported by Rainforest Alberta, Calgary Economic Development and the Hunter Family Foundation.

“EvolveU is excited to partner with local employers like Benevity, ATB and TELUS to address talent gaps,” says Allison Swelin, EvolveU’s executive director. “Full-stack developers are in demand across all industries, so our full-time, six-month program launching in September focuses on building individuals with that skill set through the lens of practical application and project-based experiences to ensure they are job-ready.”

In addition to increasing technical skills, the city also continues to build upon its entrepreneurial roots. The Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking at the University of Calgary supports diversification in Calgary and building resilience into the community. More than a dozen programs encourage students to identify opportunities, collaborate effectively and embrace sustainability — essential skills for today’s global workforce.

Startup Calgary, Lighthouse Labs and Chic Geek are other examples of organizations assisting entrepreneurs and professionals in a tech-focused role.

“Programs like these will build a pipeline of local high-quality professionals in relatively short order to address the shortage and power the prospects of organizations,” says Greg Hart, learning experience developer and founder at Inception University. “It will also assist in the production of entrepreneurial expansion of the tech sector. All of this will lead to a significant increase in Calgary’s innovation readiness, and that is the key to the future economic prospects for any city.”

EvolveU will hold an information session on June 7. Applications for the full stack developer program are open until June 8, 2018.

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