

MBA Alumni Career Profile

Sasha Hodder – Vice President, Sales at NEI Investments

Tell your own story. Where were you in terms of your professional career, before you started the program. Where has the MBA taken you professionally?

Before obtaining my MBA from the Wilfrid Laurier School of Business and Economics, I felt as though I was in a stagnant role with Franklin Templeton Investments, as a Business Development Manager. There seemed to be no chance of moving into a higher position without further education, or several years of experience. I decided to apply for my MBA, and was accepted into the full-time program. Upon graduation, I was hired as Vice President of Sales with NEI Investments.



Please tell us about your organization, your current role and your motivation for getting involved.

NEI Investments is a 100% Canadian-owned investment firm with close to \$5 billion in assets under management, and the home of Canada's largest Socially Responsible Investing management team. We offer investors unique access to top independent money managers through high quality investment solutions in two fund families, Northwest Funds and Ethical Funds. As Vice President of Sales, I am responsible for the development and oversight of NEI's presence in the retail investment community. I was motivated to join this company as a direct result of my time at Laurier. While studying, I was the co-founder and president of the Laurier MBA Net Impact Chapter, and through this involvement I developed a strong passion for environmental issues. My company works very hard to ensure Canada's businesses are operating in the most environmentally and socially responsible way possible. As Canada's leader in socially responsible investing for 25 years, we have been helping investors make money – and make a difference. If a company in our portfolios is operating in a manner with which we do not agree, we encourage them to adopt more sustainable behavior through management engagement and shareholder action such as proxy voting.

What Career Development did you engage in at Laurier during your studies?

While studying at Laurier I took part in every career development opportunity that was available to me. The Laurier MBA Career Centre had dedicated staff members who helped me tremendously with my resumé writing, job interview skills, and provided me several connections within the business world. We had excellent guest speakers and networking events throughout the year, and I didn't miss a single one.

How was networking a part of your career success and how does it continue to be important in the work you do?

The Laurier MBA Networking events provided a great opportunity to practice developing a comfort level when talking about yourself, your skills and your ambitions to potential employers or co-workers. In my current role, that 'elevator speech' is a crucial factor in gaining the attention of a potential client. Being confident at articulating your strengths is so important in today's fast-paced business community; it inspires confidence in potential clients/investors/employers. The Laurier MBA Networking events were a wonderful training ground in this skill.

Provide information about the types of skills, education and experience required to move into your career.

In order to move into my career, a person usually has 10+ years of experience in the investment management industry. In order to be successful in this role, a strong work ethic, outgoing personality and sophisticated investment knowledge are required. The MBA is not mandatory, but it allowed me to become one of Canada's youngest Vice Presidents of Sales in the Mutual Fund Industry. I believe the MBA program prepared me for working long hours, and proved to me what the brain and body are capable of doing when pushed to their maximum. The group work component also taught me a lot about interacting with all different types of personalities.

Please discuss any future trends or future needs that you are aware of in your career area.

I believe Socially Responsible Investing is still in its infancy. As the industry progresses, there will be significant areas of growth, leading to a better Canada for our future. Fields such as "Impact Investing" and "Micro-Capital" are starting to gain popularity among large institutional investors looking to provide their clients with a return on investment, while helping to improve some of the largest problems facing humanity.

Any final advice for students interested in a career in your area?

I strongly recommend anyone interested in improving their professional career to invest the 12 short months required to obtain their MBA from Laurier. While you are there, get involved in the multitude of extra-curricular activities the program has to offer. You will find many like-minded individuals who may become long-lasting friends and business partners. Canada needs innovative, educated minds to help create a progressive, sustainable and successful future. I guarantee you will not regret the decision.