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Prepared by  
Lochaven  
Consulting



In Partnership  
with The City  
of Vernon

# Glossary of Key Terms

The following notes define a number of key terms used throughout the following narrative. Note they are defined here to better explain and confirm the methodology and analyses that follow, nothing more. Importantly these are presented for clarification rather than an academic debate. As such there may be small or slight differences between what is presented here and what might be found in the academic literature, which in and of itself is sparse and somewhat inconsistent. However, these differences do not measurably impact on the overall veracity of the results of this investigation.

## **Agile Workforce**

Adaptable and readily available workers across multiple disciplines/vocations. Typically, as presented herein includes independent and non-resident workers for specific tasks/projects.

## **Contingent Work**

Non-permanent work, typically on a contract or per-project basis.

## **Corporate Refugee/Remote Worker**

Someone who works outside the confines of an employer's traditional office setting.

## **Exported Services**

As presented herein includes the provision of services to customers outside the host community, either in person or electronically.

## **Gig Economy**

An economy of market systems that facilitate the use of independent workers, freelancers, contractors, and alike for specific task/project-based assignments.

## **Hidden Professional**

A Hidden Professional is: (a) a resident of the municipality who either owns a business or works for others; AND (b) an individual who operates from locations that are neither retail, commercial, nor industrial space; AND (c) an individual who exports services or is available to export services.

## **Knowledge Economy**

An economy where growth is more dependent on the quality, quantity, and accessibility of knowledge-intensive aspects (intellectual capital) to generate productivity.

## **Knowledge Transfer**

Knowledge transfer is the process that seeks to organize, create, capture or distribute knowledge and ensure its availability for future users. Includes the theory that knowledge can be spread by demonstrations of its successful application.

## **Loneliness Epidemic**

The real or perceived feeling of being lonely. A significant characteristic (social isolation) experienced by many Hidden Professionals. Often a result of their adopted work environment, e.g. working alone in a café.

## **Micro-Influencer**

A social influencer that is more relatable for some reason or other to an individual in regards to a specifically identified characteristic or trait. An individual who may not have a high number of "followers" but has a high engagement level with those followers.

## **Placemaking**

A concept that postulates that the quality of a place is an increasingly important factor in terms of a community's vitality and talent prosperity—includes factors that influence someone's decision in terms of deciding on a place to live, a place to visit, and a place to do business.

## **Resident Staff**

Someone who works within the confines of a traditional work situation, i.e. within an office setting.

## **Solopreneur**

An individual who sets up and operates a business on their own.

## **Task-Oriented Platforms**

An online platform that allows professionals to connect with other professionals globally to assist in a variety of tasks (e.g. graphic designing, accounting, and other typically professional services).



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## Foreword

Hidden Professionals, today's mobile home-based entrepreneurs, contingent workers, freelancers, or corporate refugees (call them what you will) are an important part of our knowledge-based economy. Globally there is a growing dependence on knowledge-based services where essentially all that is needed to operate a business or to practice a vocation is a phone and a computer with internet access. While there is an expanding body of literature that speaks to the changing trends and realities of workforce dynamics, there is surprisingly little research regarding the benefits and needs of Hidden Professionals, whether they are either self-employed or employees.

Yet, it is understood that business owners and professionals are becoming increasingly free footed and an ever-growing number of professionals are making one community their home while earning their living exporting their services and abilities.

While less visible and less recognizable than typical workforce or enterprise typologies, Hidden Professional's in a municipality provide measurable and meaningful socio-economic contributions to those municipalities in which they reside in. With some dedicated attention and support, this enterprise/workforce cohort represents a serious and important economic asset from which municipal sustainability and prosperity can and should be further enhanced.

Given the commonly missed opportunity to support Hidden Professionals, due to them historically being 'hidden' and the emerging complexities in the modern day world, our team believes it to be prudent to start the conversation and to shed some light into the darkness on this expanding enterprise/workforce cohort in our expanding knowledge-based global society.

Wayne Robert MBA





# 1. BACKGROUND

## Introduction

*Hidden Professionals are an untapped, unrecognized, and underappreciated driver of local economies. To aggravate matters, because they are seemingly not large enough to be seen as influential stakeholders by local governments and are hard to reach for inclusion into key local economic development policy decisions, the need for and subsequent design of incentives and supports tend to focus on the traditional “bricks and mortar” operations. This loss of attention can have significant unintended consequences that erode a municipality’s overall prosperity.*

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Communities around the world are experiencing unprecedented demands from local citizens to not only attain economic growth, increase citizens wealth, but to also improve quality of life. All while facing new levels and complexities of challenges such as increased globalization, political/country partnership uncertainty, new levels of competition for attracting business and citizens the like. In order for communities to grow and improve by attracting and retaining development, residents, and jobs all while balancing an increased community’s quality of life is daunting, to say the least.

In order to at best keep pace with this ever-growing demand environment communities will need all economic contributors and sectors are contributing to their full potential. In order for this to occur, communities are under considerable pressure to understand what they need to do to enhance—and in some cases even preserve—their local vitality.

A common economic contributor that is left behind or ignored is the Hidden Professional. While poorly understood by many Economic Development professionals, Hidden Professionals play a significant role in community prosperity through their local spending, investment, employment generation, knowledge sharing, contributions to local diversity and competitiveness, and so forth. Yet, there is still little known about their socio-economic contributions are their needs.



*Hidden Professionals offer what most communities consider an ideal all in one package – a young, educated, highly skilled and well-paid workforce together with a thriving entrepreneurial and enterprise sector.*



## What this Report Reveals

This report is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of the concept nor fully set out all of the evidence with respect to Hidden Professionals. However, it does provide a cursory macro-level overview of the phenomena, introduces and explores some of the macro influencers, and highlights some of this enterprise/workforce sub-classifications socio-economic contributions. Further, this research was flushed out if you will and tested in a specific case study focused on the North Okanagan. The purpose of the work and this report is to create a dialogue for communities and economic development practitioners to begin to think about Hidden Professionals as a valuable economic base that deserves recognition and inclusion in traditional Business Retention and Expansion, entrepreneurial development, workforce development and investment attraction initiatives.

*Hidden Professionals are typically invisible in terms of traditional economic and workforce analyses, yet their impacts and contributions to local growth and development can be larger than many of the other more traditional sectors.*

## Objectives of the Research

The research conducted as part of this paper was focused on two primary objectives:

1. A more meaningful appreciation of the Hidden Professional movement; and
2. A better understanding of the phenomena (Hidden Professionals) within the North Okanagan.

The duality of these objectives has allowed for the identification of benefits and a focus for ongoing efforts to continue its growth and success.



## Methodological Approach

The research effort for this report incorporated a two-pronged approach. Overall it included the collection and articulation of key themes and then these were tested specifically within a case study of the North Okanagan.

In the first instance, explorative research was undertaken and included a review of secondary sources. Collectively the evidence was somewhat inconsistent inasmuch as there are varying opinions in respect to terminology and concepts. Therefore, from the explorative research findings, a descriptive research approach and tools were formalized and implemented to gather further, more in-depth information to more fully round out the investigation. This descriptive research included surveys, primary interviews, and group discussions of those considered (self-identified) as Hidden Professionals. These subsequent efforts were focused on testing the hypothesis that the numbers of Hidden Professionals within the North Okanagan is significant and their contributions are consequential.



## The Consulting Team: Lochaven Consulting

Lochaven Consulting, headquartered in Vernon, British Columbia and Calgary, Alberta, originally proposed this project to key economic development authorities within the North Okanagan Region. This project was proposed as a valuable knowledge building exercise in the broader effort to better identify and understand the multiple modern-day determinants of economic growth and development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and to share these insights to positively affect the practice of local economic development within the region.

Lochaven Consulting is a boutique firm with a global perspective on the multiple aspects of local economic development from policy analyses, sector investigations, strategic planning and implementation; to economic impact assessments (EIA), private sector development programming, business planning and feasibility studies; through to program evaluation and monitoring.

Our mission is:

*to provide governments, communities, and businesses worldwide with sustainable solutions for economic and social development.*

We are known as a client-centred firm with a proven global reputation of excellence in economic development and private sector programming. We emphasize collaborative working arrangements that assist our clients to strengthen their abilities to identify opportunities, address problems, and proactively meet the challenges of economic, social, and technological change in today's modern world.

Lochaven is acknowledged globally as thought leaders and is often engaged in the development of knowledge products on a broad range of economic development topics. Given this experience, the company through its partners and principles maintain significant experience and familiarity with the markets/business practices throughout Canada and the United States, Eastern and Western Europe (including but not limited to Hungary, Czech Republic, France, Slovakia, Poland, The Russian Federation, and Ukraine); China; Panama, Columbia and Southeast Asia (including but not limited to Indonesia and the Philippines).

The company and its partners have assisted in the design, development, and implementation of effective strategies, programs and special initiatives on behalf of a broad range of public and private sector interests; numerous communities and regions worldwide; provincial, national and foreign governments; large NGO's; multinational companies; international organizations; and, multilateral development organizations/authorities.





## 2. HIDDEN PROFESSIONALS AS A MOVEMENT

Although there are concepts related to Hidden Professionals that are becoming colloquial buzzwords, there is still not a true definition of Hidden Professionals. Further, also somewhat confusing in the mix, there is an absence of consensus as to the realm and reach of a “gig economy”. Definitional incompatibility across data sources is problematic in any attempt to fully articulate the characteristics of Hidden Professionals and the benefits associated therefrom. Regardless of how a community defines this hidden sector, identifying that they do exist and that there is an opportunity to support them is a start.

In order to begin to better understand these enterprises/workers and the movement they represent, there are some internal and external pre-conditions that provide useful insights into why and how they exist. Beyond that, there is a range of notable findings that were collected during the research and as a consequence of the primary research. These observations have clear implications for subsequent discussions on the relative importance of the phenomena and ways/means to support ongoing development.

*Hidden Professionals are evidenced across multiple industries and multiple sectors – they’re a dynamic segment that make positive contributions to local communities. Yet, much of these data points are unknown.*



### Internal Influencers (The Holding Environment)

The conditions under which someone can be at their best and grow is what is commonly referred to as a “holding environment” – a physical, social, and psychological space to be effective in their work. For independent workers, such as Hidden Professionals, a unique holding environment is essential. It must be cultivated and properly maintained otherwise the individual will return to a more traditional employment model. This may seem counterintuitive, the return to a traditional employment role, but social inclusion and efficiencies are integral to long-term success for a Hidden Professional.

Some of the common aspects of a positive holding environment include place, routines, purpose, and people.

*I was ready to close my doors. After 10 years of running a million-dollar operation I grew bored of working in my basement. My staff were scattered across the country and I needed that social outlet. So, I decided to bring the team together into one physical office space.*

*- Hidden Professional*

### Place

Disconnected from a corporate office, finding a place to work that will mitigate the challenges of the distractions and pressures, as well as find a place that is the “office” for those moments of creative solitude is critical. Often, work may be portable, yet having somewhere to retreat is important.

### Routines

Using routines to enhance focus and performance is important. Of course, each individual’s needs and work style are very different. This is often why a pre-set office culture and work atmosphere are not desirable for everyone. Open workspaces or coworking spaces are also not panaceas. Rather finding that balance between open space, closed offices, quiet rooms, talking spaces and so forth is important for all Hidden Professionals. A copy and paste of random concept design will typically be ineffectual.

### Purpose

More often than not, many Hidden Professionals, be they self-employed or employees, are seeking deeper purpose in their lives and their work. This desired level of purpose creates a bridge between their personal interests and work motivations.

### People

Human-beings are social creatures. For Hidden Professionals, an area of potential concern may arise from the “loneliness epidemic”. Social isolation can be a real danger, and as such Hidden Professionals strive to avoid it. Paradoxically many are ambivalent about traditional formal peer groups. Hidden Professionals need to have a social release to assist them in pushing through challenging times and to support them to continue to take the risks their work may entail. The importance of propinquity for Hidden Professionals relates directly to their needs as humans. By creating environments for further personal connections perpetuates success.

The context and circumstances of the resident holding environment make a vast difference in a Hidden Professional’s ability to sustain productivity, endure anxiety, and turn challenging moments and feelings into sources of creativity and growth.

*As an IT professional who works remotely it would be extremely beneficial to have access to a shared office space with proper facilities (e.g. high-speed internet) that can be used for work and networking with like-minded people. I know that Revelstoke has opened one recently.*

*The availability of fibre optic internet has provided me with the means to work from home at a long-time job that I had left in Ontario.*

- Hidden Professional

*As a professional who works from my home, I miss the opportunity for social interaction and the ability to connect with other like-minded people. The truth is it has impacted my business effectiveness.*

- Hidden Professional



*For more than 30 years, technological advancements have had a profound influence on shaping the way we work. This exponential advancement is expected to continue and shape the next 15 years.*

### External Socio-Economic Influencers

Beyond the Holding Environment the increasing popularity of working as a Hidden Professional is in large measure a consequence of selected external socio-economic influencers such as but not limited to there being an increased willingness by many employers and better systems of management/communications to allow working at home or off-site and an increasing level of public awareness and priority about work-life balance. Additionally, to increased accessibility to key internet and technology systems that set the stage for an emergence of Hidden Professionals.

Globalization complemented by amazingly innovative and dynamic changes in technologies and knowledge networks have and will continue to have an influence on the presence and success of Hidden Professionals. Understanding some of these key developments is an important part of defining the segment, its prospects for growth and continued/enhanced success, and relevant policy and programming needs going forward.

Global trends have increased the popularity of working as a Hidden Professional.



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### Business Trends



1. The continuous war on talent<sup>1</sup> for corporations of all size to attract and retain top talented staff.
2. Corporate philosophies of staffing and resource allocation. How corporations are willing to engage talent.
3. A shift in the way enterprises evaluates the performance of their employees from focusing on the amount of time an employee stays in the office to focusing on the amount and quality of work accomplished.
4. Growth in Soloprenuer opportunities.

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### Economic Trends



1. Growth of the knowledge-intensive economy.
2. The decline in traditional manufacturing.
3. Shifts in the economy (Gig Economy/Globalization).
4. Impacts of Economic Conditions.

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### Societal Trends



1. Greater independence and flexibility desires of Hidden Professionals.
2. Ability, ease and acceptance of travel as part of the work culture.
3. Quality of life desires of employees.
4. Both partners within the household wanting to be engaged in the workforce while remaining work-life balance.

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### Technological Trends



1. Enabling technologies (Task-oriented platforms) and social collaboration/messaging tools
2. Automation and Machine learning
3. Increase access to powerful, reliable and affordable connectivity.
4. Use of Web 2.0<sup>2</sup> technologies to connect the internal efforts of employees and to extend the organization's reach to customers, partners, and suppliers.

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### Financial Trends



1. Transaction costs of technology
2. Companies benefit greatly from increased labour flexibility as they can hire workers with different skill levels to work at different times while paying them only for the work they perform.
3. Corporations moving to sub-contractors and gig workers in an effort to decrease long-term financial obligations.

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<sup>1</sup>A hyper competitive environment for recruiting and retaining talented employees. As noted in the book, Michaels, et al., describe not a set of superior Human Resources processes, but a mindset that emphasizes the importance of talent to the success of organizations.

<sup>2</sup>Web 2.0 describes the second generation of the world wide web, where it moved static HTML pages to a more interactive and dynamic web experience. One that is focused on the ability for people to collaborate and share information online via social media, blogging and Web-based communities.



### How Hidden Professionals Contribute to Local Economic Prosperity and Well-Being

In the absence of consistent quantifiable data with depth and history on a larger-scale, we have looked at how Hidden Professionals contribute beyond direct dollars invested. The direct economic impact provided by Hidden Professionals and indirect benefits as well will naturally vary from community to community.

Much of the research has suggested positive economic development implications in both qualitative and quantitative terms. For example, the incomes and career opportunities associated with Hidden Professionals creates a new look to traditional municipal economies and the traditional workforce. Specifically, by way of example, certain incomes and career opportunities may not have been available or apparent in the community before, but through the presence of Hidden Professionals, the range of visible possibilities increases and so too does the “visible” employment opportunities that are created for others.

Further, as visible possibilities increase, citizen attraction and retention are enhanced. In the former instance, the existence of Hidden Professionals affirms the possibilities of broader work opportunities for those who may presuppose the importance to be in more urban areas. Hidden professionals often bring with them new ideas and new innovative technological approaches that allow them to be in almost any community and operate successfully. In the latter instance, those occurrences where there is a forced workforce relocation may be deemed to become less attractive/less necessary.

Like any other sector, the ability to successfully retain and/or grow a cadre of Hidden Professionals inevitably enhances a community’s cash flow offsetting leakage in support of local businesses. This, in turn, ripples or multiplies impacts locally both in incomes and employment. Importantly as well typically some level of innovation and knowledge transfer necessarily diffuses throughout the community.



*Effective talent acquisition and retention strategies can make or break an organization’s ability to innovate and stay ahead of their competition. It’s essential that organizations stay on top of the latest trends and technologies impacting recruiting, talent management and employee retention... flexible working conditions is a key aspect.*



As previously noted, the profile of a Hidden Professional is commonly one that is sought after, due to the fact that a more talented resident workforce coupled with the broader domestic and international visibility of “exported services” supports local investment attraction/retention efforts by building, promoting, and fostering greater municipal reach.

This diversity of industries, vocations, and skills commonly represented by Hidden Professionals highlight their importance to the broader aspects of community stability and diversity. Further, a presence within either gender and the prevalence of younger cohorts suggests greater stability and increased opportunity within the traditional workforce. These Hidden Professional opportunities can also yield several gender equality benefits. For example, with respect to traditional caregiving responsibilities that women conventionally have taken on, Hidden Professional types of work further legitimize the merits to work from home and maintain flexible work hours. It also reinforces the possibility of entrepreneurial success regardless of the absence of a bricks and mortar environment. All of which allows for a greater opportunity for women to continue to stay engaged in the workforce and accommodate caregiving responsibilities as they see fit. An ever-growing body of knowledge surrounding productivity gains recognizes that women are a significant driver of future productivity growth in Canada. Keeping them engaged and fostering their enhanced engagement adds to greater national, regional and local productivity gains where everyone benefits.

An increased level of entrepreneurial activity, new technology, and new markets as represented by the presence of Hidden professionals, means a more competitive climate typically ensues locally. A healthier level of increased competitive efforts by other local businesses typically mirrors new ways to capture further growth opportunities by seeking success and sustainability externally.

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### Key Benefits of Hidden Professionals

- Employment Creation and New Opportunities
  - Citizen Retention/Attraction
  - Spin-Off Technology and Knowledge Sharing
  - Diversification and Stabilization of the Municipal Economy and Tax Base
  - Promotion/Support for Greater Gender Equality
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## 3: HIDDEN PROFESSIONALS NORTH OKANAGAN CASE STUDY

The following notes detail and summarize the outcomes of a detailed research exercise undertaken in the North Okanagan Regional District in the summer of 2018. This exercise is described in further detail below. Importantly the implications of the exercise have much broader application not only within the North Okanagan but in other communities and municipalities throughout Canada - and it is in this regard that the following narrative is presented.

### Methodological Considerations

Because much of the investigation was breaking new trail, so to speak, the process required a higher than normal level of engagement; a more focused analytical framework adapted to the needs of this unique segment and exercise; and the collection of sufficient data to ensure adequate representativeness.

Challenges and limitations of note included the following:

1. Articulating/defining sample size to limit data generalization challenges;
2. Survey distribution adequately targeting Hidden Professionals;
3. Confirming sample size representation of the defined Hidden Professional population of which results can be generalized to the population;
4. Dependably extrapolating the data beyond the sample size to be representative of the larger community; and,
5. Adequacy of data and/or reliable data for statistical trend comparisons given a lack of prior research on relatable subjects.

Despite these limitations and challenges, the data collected, and implications drawn therefrom are nonetheless important to instill a better understanding and appreciation of Hidden Professionals. The research also offers a strong argument for continued efforts to track and engage this segment. Doing so will provide further insight into the identification and introduction of relevant programs/services to support, retain, and attract Hidden Professionals and furthermore, in turn, enhance the extensive socio-economic benefits within the municipalities in which they are hosted.

It is recommended that this effort including the research methodology, surveys and investigations that were undertaken, and results collected serve as a platform for a discussion and further research into the important contributions of Hidden Professionals. Further, this should lead to a better understanding of Hidden Professionals and define and confirm how best to support them.

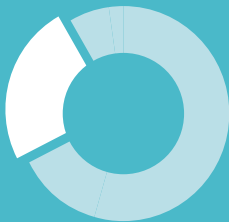
## Profile of North Okanagan Hidden Professional

Data on the typical profile of the Hidden Professional segment has many uses and implications. The many elements ranging from age distribution to gender composition, employment status, and education attainment levels create insights for local economic development practitioners to consider in their efforts accordingly.

The results, therefore, are significant in terms of their contributions of knowledge to potential programming and efforts. Although the sample was small, the findings from these efforts provide insights into the basic demographic characteristics and other tendencies of the North Okanagan Hidden Professional cohort.

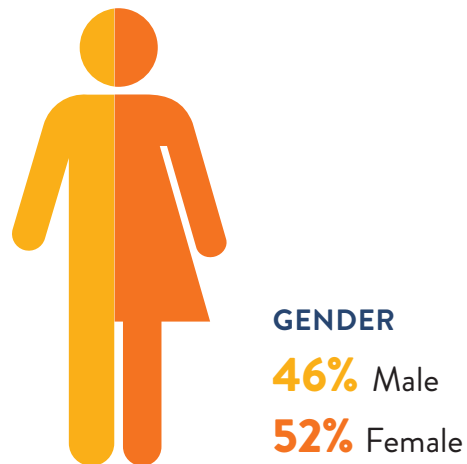
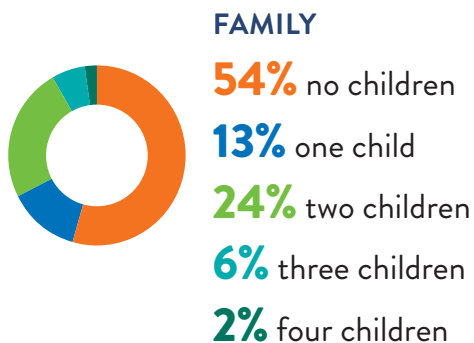
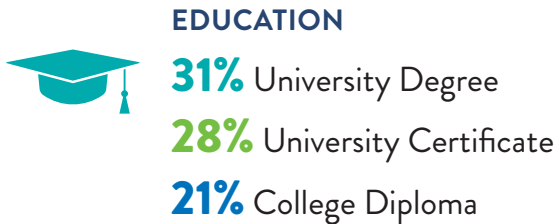
	North Okanagan	Hidden Professional
<b>Education</b>		
University Degree	9%	31%
University Certificate	1%	28%
College Diploma	21%	21%
<b>Gender (Employed in Labour Force)</b>		
Male	62%	46%
Female	54%	52%
<b>Age (years)</b>		
25 to 34	9%	18%
35 to 44	10%	34%
45 to 54	13%	24%
55 to 64	17%	17%
65 to 74	14%	4%
<b>Median Total Household Income</b>	<b>\$63,364</b>	<b>\$100,000 - \$124,999</b> range based off respondents.

Census Profile, 2016 Census. Source: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=5937&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=north%20okanagan&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Education&TABID=1>



*Randstad Canada, a staffing company, suggests that if one were to add up all of the non-traditional workers such as contingent workers, freelancers, independent contractors and consultants this would represent 20%-30% of the Canadian workforce.*

As the information presented suggests, the cohort of Hidden Professionals in the North Okanagan are those that are typically well-educated, are younger comparatively, and their household incomes are significantly higher as well. Some of the other common characteristics of the North Okanagan Hidden Professionals from marital status, to volunteerism are as such:



*I moved to Vernon with my wife because I can work from anywhere and here, we have access to many world-class outdoor amenities... skiing, lakes and mountain biking.*

*Hidden Professional*

The research also allowed for a separation between those that self-identified as either self-employed or as employees. These characteristics are interesting as they are not aligned with common expectations. Typical assumptions often predominantly revolve around the connotation that most of these individuals are in the IT industry and work out of their basements. The research suggests otherwise. That's not to say there are not IT professionals that make up part of this cohort, but the interesting aspect is that the range of business functions, job titles, and skill sets is much broader than that.

Variable	Employee – 38%	Self-Employed – 62%
Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional, scientific and technical services (27%)</li> <li>Information and Cultural Services (11.5%)</li> <li>Other Services (10.3%)</li> <li>Manufacturing (7.7%)</li> <li>Finance and Insurance (7.7%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (30%)</li> <li>Other Services (18.5%)</li> <li>Arts Entertainment and Recreation (8.7%)</li> <li>Information and Cultural Services (7.7%)</li> <li>Educational Services (6.8%)</li> </ul>
Business Functions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consulting</li> <li>Administration</li> <li>Sales/Marketing</li> <li>Accounting/Finance</li> <li>Research &amp; Development</li> </ul>
Number of Staff (Of entire company)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>64% said the company had 100+ staff.</li> <li>15% said the company had 26-100 staff.</li> <li>12% said the company had 6-25 staff.</li> <li>8% said the company had 1-5 staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>102 total staff globally               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With a median of 1 staff.</li> <li>Average of respondents was 1.5 staff FTE's globally.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Expansion Plans		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>64% said they plan to expand in the next 3-years.</li> </ul>

### Motivators for making a conscious decision to be a hidden professional

Lack of economic opportunities within the North Okanagan

To achieve work-life balance through working from home to have flexibility with family.





The flexibility of location that allows them to locate where their partner has employment opportunity.

Allows for greater income-earning opportunities.

The freedom it provides as self-scheduling workers.

Allows the Hidden Professional to choose who they physically work with through the flexibility of sharing space with non-work-related professionals.

The unique and novel feature of this business model relates to the nature of employment: independent workers can freely choose when to work as well as seamlessly switch between multiple work and private life.

While footloose professionals are able to choose where they want to work and live and for many the decision is influenced by determining if there is a cohort of like-minded people.

The Hidden Professional in the North Okanagan is more likely to export their services with:

69% do business in the North Okanagan

59% do business across British Columbia

50% do business across Canada

35% do business internationally

With 35% of the 271 (95) respondents indicating they work internationally. Some of the countries North Okanagan Hidden Professionals travel to are:

Americas	Europe	Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• U.S.</li><li>• Barbados</li><li>• Trinidad</li><li>• Bermuda</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• U.K.</li><li>• Russia</li><li>• France</li><li>• Ukraine</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Australia</li><li>• Indonesia</li><li>• India</li><li>• United Arab Emirates</li><li>• China</li><li>• South Africa</li><li>• Egypt</li><li>• India</li><li>• Oman</li><li>• Bahrain</li></ul>

Part of the research included one-on-one interviews, of which, some have been reflected into personal profiles. These profile examples provide deeper insights into the characteristics and some of the motivators and influencers behind the Hidden Professionals in the North Okanagan. Given the range of broad canvassing factors, those related to self-employed vs. employees, and the unique needs; these profiles are but an example of some of the common themes throughout, and thus speak to many of those common trends and those uniquely defining characteristics.

## Hidden Professional Profile

### Eric Miller

**Education:** B. Sc (Double Major) in Biology/Physical Geography. The Post-Graduate Studies in Forestry (Registered Professional Forester)

**Email:** eamiller@telus.net

**Website:** [www.terrasense.ca](http://www.terrasense.ca)

**Business:** EA Miller & Associates Ltd. ,  
Terra Sense Analytics Ltd. ,  
Latitude 55 Distilleries

**Industry:** Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services / Forestry and Logging & Information Technology

**Location:** Vernon, BC

**Staff:** 11 total staff (Terra Sense Analytics)



Eric Miller is what many would deem a serial entrepreneur. His background is a unique one and the expertise he's acquired he has brought into the North Okanagan.

After working in Nelson, BC for several years Eric decided to relocate to Vernon in 2012 with his wife (an audiologist - hearing medical professional) and his two young daughters. For Eric and his family, they love the outdoors and wanted to ensure they located somewhere that offered them access to a high quality of life with natural outdoor assets. But also important was the centralization of Vernon with major trade areas for his business and ease of mobility through a reliable network of highway infrastructure and the international airport. Eric is in some ways a diaspora of the Okanagan, growing up in between Kamloops and Revelstoke, and so his parents are still in Kamloops which is a great benefit to be closer to family.

Eric holds multiple degrees, firstly from the University of Victoria, he has a bachelor's in science with a double major in Biology and Physical Geography. In addition, he pursued post-graduate studies at the University of British Columbia in Forestry. It's through this background that allows him to work in the various industries of professional, scientific, and technical services, along with those in forestry. This combination of education and experience is what spurred on his first North Okanagan business – EA Miller & Associates Ltd.

EA Miller & Associates is a consulting/investment company that retains ownership in a number of other businesses that have been founded and developed over the past several years. Some of the companies that EA Miller founded and/or retains ownership in includes: Terra Sense Analytics, Northern Empire Resources, Latitude 55 Distilleries, Selkirk Power, and Envolve Energy Services.

Although Eric is still active in several of those aforementioned businesses, his primary focus is Terra Sense Analytics, of which Eric is one of two original founders of the Vernon based company. His role there is a diverse one, as he acts as the IT Corporate Manager where he oversees company operations, finances, strategic planning, and the implementation of other resources as needed.

Terra Sense Analytics is an IT start-up focused on redefining data acquisition methods in various industries (forestry, utilities) and processing data with custom developed deep learning neural networks (AI) algorithms specialized in computer vision. This coupled with specific processes in generating training data for algorithms greatly enhances the capabilities of object recognition in applications such as landscape/vegetation analysis, infrastructure/industrial inspections and security applications.

Terra Sense is a growing company as Eric is already hiring an additional 6 staff that will be relocated to the North Okanagan, pushing total staffing into the double digits with 11 high-powered knowledge-based professionals. The company is poised for further growth. Some of these new staff members are IT professionals, some carry Master's Degrees in Geomatics Engineering and Doctorates as well. Through established partnerships with research institutions, specifically the University of British Columbia and the Selkirk College Geospatial Lab, they're working together on new and innovative applications of deep learning (AI) software. Some of these new projects are focused in the National Defense sector and within other areas of asset management and predictive maintenance.

Although a dedicated entrepreneur, he is also a dedicated family man and community advocate, as he is always seeking opportunities to volunteer and support the community. Whether that is through various activities and functions with educational workshops and presentations at the local schools for science-related initiatives or through his role on the Board of Directors for the Vernon Speed Skating Club and with taking on the Head Coordinator position with the Special Olympics BC Winter Games Speed Skating in Vernon, volunteering with the city track and field club, and his professional associations as a Registered Professional Biologist and a Registered Professional Forester.

*Eric says, "there's a lot of talent in the valley and building a network here in the Okanagan has been key in establishing and supporting my businesses both locally and afar."*



# Community Benefits

**Subject:** Skilled Workers (Talent)

**Observation:** On average Hidden Professionals are more highly educated than the average employee within the North Okanagan. 31% of Hidden Professionals record having a degree versus an average of 9% for all workers within the North Okanagan.

**Implications:**

The existence of this enterprise/worker cohort suggests that the level of talent evidenced within the North Okanagan is more significant than what traditional measures would suggest.

A talented workforce supports local economic development efforts aimed at investment attraction by highlighting in a positive way a key site location determinant, i.e. available “talented” workforce/contractors.

Citizen (talent) attraction efforts are enhanced by illustrating the opportunities for talented workers.

A talented workforce supports the level of innovation that will occur.

**Subject:** Social/demographic viability and sustainability

**Observation:** On average Hidden Professionals are relatively young (59% recorded being 54 years of ages and younger and 34% recorded being 44 years of age and younger). Further, 67% registered as being married, and 45% recorded having children.

**Implications:**

A balanced demographic profile is essential to municipal viability and sustainability. The North Okanagan Region is generally older than other municipalities. As such the in-migration of young people and young families is important.

Young families support local schools and strengthen social networks improving the overall quality of life. This supports citizen/investor attraction and as importantly supports investment retention.

**Subject:** Volunteerism and municipal sustainability

**Observation:** On average 58% of Hidden Professionals report being volunteers within their host communities.

**Implications:**

Volunteerism is the lifeblood of most communities. It is also indicative of local pride and commitment, key attributes of “quality of Life”. 58% of Hidden Professionals report giving back to their host community.

Many of the Hidden Professionals staged they volunteer by lending their technical abilities. This increases the operating capacities of social organizations.

Many respondents stated they volunteer for the social aspects. Through the volunteering, Hidden Professional become more attached to the community.

**Subject:** Gender Equality and Gender Equity



**Observation:** Of the aggregate of Hidden Professionals surveyed/interviewed 52% were female and 46% male. This ratio is significantly different than from the recorded labour force participation rates for British Columbia (59.7%/68.3%) and the North Okanagan (54.0%/62.3%) respectively.

**Implications:**

- Gender equality across vocations is an important issue across Canada and internationally for a number of reasons, not the least of which include the importance of labour force productivity to economic growth and equality of access to economic development.
- Often times real and artificial barriers preclude equal opportunity. Clearly, this is not the case amongst those broadly categorized as Hidden Professionals and provides an important foundation in local efforts to promote citizen (talent) attraction and investment attraction.

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**Subject:** Economic Diversity and Stability

**Observation:** Hidden Professionals surveyed/interviewed reported engaging in a number of different vocations, the more significant being consulting, sales and marketing and administration. Hidden professionals also recorded diverse representation across multiple economic sectors.

**Implications:**

- Workforce diversity is an important site location determinant for incoming investors.
- Workforce diversity, where that diversity is either sector-specific or sector focused, can provide a foundation for economic growth in respect to agglomeration and/or clustering.
- Sector diversity is essential to economic stability and sustainability.

Service exports are an important emerging trend in global trade. Many traditional manufactured product exports increasingly contain technology that requires installation, troubleshooting, maintenance, and repairs. The increase in service exports is a natural outcome of the continued growth of the services economy in North America. And the pervasiveness of the Internet and the explosion of cloud-based communication has enabled information and related services to flow freely across country boundaries.

**Subject:** Investment Attraction

**Observation:** 82% of Hidden Professionals surveyed/interviewed reported having a main office outside of the region and 64% reported working within companies with or on behalf of companies with more than 100 employees. Further 59% reported working in other BC markets and 35% reported working internationally.

## DIRECT IMPACTS

**Subject:** Growth in new jobs and new enterprises

**Observation:** of 271 surveyed Hidden Professionals, 62% recorded being self-employed (168) and 38% recorded being employed (103). Of those who were self-employed, 64% representing 107 enterprises recorded an interest in growing/expanding their business.

**Subject:** Financial impact to enterprises, organizations and local governments within the region

**Observation:**

1. Median household income for the 271 surveyed Hidden Professionals was in the range of \$100,000 - \$124,999 representing \$27 million to \$33.75 million in aggregate – a not insignificant amount available, depending on leakage/capture, for local expenditures on housing, retail, transportation, taxes and so forth.
2. Taking into account salaries and wages paid to the staff of Hidden Professionals (46% recorded having staff and average payrolls of \$83,094) the aggregate contribution in salaries /owner draws to the region was \$48.4 million. Again, a not insignificant amount available, depending on leakage/capture, for local expenditures on housing, retail, transportation, taxes and so forth.

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**Subject:** Job Creation

**Observation:** 46% of the 271 surveyed Hidden Professionals employed 1-5 individuals. In aggregate total direct employment in the region as a consequence of the activities of Hidden Professionals is approximately 582 (employed and self-employed).





### Implications:

Investment and citizen attraction success relies heavily on getting the message out to those key individuals and enterprises who might be interested or might be persuaded to relocate or expand elsewhere, i.e. in this case to the North Okanagan.

Hidden Professionals can Offer a bridge to other talented workers and potential investors. As “ambassadors” or similar arrangements they extend the reach of local economic development investment attraction efforts.

Further, as ambassadors Hidden Professionals can Offer a bridge of support to local tourism attraction programs.

**Subject:** Business development and economic resiliency

**Observation:** 64% of Hidden Professionals surveyed/interviewed reported planning to grow their business – 107 businesses

### Implications:

In current uncertain economic times, it is quite amazing to record such substantive business optimism as that voiced by those engaged as Hidden Professionals. It further emphasizes the dynamic and important contribution this cohort can offer to the economic development agenda.

The spin-off benefit of the aggregate contribution in salaries /owner draws to the region was \$48.4 million not only provides existing businesses with support with viability but also expansion.

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## Hidden Professional Profile

Name: Stephanie Tambellini

Education: Diploma in Fine Arts, Diploma in Graphic Design, Diploma in Digital Art & Design

Email: [steph@tambellini.ca](mailto:steph@tambellini.ca)

Website: [www.tambellini.ca](http://www.tambellini.ca)

Business: Tambellini Design Studio

Industry: Professional, Scientific, and Technical

Staff: 3 total staff

Stephanie Tambellini has roots in the Okanagan. Growing up in the region, she's always been fond of the natural assets and amenities that are available. But, moving back was not a choice driven by those assets nor by her career at the time, yet she couldn't be happier with the opportunities that have been afforded to her through hard work and tenacity. Stephanie moved back to the Okanagan from Vancouver in 2001 when her husband, a Certified Professional Accountant, was offered a new job opportunity.

Given Stephanie is a seasoned marketing and design expert, with multiple diplomas in Fine Arts,

Graphic Design, and Digital Art & Design, she found it difficult to find a suitable position for herself that would challenge and drive her. Hence, Stephanie in many ways may be considered a "reluctant entrepreneur", inasmuch as at first blush entrepreneurship wasn't Stephanie's first choice as she initially had no intentions on starting her own business – yet, it just happened organically. This dilemma was amplified as she valued and wanted to be able to spend time raising her children. But don't let the term reluctant entrepreneur fool you, Stephanie's first run at entrepreneurship brings her back to her early twenty's and so the entrepreneurial mindset has in fact always been part of her DNA.

“The business community in Vernon is very supportive of one another, so word of mouth and referrals have driven the success of my business.” Stephanie humbly attributes part of her success to the great welcoming community of Vernon.

Given these variables, Stephanie started to network and through her connections, her graphic design portfolio just kept growing and before she knew it in 2002, she began operating a small business! As the demand for her high-quality work grew, so did her business, which spurred her to move out of her home office into a formal office setting; offering and hosting some coworking styled arrangements for other fledgling entrepreneurs.

All this growth propelled her from initially using subcontractors to help manage the workload, to now employing 3 full-time staff. Her team, all of whom are migrants to Vernon, also experienced similar challenges in finding high-calibre employment to fit their skill sets. But through Tambellini Design Studio, they’ve found the local career opportunity they’ve been seeking, and Stephanie is always on the hunt for great people to fit within her team’s culture. Her staff is highly skilled as well, ranging from self-taught designers to those with marketing and graphic design degrees; showcasing the level of skills and education required to be successful in a competitive field.

Vernon itself has offered Stephanie’s family and her business all the opportunities. The central location and fabulous amenities allow her family to enjoy the lifestyle many other Vernonites rave about and many other Canadians crave to be a part of.

Self-Employed  
Yes

3  
Staff

Vernon  
Location

Growth  
Yes



## What Are Their Needs

Clearly, Hidden Professionals are stimulating innovation and competition, of which is and will continue to be essential to enhancing the diversity and vibrancy of communities and promoting and fostering an ever-more competitive knowledge-based society. Certainly then, Hidden Professionals should not be overlooked in any serious economic development effort.

The challenge associated with supporting this cohort is gaining an intimate understanding of their needs. Based on the primary and secondary information, a number of needs were identified as a means to assist Hidden Professionals in the North Okanagan. While the Hidden Professional business owner had many of the common business needs such as access to market, marketing, operations and accounting needs, many of the other stated needs were either unique in nature or have a very unique aspect to them from the bricks and mortar types of business. The most predominant themes were:

1. Talent Attraction and Retention
2. Access to quality and appropriate office space
3. Professional Development
4. Social Inclusion and Isolation of Likeminded People



## Talent Attraction and Retention

Hidden professionals largely work within the knowledge economy and with that, the attraction and retention of talent is paramount to business success. Much of the dialogue with Hidden Professionals rotated around the ability to attract talent and retain talent in order to maintain existing operational levels and to expand their business further. The dialogue focused on four (4) major attraction/retention topics: 1) educational requirements, 2) levels of experience, 3) housing and 4) social issues:

- In regard to educational requirements, this cohort is looking for highly educated individuals with specific formal training in areas that are deemed to be relevant fields for their business (e.g. computer science). Those candidates that don't have at least a university degree were identified as not suitable fits for talent needs for this cohort; a university degree is a minimum and many are looking for advanced graduate degrees in candidates to really help to take their businesses to the next level. According to the survey results of all respondents, the following data was gathered:
  - o Only 20% of all respondents stated that they could utilize and hire a candidate with no "certificate, diploma or degree" and only 15% of all respondents stated they could utilize and hire a candidate with just a "secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate". All other responses stated that desirable candidates need to be highly educated, with a minimum of a college diploma but the expectation was for candidates to have university degrees and advanced graduate degrees.
  - o 33% of all respondents stated desirable candidates should have a "college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma".



- o 26% of all respondents stated desirable candidates should have a “University certificate or diploma below a bachelor level”.
- o 27% of all respondents stated desirable candidates should have a “University certificate, diploma or degree at a bachelor level”.
- o 18% of all respondents stated desirable candidates should have a “University Graduate degree and/or professional designation”.
- While it may seem counter-intuitive, the Hidden Professionals indicated that while they are looking for good educational backgrounds, they prefer only 2-5 years of experience when searching for potential employees. The rationale provided as for why preferring someone with limited work experiences was two-fold: 1) to train the staff their way, and 2) the cost associated with more senior staff.
- A critical issue associated with attracting staff was the accessibility of appropriate housing. It was felt that potential staff are impacted by the vacancy rates, the structure and quality of the inventory, and the costs associated with both rental and ownership options.
- While social issues are a topic for the Hidden Professionals, it may be through a different lens than what is typically found in the Region. Most of the Hidden professionals self-identified as very well-travelled and are open-minded to the common global social issues that the North Okanagan Region also faces, such as homelessness. While this is still a point of concern, the other social issues that were stressed were personal recreational/entertainment issues.
- o Social challenges specifically in regard to the lack of recreational/entertainment opportunities were cited often throughout the research. Conversations were centred around identifying opportunities for social engagement and recreational/entertainment activities for the cohort to participate in. These activities go beyond professional needs but relate to lifestyle needs and the very intimate personal needs that are desired of the cohort to find and create a full and meaningful life outside the confines of their careers and jobs. While there was and is always a positive conversation about the natural amenities the Region offers (lakes, ski hill, trails, camping etc.), there are large gaps beyond the natural amenities that the Hidden Professionals are yearning for. The natural amenities do not appeal to all professionals and it was stated that beyond the natural assets there is a significant deficit of other activities, events, and venues that fulfill the social desires of Hidden Professionals. Being a smaller market there were comments regarding building a cohort of other like-minded people and activities for them to participate in (concerts etc..).

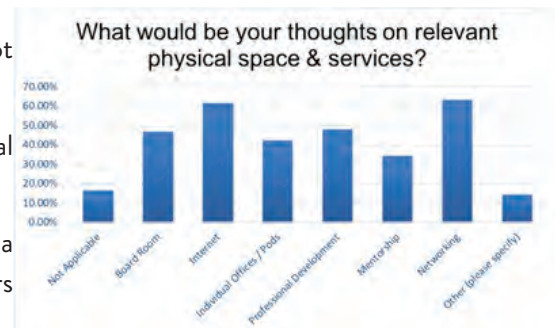
## Quality and Appropriate Physical Space

While Hidden Professionals can work from nearly anywhere, it is also recognized that not all places are compatible with the contingent nature of their work, meet their required infrastructure needs, or fulfil their needs when it comes to the social nature of work. Though technological, economic, and social circumstances are fostering a significant transition away from traditional work structures, there are still interpersonal aspects to office-based employment. Through the research, the following aspects were identified as strong themes:

*I moved to Vernon for my job and applied to 15 different apartments and basement suits... only one person got back to me. The only reason the rental rates work for us is that my girlfriend and I are both working professional jobs.*

- Hidden Professional

- Work is a social activity and professional isolation can negatively impact job performance and create adverse psychological conditions.
- Hidden Professionals are wanting a sense of control over work style and hours, for example, and thus seek autonomy and scheduling flexibility of their remote work. This is combined with the desire to have the option to access the structure and ‘community’ of an office, if and when the worker wants it.
- While there was an identified need/want for physical space, the following in regard to the North Okanagan was stated:
  - o Much of the office space is old, outdated, and not suitable.
  - o Space available was too large for the Hidden Professional to take control/manage of individually.
  - o Hidden Professionals want to be able to utilize space on a very flexible as needed basis, such as part-time, access 24-hours a day, 7-days week.
  - o There is a desire/need to access and share infrastructures such as equipment, facilities (boardroom, meeting rooms) and reception services.



## Professional Development & Support

As the types of skills needed to be successful in today’s economy change rapidly, hidden employees and business owners recognize the importance to engage in life-long learning in order to stay relevant and improve their operations. It is important to note that a common theme of this cohort is that they do not require assistance in making their business viable. By and large, this cohort of professionals are very healthy. Therefore, their professional development and professional support needs (wants) are very specific and should be targeted towards professionals who are successful but are looking to either grow their business and/or create more sophisticated business operations. The type of professional development opportunities that were mentioned (that are broad-based and not overly specific to an individual business) to be of value were :

- Online marketing
- Staff Attraction and Retention
- Accounting - Tax planning
- Legal (Joint Ventures, Real Estate)
- Creative design and printing services
- Project Management and Communications through online platforms
- Team Development

Appreciating what types of needs any cohort has is only a partial answer when developing programming and services to assist them. The second question is ‘how’ or ‘what’ programming modalities are they open to participating



in, is equally important. Many of the Hidden Professionals indicated they would be interested in the above-mentioned opportunities if they were targeted for their cohort (other Hidden Professionals as their needs are unique than traditional bricks and mortar operations) and would be open to participating in:

- Peer to peer mentorship
- Workshops
- Lunch and learns
- Joint speaker series
- Mastermind groups for collaboration and sharing ideas
- Networking – 83% of respondents indicated that they would benefit from additional formal/informal networking opportunities with fellow professionals.

It is important to note that while the above topics were common themes, the level of specificity and depth of the assistance being requested is well past an introductory level course or cursory advice. The assistance provided needs to be at an expert-level of servicing and uniquely tailored to the cohort. As it stands, the Hidden Professionals cohort is very well networked beyond the Regional boundaries, and as such many of them seek out and obtain professional development and other support services (advice) from the major urban centres they work in outside of the Region.

## Social Inclusion

While it is well understood that with our 40-hour plus work weeks the importance of ensuring strong social inclusion and relationships is an ever-growing point of consideration. The need for social inclusion outside of the 'office setting' becomes exasperated when you're a Hidden Professional who might be working in social isolation and yearning for opportunities to connect, both professionally and personally. This message was overwhelming in the research conducted. The severity of social isolation for many has them even reconsidering their business and/or reconsidering continuing to make the North Okanagan a place for their businesses and personal lives. Some key comments to indicate the importance are:

- I drive to Kelowna every day to find social connection with like-minded professionals.

• The ability to work remotely is a blessing and a curse at times. Often, I find myself contemplating living here (North Okanagan) since I constantly seek out other communities just to find a social connection, in terms of seeking those social connections for my business and for my own personal well-being.

• I really enjoyed working from home for the first six months. Then it got very challenging, I even had a plan to walk away from my very successful business to find something that would allow for more social interaction.

• I have considered relocating so I can have better professional and personal social inclusion.

• As a professional who works from my home, I miss the opportunity for social interaction and the ability to connect with other like-minded people. The truth is it has impacted my business effectiveness.

• I was ready to close my doors. After 10 years of running a million-dollar operation, I grew bored with working in my basement. My staff were scattered across the country and I needed that social outlet.

The sentiment of social inclusion was made throughout the 271 survey respondents, interviews, and focus groups countless times, when the research team tried to quantify the impact, it was assessed that within the range of 80%-85% of respondents felt socially secluded. In fact, many of the previously mentioned needs/wants of physical space and professional development were anchored within the social inclusion context.



## Hidden Professional Profile

Name: Neil Hagen

Education: Bachelors, Computer Science

Email: [neil@middleware360.com](mailto:neil@middleware360.com)

Website: <http://www.middleware360.com>

Business: Middleware360 - Solutions to Automate Your Business

Industry: Professional, scientific and technical services (Custom Computer Programming Services)

Staff: 9 total staff  
(5 in Vernon and 4 in Vancouver)

Neil is a custom software solution specialist, with technical training and a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science. His skills and abilities have moved him around British Columbia and Alberta. He had been a Senior Solutions Architect with the Middleware360 team for a couple years prior to his move to Vernon, but he realized that the opportunity to grow the Middleware360 company and to further pursue his own career aspirations, moving to the company's main office was the best choice.

As such, Neil Hagen moved with his young family to Vernon in July 2018 to continue to pursue his career with Middleware360 and to get back to the great lifestyle that he's been accustomed to

with BC communities and specifically within the Okanagan.

Neil was born and raised in Prince George but relocated to Vancouver and then to Calgary, prior to moving to Vernon. Like most career driven young professionals, many of the factors that influenced his decision to move were related to work and career opportunities, but Neil also states that the communities themselves have been instrumental in making those final decisions.

Neil loves what "small town BC" has to offer and says Vernon specifically as a community and with the natural assets was influential in his decision.



“The amenities that are available for families including outdoor activities with biking, skiing, and the lakes, the overall lifestyle and climate; really the overall package Vernon has to offer compared to other Okanagan communities were all important in our final decision. Especially when we think about how and where we want to raise our young daughter” states Neil.

Another benefit was that Neil and his wife already have family that lives in the Okanagan, so the move provided them with a great opportunity to be more connected as they raise their daughter. Now, Neil enjoys the spacious environment his new home provides, by getting his family outside the confines of the chaotic city life and cramped living spaces. He is happy to call Vernon home.

Middleware 360 is a bustling company, with a total of 5 young computer programmers currently in the Vernon office, 4 located in Vancouver and plans to grow to a total of 20 employees in the next 18-months. The demand for their services continues to grow and in order to keep up with the demand and expand the company organically, that requires a healthy supply of young tech experts. The staff are all formally trained with degrees and diplomas in Computer Science and have also moved to Vernon from various places throughout BC as the company focuses on building out the Vernon office.

As the company expands, there is a growing need for professionals in project management and other business analyst roles that offer further depth and breadth to Middleware360 clients and allows the company itself to manage even larger projects. Moving from a home-based business to an office setting and already expanding into a bigger and newer office as their team grows is a remarkable story in itself.

Self-Employed  
**No**

9  
**Staff**

Vernon  
**Location**

Growth  
**Yes**



## 4: CALL TO ACTION

### Call to Action

Even within the context of a limited survey/evaluation and the sparsity of relevant secondary data, the benefits that typically accrue with a well-developed cadre of Hidden Professionals are clearly visible and meaningful. The survey data explored in the report supplemented by secondary sources support this contention. That said, it is important to seek to more fully understand the phenomena and appreciate its potential as an economic base to be enhanced and pursued.

Within the context of the North Okanagan, the region already has many assets in place that can help to foster and facilitate the further emergence of Hidden Professionals, e.g. high-speed internet, high quality of life, and readily available access to other key assets desired by many Hidden Professionals. All of these factors play an important role in supporting these enterprises/workers and can be part of an enhancement strategy. Of course, none of these initiatives can happen without a broad and enabling ecosystem that is sensitive and focused on the needs of Hidden Professionals.

Local economic development (LED) policy setting, decision making, and overall LED organization and operations should be structured to allow for and ensure the greater development of this important segment. The workforce is changing, and efforts need to be focused on getting in front of those changes to create a supportive environment.

Overall, a focused strategy needs to be in place, with more effort around business formation, talent creation/attraction, focused efforts on knowledge-economy jobs, and enhancing an already great living/working environment through “placemaking” efforts. The information presented is a starting point for understanding the needs and behaviours of Hidden Professionals so that communities can plan for the future in the growth of the knowledge-based economy. The research suggests that there is a need to be deliberate in shaping the environment to facilitate social interactions and enhance the opportunities to support the needs of Hidden Professionals.

Of course, more information is required to better understand the unique aspects of the Hidden Professionals movement and to be better equipped to articulate realistic and relevant efforts to create a more supportive environment that would allow them to grow and expand. And in so doing provide a base for further growth and development through effective attraction efforts.



## A Caution to Local Economic Development Practitioners

Traditional economic development tools, unless adjusted accordingly, will be ill-suited to support, retain, expand, and attract the Hidden Professional cohort. As communities become more complex, so too do the strategies required to support their growing demands. A new era of strategic thinking will need to be applied.

As we continue to speak to the changes within the traditional workforce, traditional industry sectors, and the work environment, we must also speak to the necessary changes away from traditional economic development methodologies. To continue to use dated strategies of retail centers with anchor stores, servicing mass amounts of industrial land, or the very historical method of chasing businesses to relocate, would be remiss as they will not suffice; particularly if those efforts are done without a holistic and inclusive vision and plan. At the risk of being trite, suffice to say if there is a serious desire for long-term prosperity for the Hidden Professional segment within a community, and there should be; new age thinking with relevant programs and services will be required.

Certainly, this task of fostering the Hidden Professionals towards more quality jobs, higher incomes, and more opportunities must be led by the private sector. That does not mean there is not a role for municipal economic development, chambers, business associations, and the like – but those roles need to be supportive of the needs and efforts driven by the private sector; not the other way around. As indicated from the survey results, many of those traditional mechanisms from institutions are not desirable nor impactful for this cohort. Consequently, it is with a strong partnership between public and private stakeholders, with clearly defined roles that will have the best chances of positive impact.

Pursuing appropriate strategies will be challenging, often with progress or results being ‘invisible’ to reporting metrics as new ideas, data, and evidence that is required to inform or substantiate the required efforts can be tough to create and find.

Given the Hidden Professional cohort is difficult to identify or classify, as there are no stereotypes, no one-size fits all demographic profile, nor a specific sector to focus on, many municipalities economic development subsequently focus their efforts on specific sectors. Yet, this cohort varies quite greatly and therefore would require a unique cross-sectoral approach. Traditional approaches that are focused on sectors or locations (Retail, downtown, industrial parks, etc.) will not be sufficient for targeting efforts.

Many existing development approaches are too focused on infrastructure policies, and legislation (office space or servicing industrial lands, zoning & development services, business incentives, traditional business associations etc.). But even the initial survey suggests that Hidden Professionals don’t seem to care about many of these

things, as they don't have a real impact that would affect their businesses, positively or negatively.

## Conclusion

Beyond the implications/contributions noted above, the presence of Hidden Professionals represents positive and measurable contributions to local economies both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The benefits are numerous – though some are readily measurable and others not so.

Hidden Professionals promote greater economic stability by broadening and deepening the economic base. They also facilitate greater economic diversity in terms of service offerings/availability; knowledge transfer; talent/skill sets (workforce); and cultural and ethnic diversity. All of these spinoffs build a stronger more sustainable community.

The presence of Hidden Professionals solidifies and promotes a municipality's entrepreneurial culture. This concept of effectuation is attributed to the way entrepreneurs think, how they see challenges and conceptualize opportunities – it is a unique logic of thinking. This infectious thought process can, in turn, build and solidify the ecosystem that fosters and celebrates successful entrepreneurship and all the supporting mechanisms and services that come with local successes.

An increase in the number of Hidden Professionals should improve lead to multiple benefits to host communities.



