

in conversation

with...

Stephen Lund

President & CEO
Nova Scotia Business Inc.
Halifax

One of seven children, Stephen Lund left the Maritimes after graduating from university to seek his fortune. He made his name in the financial sector, first in commercial banking, and later as vice president of Canada's largest national venture capital firm. Now, as president and CEO of Nova Scotia Business Inc., he leads a team dedicated to building a prosperous future for the province, building strong local companies and attracting international companies like Research in Motion.

Growing up in a family of seven kids born in nine years, you learn very quickly how to get along with one another. Of course, you also learn how to compete. That comes naturally when you're vying with six siblings for the last drumstick or the highest grade in math.

My dad could be tough, but he was always supportive, and very engaged. His advice to me, which I still follow, was to always do what's right, to give back to the community and, most importantly, to do what you enjoy.

If I hadn't left Nova Scotia to work in Bermuda and Toronto, I don't think I'd be as well prepared to do this job. I think everyone should experience what's happening in the world. We live in a global market that is becoming smaller and we need to be aware of it.

Too often, young people leave Atlantic Canada because they think the grass is always greener. And once they go, they never come back. My advice to them is to go see the world, but go knowing that this is a great place with lots of opportunity. And when they come back, we will have the right job waiting for them.

When I hire, I look for people whose skills are different from mine. I look to hire the best; they have to be. We represent Nova Scotia around the world. Not only do they have to be the best, they have to be passionate about what they do. Most importantly, they must be a good fit. The hardest people to deal with are high performers who don't fit in. They're the disruptors.

It's important to maintain a fun workplace. That's how you retain talent. After all, you spend a lot of time there.

When you do a job you truly enjoy, it makes other parts of your life really rewarding. I know that, in this role, I don't dwell on the negatives. I tend to focus more on the positives, and I think that carries over into everything I do.

My BlackBerry is always on and I'm always thinking about the work I do. So striking a balance between work and family is difficult. I'm better at it than I used to be, partly because my wife and kids constantly remind me what's important.

If you're in a position where you aren't regularly facing obstacles, you're probably not pushing yourself enough. Whether at work, or playing sports, I've always pushed the limits. Sometimes, you make decisions and beg for forgiveness later. That's just part of leadership.

There are three things leaders should always keep in mind. First, the business world changes constantly, and you have to keep up. Second, there is always a younger generation available to help you do so, and it is just as smart, eager and capable as you, if not more so. Third, it's important to always hire the right talent.

I've been able to draw on pretty much everything I've ever learned or done in this role. I deal with people, companies and governments. I wear several hats – HR, business development, marketing, finance, and operations. I haven't given much thought to what's next, but I hope it will be something where I'm able to make a difference, to give something back. **I ABM**

Interviewed by Kevin Stoddart, vice president, Knightsbridge Robertson Surette – Atlantic Canada' leading recruitment and human resource consulting firm. Leader's Insight conversations are published in each issue of *Atlantic Business Magazine*. Feedback: dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com