

Halifax Chamber of Commerce – Winter 2021 Advocacy Update Task Force Member Spotlight



Ashwin Kutty, WeUsThem Fostering Private Sector Growth Task Force

Ashwin Kutty is the President & CEO of WeUsThem, a full service ad agency serving clients like the Canadian Space Agency, the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, the Kempinski Group, the Sinai Health System, Cambridge University, and Telus to name a few. He is a celebrated leader in the region being named a Top 50 CEO on several occasions, a Next Generation Leader and a Business Person of the Year.

WeUsThem has been recognized nationally and internationally, bringing home accolades that are all a first for the East Coast.

Under Ashwin's leadership, WeUsThem has also championed over 350 organizations since 2020, from all three sectors by providing for free consultative advice through COVID under its #AdFree30 initiative running each year. Ashwin is a Board Member of Creative Commons Canada and has been on the Boards of the Canadian Council for Small Business and Entrepreneurship, the Independent Living Resource Centre and VON Canada, while also giving back each year to numerous community organizations that are near and dear to the team at WeUsThem. "There has never been a more important time to have a Task Force working on fostering private sector growth than now.

COVID has certainly put a wrench in the private sector, but the task force, in my view, is looking to support both the immediate short term as well as our long term sustainable and growth needs. With celebrated leaders from all stripes, the task force looks to bring recommendations for both policy and implementation across all industries and sectors that happen to call our region home", says Ashwin on his involvement and work with the Task Force.



**Debbie Adams, PeopleCan Training
Fostering Private Sector Growth Task Force**

Debbie Adams describes herself as a forced entrepreneur, turning necessity into the mother of her own powerful reinvention. A proud Newfoundlander and Labradorian who now resides in Halifax, she is an author, speaker, business coach and visionary, with a gift for inspiring people to dream big, then get ‘er done. A veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, Debbie’s unique coaching style draws from lessons she learned as a mechanic apprentice - lessons that now form the foundation of a system that connects clients with the skills they need to “charge large with confidence” for the value they bring to the market.

A lifelong learner and natural teacher, Debbie is a believer that every experience, success and failure alike, is an opportunity for entrepreneurial evolution, but the first step is to clear away the mental obstacles that place unconscious limits on our growth. Coining the term “Bias Bundle” to describe these unconscious barriers, Debbie’s personal experience in identifying and tearing down her own internal roadblocks plays a central role in her success as a keynote speaker and in the classroom. She shares 3 core principles in building a profitable business - networking outside your circle, communicating assertively, and embracing a money mindset. Understanding that a one-size-fits-all approach to program delivery doesn’t work for first generation entrepreneurs, Debbie works to connect those new to business with role models and mentors, driving greater success for all.

Combining a heart to serve and a head for business, Debbie sees her participation on the Task Force on Private Sector Growth as an opportunity both to share her valuable perspective at the big table and a chance to give back to the community. By lending her voice, creativity and entrepreneurial savvy to the Task Force, her desire is to contribute to strong, positive progress for private enterprise, and she is grateful to have the support of the Chamber of Commerce as she scales her business.



**Robert Wooden, Director,
Management Career Services,
Faculty of Management, Dalhousie
University
Accessing a Skilled Workforce Task
Force**

Robert Wooden has more than 15 years of work integrated learning-related experience. In 2008, after five years as a hiring manager of co-op students, he joined Dalhousie University's Management Career Services where he is currently the Director. This year, Management Career Services will facilitate over 900 work integrated learning experiences for Dalhousie business students.

Robert serves as Chair Elect for the Accreditation Council of Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada, the lead organization for

work integrated learning in Canada. He has presented nationally on work integrated learning topics at the Campus Recruiting Forum, the Future Workforce Conference, and at CEWIL Canada National Conferences. Volunteering for the Accessing a Skilled Workforce Task Force allows Robert to lend his knowledge of work integrated learning to support HRM. As per the One Nova Scotia Report and Canada's Advisory Council on Economic Growth, the retention of international students is necessary for our city, province, and country.

His involvement with the Halifax business community and Halifax Chamber of Commerce is purposeful in helping more organizations see the value that students participating in work integrated learning can provide. Reach out via Robert.Wooden@dal.ca or on LinkedIn to learn how talented Dalhousie business students can help your organization today and be part of your talent pipeline tomorrow or to chat about the goals of the task force related to youth retention.



**Robyn Byrne, Marketing Manager, Wilsons,
Overseeing the Wilsons Heating, Wilsons Security,
Wilsons Mechanical, and Moncton Propane
Services Brands
Accessing a Skilled Workforce Task Force**

I joined the Accessing a Skilled Workforce Task Force because as a young marketing professional, I was looking for an opportunity to contribute to the Halifax business community.

The Task Force focuses on helping to find solutions for connecting employers with local talent in a way that creates value for both parties. This resonates with me because it's so important that we recognize the mutual relationship between businesses, their employees, and the communities in which they work.

Being on the Task Force has been a pleasure; the wisdom shared by our members on the topics of Immigration, Youth Retention, Entrepreneurship, and connecting with Underrepresented Groups has a real impact on the Chamber's programming, and it's motivating to see those efforts reach across communities. One topic I have experience with in particular is the concept of Youth Retention. When I was in school, many of my peers felt they had to leave the region to obtain employment in their fields. Through the continued work of the Task Force, I hope to see more youth finding meaningful opportunities and building their lives right here in Halifax.