

THE DAILY GOOGLE: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH JIM LAMBE

On Jim Lambe's first day at Google on January 10, 2009, he was sitting in the reception area of the California campus when two searches popped onto a screen showing Google's live stream: "St. John's, Newfoundland" and "Ches' fish and chips." He saw it as a good omen. Nine years later the St. John's native returned home to welcome entrepreneurs to the Grow with Google event at Memorial University's Emera Innovation Centre as the Country Director for Google Cloud in Canada. Associate editor Gabby Peyton chatted with him about work and how he feels about pineapple pizza.



GABBY PEYTON: How did you end up working for Google?

JIM LAMBE: I'm the second youngest of seven kids, but I was the first sibling to go to university in my family. I graduated from university in 1988, at which time unemployment in Newfoundland was in the teens so for me to find an opportunity I didn't really have a choice but to look outside the province. I started my career with Nortel and I was fortunate enough to start in high tech and I essentially stayed there my entire career. Throughout my career I did a couple different things, like venture capital-backed startup companies, and from there I was recruited by Google.

GP: What does a typical day in the office look like?

JL: I will talk to customers all day long. My responsibility at Google—I'm the Canadian director for our Cloud division, so my team spans the country—will be dealing with several customer calls, several customer interactions per day face-to-face, so I do a lot of travelling from Vancouver to St. John's. Making sure we have a strategy that we can continue our very aggressive growth rates and making sure we are always on the lookout for new people and always having a bullpen of very capable people.

GP: What are you most proud of since you started working at Google?

JL: I absolutely love my team, I love my company and I love my customers. We are one of the fastest growing regions globally for Google Cloud, and I attribute all of that to the amazing team that we have.

GP: How do you see technology like Google Cloud changing the outlook for businesses in Atlantic Canada?

JL: Cloud computing is the great equalizer to me. Just five years ago if you wanted to create an application and roll it out you needed significant infrastructure to do that, and because of that, significant resources. For a smaller organization in Atlantic Canada, forget it, impossible. Today however, you have access to hundreds of thousands of computers at the end of your keyboard. It's about the ingenuity and the creativeness of the team that can be successful, it's not about 'I'm bigger than you so I can beat you'. Forget Newfoundland having to compete with Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia having to compete with P.E.I., this is about the smallest companies in St. John's competing with the biggest companies in California.

GP: A recently released BDC study [assessing the digital maturity of small and medium-sized businesses in this country] found Atlantic Canada's SMEs are low tech. Is this a challenge for the region?

JL: Are there challenges? Yes, there are. But now it's a skills challenge, it's not a capital challenge anymore, it's not a technology challenge. The challenge has changed and we need to work to up-level the skills of our constituents, but the opportunity is much larger than it ever was.

GP: What do you do when you're not working?

JL: I spend time driving my daughter to hockey, and my other daughter to soccer. If I can I try to get to my cottage as often as possible because I like to wake-surf.

GP: What's at the top of your bucket list?

JL: I want to take my family to Africa. I want to take them there, I'd like to take them, but I'd like to organize it in such a way where we spend a week helping someone. So that my girls can really experience how fortunate we are.

Aisle or window? Window on long legs, aisle on short legs.

Vacation—hot or cold? Hot places.

Coffee or tea? Coffee.

Newspaper or phone? I wish it was newspaper, but it's my phone. I miss local news so on the weekends I will buy the newspaper.

Does pineapple belong on pizza? Yes!