

Smarter Spaces: 'We are working to change the mindset'

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Smarter Spaces co-owners Dan MacIntosh and Colin Gillis.

After operating a project management consulting business for 10 years, Colin Gillis and Dan MacIntosh knew their growth had stagnated and it was time to either close the business or pivot in an entirely new direction.

That's when they decided to rebrand and reposition their company, and take a leap toward the future.

"We realized that we're not afraid of risk and we want to keep charging forward," said Colin Gillis, co-founder of Smarter Spaces.

By investing in emerging 3D scanning and modelling technology, the company now specializes in creating digital models of buildings and public spaces to inform design, restructuring and remodelling projects.

Using a combination of hand-held 3D scanners, tripods, drones and other technology, their digital reproductions of buildings and structures are precise and create unprecedented possibilities.

Smarter Spaces is quickly becoming recognized as a world leader in the field of 3D scanning and processing.

"The key to our success is in how we manipulate and merge this data . . . we're doing that in ways no one else in the world is doing," said Gillis. "We're using the educated workforce here in Nova Scotia to disrupt an industry."

Their groundbreaking approaches are gaining attention around the globe. They recently completed a promising trade mission in Amsterdam and are in discussion with clients and potential partners in Australia, Austria, Philippines, the United Kingdom, Boston, Chicago and China.

Beyond their industry leadership, Smarter Spaces has an

ambitious growth vision for their presence in Nova Scotia. It is committed to creating jobs, hiring new graduates, and encouraging entrepreneurship among youth in the province.

“We’ve figured out a scalable model,” said Gillis, who explains that for every one hour that someone has their feet on the ground, scanning data of a particular space or building, there’s four to five hours of processing and analysis that needs to happen afterwards.

“We could hire someone in Amsterdam to do the scanning, then hire three or four people here to process and analyze the data once it’s been uploaded.”

This ability to grow locally and export internationally is the sweet spot for Smarter Spaces and for Nova Scotia, says Gillis. “We have to stop fighting over the pot of money in Nova Scotia and start bringing more money in.”

To help make that future possible, the Smarter Spaces team actively volunteers with organizations that are cultivating an entrepreneurial spirit province-wide, such as CEED, Techsploration and Futurepreneur.

They even designed their own Crazy Classroom workshop that introduces 3D scanning technology to students and allows them to explore its possibilities by working with the data and some hands-on activities to redesign their classroom.

“We are working hard to change the mindset of youth, teachers and parents and establish entrepreneurship as a viable career option,” said Gillis.

“We believe in encouraging young people to innovate and create their own businesses so the East Coast can continue to be a great place to live and do business.”