

## TFSA CASE STUDY: FDM GROUP



When FDM Group conducted a feasibility study before choosing a Canadian location, the IT services company had been in business for almost 25 years and had established itself in locations in Europe, Asia and North America.

“But in all the locations where we’ve opened an office, I’ve never experienced the welcome that we’ve received in Toronto,” says Sheila Flavell, the company’s Chief Operating Officer.

Hiring, training and placing IT and business consultants on-site with their clients, FDM locates its offices in places “where our clients need our services,” says Flavell.

The company serves more than 130 clients, including some of the world’s leading multinational financial institutions such as Credit Agricole, HSBC, Barclays, Sirius XM Radio, UBS, Royal Bank of Scotland, and Credit Suisse. Many of these FIs operate in Canada from head offices in Toronto. In fact, says Flavell, when FDM completed its feasibility study, “Toronto came up trumps.”

Opening its Toronto office in January 2014, FDM began establishing itself with other members of the local financial community with support from the Toronto Financial Services Alliance and their partners.

“TFSA has been brilliant in helping to embed us into the community,” says Flavell. “It helped with introductions and with establishing ourselves in a suitable office in downtown Toronto, in the heart of

the financial district. It also pointed us in the right direction to start recruiting consultants.”

Recruiting recent university graduates with strong academic backgrounds in mathematics, computer science and engineering, FDM trains them for 6 to 17 weeks to become professional IT and business consultants. Through its Academy Program, FDM equips aspiring consultants with technical skills and commercial experience in service areas including software development, MX.3 production support analysis, software testing, business analysis and project/application support. Once trained, they become professional FDM Consultants, working on-site throughout Canada with key clients for a minimum of two years. This unique business model, developed by FDM in the 1990s, was derived from many airlines’ approach at the time: providing two



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years of training to aspiring pilots in return for a two-year commitment to work for their employer.

“We now have more than 45 consultants in Toronto,” says Flavell, “and we aim to have 100 by the end of the year.”

As a source of candidates, the rich academic environment around Toronto influenced FDM’s decision to locate in the city. “Our training centre is filled to capacity,” Flavell says. “We’ve also been impressed with the strength of their financial knowledge.”

Through Catherine Chandler-Crichlow, executive director of TFSA’s Centre of Excellence in Financial Services Education, Flavell has also met numerous government representatives at the local and provincial levels. “The support of government has

been exceptional,” she says. “In one day, I met four provincial cabinet ministers. For a new company, that’s impressive.”

Meanwhile, the demand from clients for FDM’s Consultants continues to grow. “Our current consultants will be placed primarily with major banks,” Flavell says. “But clients in other sectors are also impressed by the caliber of our candidates.”

As for the decision to locate its office in Toronto, Flavell says there’s no question that FDM made the right decision.

“I’ve been nothing but impressed with Toronto so far.”

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