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## ALUMNI NOW

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# Addicted to Continuing Education

By Sharon Oosthoek

Michael Martin tells the humiliating story of his introduction to continuing education with the all enthusiasm of the converted.

Centennial's 2003 alumnus of distinction award winner says he was forced to go back to school more than 10 years ago, after his boss called him into his office and told him he was illiterate.

"He told me all my letters had to be proofread by another employee and that I had to go back to school. He arranged for me to take business communications at Seneca. He never threatened me with unemployment, but it was pretty close to the surface," recalls Martin, now president of MICAN, a Toronto-based company that designs and installs telecommunications and broadcast facilities.

"The poor professor had a horrible time with me. The first two or three sessions, I was a complete idiot. I didn't want to participate. I didn't want to be there," he says.

But then his teacher began comparing the syntax of language to the syntax of music, and suddenly he had Martin's undivided attention. Not because Martin plays music, but because Martin is a fan of analogies. His instructor was using a teaching tool that made sense to him.

"By the time I got to the end of the course, I loved it. And as is my habit, I went way over the top. We had to do a final 10-minute presentation. I used freelance graphics and had slides made – this was before PowerPoint – and had full media support," laughs Martin, 46.

### On a roll

Not long after, Martin was inspired to enrol in Centennial's certificate program in microcomputer programming. In fact, Martin liked his adult education experience so much that he just kept going....and going.

In addition to his success at Centennial, he's completed work at the Project Management Institute in Pennsylvania, USA. He has his certification in media and new technology management from the University of Toronto, and a master's certification in project management from York University's Schulich School of Business.

And last year, Martin completed an intense two-course preparation program at Ryerson University in order to write the Cisco certified network associate (CCNA) exam. Right now, he's studying advanced project management at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California.

"I have a thing for lifelong learning," he says, putting it mildly. "Learning is part of it. It's not all of it. I love the people I meet. I despise the word networking.



**Michael Martin** - takes his love of learning into the workplace.

**"I have a thing for lifelong learning,"**



**"Learning is part of it. It's not all of it. I love the people I meet."**

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It's not at all what I mean – it's friendship. I've met some incredible people. I learn. I meet people. I have fun. So why wouldn't you do something when you're having fun?"

## **It has to be fun**

Indeed, Martin has fun both at school and work. He says he loves the challenge of bringing large, high tech projects together.

Martin's speciality is logistics and project management in broadcast and telecommunications. His high-profile project list includes Bell ExpressVu's Toronto teleport, Labatt's broadcast facilities in the SkyDome, and various post-production studios, satellite and microwave facilities for CBC, CTV, and CanWest Global.

Martin likens his job to a contractor's. "I take a whole bunch of items and bring them together into a system. I like building stuff. It's fun. When you take something from a concept and at the end you see the results, it's rewarding."

Martin also takes his love of learning into the workplace. "I have no problems asking questions and sometimes I look dumb. Well I don't care. I'll learn something in the end."

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