

# Small Business Spotlight:

## Ted Hall | Co-Owner & Founder Spearhead Inc., Est. 1995

### Life Story

Ted Hall grew up in North Vancouver and became immersed in the worlds of construction and design as a teenager when his parents hired a well-known Canadian architect to design a home. Eventually, a Danish construction team was hired to build the home. Ted admired the skill, training, and discipline of these individuals – so much so that he worked for the team throughout high school and university. It was through this work that he developed the strategic approach to construction that now influences his business.



Ted is the founder and co-owner of Spearhead Inc., a multi-faceted manufacturing company in Nelson, B.C. that specializes in the design and fabrication of architectural timber and steel.

### What was the motivation behind starting your own business?

My motivation stemmed from my own interest in design, and in making better connections between craft and design. At Spearhead we merge the processes of craft and design – that's what makes us unique.

### How has your business grown and evolved over the years?

We started out doing traditional timber frame work. Over the years, we've become more specialized and have adapted to new technology. Digital fabrication is a big part of what we do now – you could say we're also a technology company.

### What challenges did you encounter while growing your business? How did you overcome these?

Nelson is a fairly remote region, so shipping costs have been a challenge. A lot of our work is in the United States, where we face local competition for projects. We've been able to justify the additional shipping costs strategically by offering a more efficient product.

### What advice do you have for companies that want to enter international markets?

Realize that we're in a time of change and converging technology, and adopt new technologies to increase efficiency. This goes for any line of business. Also, focus on ways to attract skilled people and offer them a rewarding work experience.

### How has networking played a role in where you are today?

We build relationships with design professionals because we link the processes of design and manufacturing. As a result, most of our work is repeat work with established, sophisticated architectural firms. Networking also influences the technologies we adopt. Since most architectural firms model in 3D now, we also do our modeling in 3D to enable better connections between design and fabrication.

### What do you see as your greatest accomplishment to date?

I've assembled a unique team of individuals capable of doing the high caliber of work that we do.

### How has your multi-faceted team helped with the growth of your business?

Our team is an eclectic mix of designers, technologists, craftspersons, builders, managers, and planners. They are responsible for the growth of the business. We've focused on attracting exceptional people by offering challenging, engaging and rewarding work. As a result, our retention is high – over half of our group has been together for over 15 years!



Tell us a little-known fact about your company.

We have people from eight different countries working for us, many of whom have moved here to join us.

Where is your favourite B.C. destination?

I travel for work to some of the most beautiful places in North America, but every time I come home to Nelson, B.C., I think to myself that there's no place I'd rather be.

#### Bottom Line

- Over the last 10 years, Spearhead Inc. has grown to 55 staff, up from 30.
- They will continue to focus on specialization, and capability over capacity.
- They are in the final stages of planning a substantial expansion.