

Craig Baute



He's an explorer, a risk-taker, and an energetic visionary.

At 24 years of age, Craig Baute is a youthful leader with a seasoned outlook on the business world. Given his characteristic footwear (flip flops even in the winter!) and his preppy style of dressing, there's nothing laid back about this young businessman. Craig is a hardworking professional, committed to expanding an already existing movement in Toronto called coworking — a non-traditional style of work that brings together a community of independent professionals into a shared, productive workspace.

As the manager of Longbranch Coworking located in West Toronto, Craig provides modern, fully-equipped and affordable office space for a growing population of freelancers and entrepreneurs. Coworking is a new venture, in a new city, for Craig who is originally from St. Joseph, Michigan.

"With self-employment figures on the rise each year in Canada, it was a good time to expand the coworking movement up here," says Craig. "My goal is to help professionals cope with the difficulties that come with setting up shop at home—a place where distractions are plenty and productivity can be low."

"I believe coworking frees people up and alleviates the uncertainty of starting your own business," says Craig. "And it eliminates the feeling that friends are lost when you leave a business. I'm here to change that mindset and lead this movement as work styles evolve."

Craig's extensive knowledge of coworking, his passion for the industry, and his ability to bring workers synergistically together under one roof makes him an extraordinary leader in the marketplace today. He is highly motivated, has an exuberant personality (his sense of humour is contagious!) and integrity, and believes in transparency. But he is most admired for his hands-on approach to doing business, and for genuinely caring for his clients.

"I love to learn about people," says Craig. "Guiding them through what could be a difficult process to find a productive work environment, and helping to empower clients, makes coming into work so easy for me."



PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

Street-smart. Life-smart. And naturally smart. Craig took the workforce by storm since the age of 14, working as a server at Chili's Bar & Grill (a casual fare restaurant chain). Motivated by people (and the money was going to be useful in the future!), he served up excellence until the summer of 2010. He was not a commitment phobic! "Who works at one place for eight years?" says Craig with a smile. "It was a great way to meet people, hear their stories, and discover their motivations." It was a sign of things to come as research and learning through everyday life was Craig's forté!

But a formal education added weight to an already well-rounded mind. Craig is a graduate of Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

He received a Bachelor of Business degree in marketing in 2007 with a focus on consumer trends and behaviour. He got his MBA in 2009, studying international trends, business development, and cultural management.

From 2006 to 2010, Craig spent summers as a researcher for new product development at MForce, a marketing company in Chicago. Through business innovation sessions, Craig helped companies plan product development five years ahead, identified trends, determined new strategies, and analyzed financial data for business growth. But Craig was looking to utilize these skills in a more grassroots fashion—offering new solutions to emerging entrepreneurs.

In March 2010, Craig began a mission to discover everything about the concept of coworking while still living in the U.S. He explored the culture and generated business plans, supported by his research findings. An avid online communications guru, he then joined a Google group in July 2010. He blogged about the coworking movement in the U.S and about his desire to start a career in the business, knowing this was the grassroots concept he was looking for.

"I wrote that coworking had to be profitable and not just a co-op concept if it was to grow and generate the global change in entrepreneurial work behavior," says Craig. "I listed features I felt were critical for a space and suggestions for expanding the appeal. This blog post generated interest from people in the U.S., Canada, and Germany who were willing to talk to me and coach me through the process."



In an effort to build on the existing coworking community in Canada, Craig partnered with a Toronto commercial real estate investor who asked him one simple question: "Do you think coworking is a viable business in Toronto?" Craig said "yes" and backed up his response with research, stats, and an analysis of this popular concept in the U.S. The two soon met in Toronto,

toured the commercial space the investor owned, and Craig moved to Toronto in September 2010.

He was well-equipped with the knowledge, the expertise, and the enthusiasm for expanding the coworking movement in Canada and was destined to turn his favourite quote into reality: "Veni Vidi Vici" (Latin for I came. I saw. I conquered... famously coined by Julius Caesar). And that he did.



ABOUT LONGBRANCH COWORKING

Longbranch Coworking opened on September 20, 2010. The name Longbranch dates back to 1930 when it was a village in Toronto's south-west area. The coworking facility is a shared workspace that offers an open, on demand space for freelancers, entrepreneurs, start-ups, small businesses, and other independent professionals. Formerly a popular bowling alley (the original hardwood lanes and pin markers are part of the new modern design!), the company offers lease-free packages, affordable monthly or yearly space, usage of office equipment, furnished private or open-concept offices with full online access, parking, transportation (TTC, Go, and Pearson International Airport), boardrooms, a brainstorming section, locked storage, a café, an events venue, and an opportunity to conduct business in an inspiring and productive environment.

"Because each professional is not employed by the same organization, the environment is like a community," says Craig. "Many workers share the same values and they're interested in potential business synergies with others. Everyone sees new ideas develop and there's a social, collaborative and informal aspect to Longbranch Coworking."

"We're a new way to work. It's so much more than just a traditional office because it is where clients share energy and ideas. It's an alternative to working in isolation or at a coffee shop," says Craig. "In fact, a 2007 Stats Canada survey states that many independent professionals worried about losing human interaction after the loss of a job. Coworking is a great alternative."



LONGBRANCH COWORKING



www.longbranchcoworking.com

HISTORY OF COWORKING

Coworking began in 2005 by Brad Neuberg (a software engineer known for his emerging web technologies and creator of a coworking site called the Hat Factory in San Francisco—a work loft that housed three technology workers and was open to other professionals.) to describe a physical space he called "the 9 to 5 group." Today, over 400 coworking spaces span six continents worldwide with San Francisco leading the way. Other metropolitan cities like Portland, Seattle, Austin, and New York have also caught on to the coworking movement.

"Coworking is going to continue to grow," says Craig. "Cell phones and WiFi has made it easier for people to be mobile when they're working and an increase in self-employed professionals only means a change in work style is imminent."



CRAIG BAUTE - EXPLORER, RISK TAKER, AND ENERGETIC VISIONARY

THE JOURNEY OF A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL

Born in St. Joseph, Michigan on March 4, 1986, Craig grew up in Benton Harbor, Michigan, an impoverished U.S. town of 10,000 people.

“The majority of people were African American, but as a kid, I rarely thought of being in the minority and didn’t really see a difference,” says Craig. “My father encouraged us to take pride in our community and to always give back. One way was to care for neglected pieces of land between roadways. We cut the grass, trimmed the trees, and picked up all the litter regularly. I’m still a big advocate of the city and I’m always looking for ways to improve it. ”

The middle child of three (there are no signs of a syndrome!), Craig was an adventurous, happy, and an optimistic child. A curious eighth grader, he had already started reading the local newspaper (thanks to his father’s insistence that he be informed about the community) and left little or no time for homework. But learning in the classroom and debating finances, stocks or business trends with his fellow 12-year-olds were two of his early passions. He could easily do math at an algebraic level, eventually preparing him for the business world (he still does math problems when he’s bored!). But Craig wasn’t just a left brain kind of kid. He was an activist and got involved in his community by volunteering at his church, fundraising at events, and helping out at organizations like Habitat for Humanity.

Craig’s parents instilled the old-fashioned virtues of discipline, hard work, and trust in their children who “knew what was expected and lived up to those standards.” Yearly family vacations and daily family dinners were a must. Family walks were also a time for communication with each other and a time when fatherly advice was most often given.

Craig’s father was an IT specialist who taught him to think critically and be a forward thinker. A hardworking professional for many years, he is now retired and “enjoys people again” according to Craig. But it was Craig’s mother who inspired his compassion for people and making a difference in their lives. She managed Milestone, a non-profit facility for the mentally challenged and is now the activities director at a nursing home in St. Joseph. “My mother taught us to accept all people and to always lead in the right direction,” says Craig.

Today, as the manager of Longbranch Coworking, he is a natural born leader, with an analytical mind, quick wit, and possesses strategic planning skills that reach beyond his years! He is a doer and a compassionate professional who has admirably built a career in coworking, raising the bar each day.



To stay competitive and at the top of his industry, Craig says “you can’t be an expert in everything. I maintain focus and passion by reading everything (Fast Company and Wired are his favourite mags!), listening to National Public Radio, meeting lots of people, attending business events, and maintaining a positive and happy mindset.” In fact, his smile does not wash away...ever!



EXPERTISE AND A WAY OF LIFE

Craig's multi-faceted responsibilities as the manager of Longbranch Coworking include maintaining day-to-day operations of the West Toronto facility, acquiring new clients, developing partnerships, and conducting promotional events that keep the company top-of-mind.

"My job depends on an understanding of what's going on in my space," says Craig. "So that I can help others connect and build a stronger community."

He is happy with the progressive increase in clients that have moved into Longbranch Coworking. His media exposure is on the rise and he's received accolades for his down-to-earth and polished way of doing business.

"My goal for Longbranch is to grow multiple locations around the Greater Toronto Area," says Craig. "We want to be accessible to independent professionals in all parts of the city and I want the members to eventually drive the business."

When he's not immersed in running the coworking business, organizing a VIP affair at the facility, or increasing his social media exposure online, Craig enjoys working out, reading, travelling (he's a natural hot spots enthusiast!), hiking, playing tennis, or just hanging out at coffee shops (for inspiration that is!). A social butterfly and networker extraordinaire,

Craig maintains work-life balance by having an active social life which includes catching blockbuster movies on the big screen. He's been known to sneak Taco Bell tacos into theatres! And it's no secret that he has watched every episode of the hit TV series *Sex and the City*! Why? Remember his insatiable hunger for knowledge? Well...it applies to learning about women too!

A lover of art, Craig is also drawn to finely crafted furniture. His favourite piece is his Eames Lounge Chair by Herman Miller—given to him as a combined gift from his father and his mentor, John Berry who was VP of communications at Herman Miller (and he was his professor for a course called Design for Non-designers at Grand Valley State University). "The greatest lesson I learned from him was to deliver an honest product and to continue my analysis of the economic impact of design on business and communities." It all connects to make an effective and productive work environment, he says.

At the end of the day, Craig's youthful leadership, forward thinking, and boundless energy serve as a platform for his mission to make coworking a popular and recognized work style in today's business world. So how does Craig maintain his joie de vivre and energy while working tirelessly to make his mark in business? "I don't work at home and I like to have fun," says Craig. It's a good balance and a good mix for a movement he is determined to expand as big changes continue to unfold in the workforce today.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Geneviève D'Souza

Media & Promotions Manager

GCommunications

416.801.2171

genevieve@gcommunications.net

