

## BUSINESS:



ROB MCCORMICK Examiner

Corporate Consultant Sheila Crook is pictured in her home office in Peterborough.

# Sheila Crook returns home to launch new business

Sheila Crook is glad to be back.

The graduate of Fleming College and Queen's University who has run her own consulting business since 1991, and her husband, Mike, who recently retired from the Bank of Nova Scotia, have lived and worked all over the province, and recently returned to their native Peterborough after about 15 years in the London area.

Now, Crook, 55, is re-launching her business in the local market.

Her early career was in social work, in mental health and addictions.

"That was my passion," she says. "I really enjoyed working with that clientele, and every day I had the opportunity to see the amazing resilience of the human spirit as they worked through their challenges. And when they were ready to be reintegrated back into the workplace, the clients and the employers would be asking, over and over again, what they could be doing better, how they could do something

different and better for their employees because of the challenges they were experiencing."

Out of that, Crook says, her company, SMC Performance Plus, was born.

"I introduced occupational health, prevention and promotion strategies to the workforce, long before it was common practice," she said.

In 1998 she graduated with a degree in educational and organizational psychology from Queen's.

"From there I began shifting from more individually focused strategies to more organization-wide systems and strategies that could enhance the workplace," she said.

Five years ago Crooks received the Canada Leadership Award from the Canadian Business and Professional Women (BPW).

Today she offers her corporate clients "customized performance solutions that address four key performance drivers: profit and results; product and service efficiencies and excellence; process improvements; and people and leadership."

The two biggest challenges

businesses face today, Crook says, are regulatory requirements and paperwork processes, "the bureaucratic red tape that can bog them down," and the "recruiting, retaining and developing the top talent for their organizations."

The return to Peterborough has been pleasant for Crook and her husband, who is also her business manager.

"We're just thrilled to be back in Peterborough," she said. "Having family here, we have been back throughout the years. It's amazing what Peterborough has done over the last 15 or 20 years in terms of the downtown. There has been a lot of effort and work downtown in terms of its culture, and the restaurants are fabulous. The zoo is spectacular, and all the pathways and green spaces are beautiful. "We are just very impressed with what Peterborough has to offer, and I'm really excited about bringing my company and what we have to offer back to this market."

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