

Globetrotting Kabam executive 'game' for anything in video world

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

Growing up in a Hornby farmhouse, Derek Sidebottom says he wasn't exactly a video game junkie and spent a lot of time playing soccer at Pineview Public School.

But now that he's a globetrotting executive overseeing hundreds of employees for one of the world's top social gaming companies-- California-based Kabam-- the 38-year-old finds himself plugged in to the latest popular releases.

"I have to keep playing to keep my street cred up in the social gaming community," laughed Sidebottom from his Silicon Valley office.

"Most of our games are strategy-driven with massive multiplayer capability, so you can have thousands people playing a game at the same time. One of the first games I played in, I joined an alliance with a group from Taiwan and with the chat features that you can add, it's really neat to be able to interact with people half way around the world."

Sidebottom worked as vice-president of human resources for another popular interactive entertainment brand, EA Sports, for two years before being hired by Kabam to be its "Chief People Officer" this spring.

With offices in San Francisco, Redwood City, Ca., Beijing and Luxembourg, Sidebottom oversees approximately 450 employees at Kabam, which has skyrocketed up the gaming industry ladder in just

a couple of years from having a staff of 25.

Its 2009 release, *Kingdoms of Camelot*, was one of the first successful strategy games on Facebook and the company's "free-to-play, frictionless model" has attracted many casual gamers to sample the product online without any startup cost.

"Before, you'd have to ask mom and dad for \$40 or whatever to go to the mall and get the latest video game, but with these new social games, you can access your computer browser and start playing for free right away," said Sidebottom, who went to Stewartrtown Middle School before moving on to Milton District High School. "Then you can pick things up and add features and move faster in the game if I keep paying, and have the option to decide whether I like it or not."

"That's the emerging model in the gaming industry. It's a little different for us in that we're chasing the core gamer, so the games are more in-depth and engaging when you're involving thousands of players at once. The games take hours to play, not just 10 minutes and we find there are a lot of multi-taskers out there who might play for a few minutes on their computer at work while they're juggling other things."

Sidebottom graduated from the Univer-



**DEREK
SIDEBOTTOM**

sity of Ottawa with a BA in psychology before earning a grad diploma from Humber College's human resources program. He received his executive MBA from Athabasca University in Alberta and joined the work force as an HR generalist with Telesat in Ottawa, later serving as the director of HR Global Programs for the Corel Corporation until moving on to EA Sports.

Using a sports analogy, part of Sidebottom's job is to find and recruit the top players in the industry to join Kabam, much like trying to lure free agents to a certain team.

"We're in the interactive entertainment business and it's really not that big of an industry in terms of the number of people working for the top corporations, so

the only competitive advantage between them is what people they can get to work for them," he added, noting that Kabam's workforce is expected to double in 2011.

"Most of these people who work for these companies are so talented at what they do, they could work anywhere in the world they choose. As the CPO, my job is to make their time here enjoyable and provide a work environment that's unique and special, with things like gym facilities and catered lunches for the employees. The focus is to bring in excellent people and we're always on the lookout for new talent."

Sidebottom resides in San Francisco with wife Allison (Simpson), a Burlington native. His mother, Anne Benest, lives in Georgetown while father Ken currently resides in Acton.

Police blotter: Trio face charges

Three men have been charged after Halton Police were called to a residence on Academy Rd. in Georgetown after a resident saw three males damaging a pickup truck about 9:50 p.m. Wednesday.

Police responded and found the headlights and windshield had been smashed and there was also damage to the body of the truck, but the suspects were gone.

Police report three men arrived while officers were at the residence and they were arrested in connection with the incident.

Charged with mischief is Ryan Dowling,

34, of Acton, Darryl Dowling, 34, of Acton and Jason Chedore, 35, of New Carlisle, Quebec.

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Halton Regional Police seized about \$40,000 worth of marijuana plants (50) growing in a wooded area on Scotsdale Farm property in the Trafalgar Rd./ 27 Sideroad area Monday (July 25).

Police received a tip about the three-foot-high plants from a person who had spotted them on the property. Police have no suspects.

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