

**Dallas Mercer**  
**Innovation Award**

*President and owner, Dallas Mercer Consulting Inc.  
St. John's*

*Recognizes an entrepreneur whose business is employing innovation in technology, capitalizing on processes to grow, having success in international markets, or who has recognized a new market, service or opportunity and has been a leader in that field. Sponsored by **Scotiabank**.*

NLOWE's Innovation Award seeks to honour a woman who has recognized a new market, product, service or opportunity, and who has led the way in establishing this new field. Dallas Mercer certainly fits that bill, having had the foresight to seize a new market for consultation services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

After being employed in the worker's compensation industry for 15 years, Mercer saw a need for greater employer education in this area. This lack of knowledge in disability management was costing businesses money, evidenced by the fact that Newfoundland and Labrador employers pay the highest average worker's compensation assessments in Canada.

Seeing an opportunity to provide much needed professional solutions, in 2002 she started Dallas Mercer Consulting Inc, specializing in disability management.

At the time, she had left the province temporarily to work in the industry in Montreal but commuted home to see clients monthly. A year later, she took a risk and decided to move back to St. John's and grow her business by building a great team of disability managers.

In Montreal, using disability management consultants to handle worker's compensation claims was commonplace, but Newfoundland and Labrador companies were unaware such services existed.

Often underselling herself to set up a client base, her biggest challenge in the beginning was proving to companies that her services could allow them to recover thousands of dollars in overpaid worker's compensation premiums, plus interest.

Eight years later, the business has 13 employees and has expanded to include Occupational Health and Safety services provided by in-house safety engineers.

She has been proactive in recognizing the evolving needs of the industry. In 2004, for example, federal legislation was introduced that established a legal duty for all employers and supervisors to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of workers and the public. In response, she developed a two-day manager and supervisor course to help them understand their liabilities and the importance of due diligence in preventing injuries and accidents.

Her knack for innovation has gone a long way internally as well. During an extended leave out of the country in 2008 for example, at the height of her business's growth, she used web technology such as Skype to stay in regular contact with her staff and clients, thus allowing the business to flourish in her absence.

Mercer, a native of Harbour Grace South, is also completing a Master's program in Disability Management from the University of Northern British Columbia.