

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

Brampton Entrepreneurs Derrick and Marilyn Raphael develop ICONIC Talent in the GTA



Derrick and Marilyn Raphael, co-founders of ICON Talent Partners

This month's client spotlight is the dynamic duo, Derrick and Marilyn Raphael. They are the co-founders of ICON Talent Partners, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to training and placing diverse talent in high-impact sectors. The Raphaels aim to close the achievement gap for visible minorities. They focus on BIPOC talent who often lack access to high-level jobs. Their current target demographic is students, young professionals, and mid-careerists.

Their Entrepreneurial Beginnings

At the heart of this venture is a love story. In 2013, Marilyn was in Brampton, Ontario, doing health policy work at Peel Public Health. Derrick was in Fayetteville, North Carolina, becoming a lawyer. The two met through an online dating site. Long story short, they are now married with two children, Harper and Preston. One of the many things that built their connection across 1,204 kilometers is a shared passion for uplifting their community. Even after all of life's ups and downs, this passion has not only remained but intensified.



Marilyn and Derrick's first in-person meeting

In 2019, while working as an articling student, Derrick felt something missing in his life. It was on his quest for fulfillment that the concept of ICON came to him. Derrick shared the idea with Marilyn, and she was immediately onboard. After a career pivot to investment banking, she knew first-hand the opportunities available in high-impact sectors. ICON was Marilyn's chance to share this experience with the people in her community. ***"Community is always top of mind for us, we really believe in lifting as we climb and making sure that we open doors for folks,"*** says Marilyn.



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PARTNERS**

ICON Talent Partners logo

Bringing vision to fruition

Equipped with a vision, Derrick and Marilyn started pitching their idea. ***"At first, people weren't so receptive, or at least it seemed like a much slower process but you know we were putting in that work,"*** says Derrick. Their hard work paid off, with companies such as Fasken and KPMG becoming ICON partners. These organizations were a good start, but if they were to meet their goal of introducing diversity to high-impact sectors, then they needed more partners.



ICON launch event

As fate would have it, COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests of 2020 sped up ICON's growth trajectory. Due to restrictions on physical gathering, all ICON's offerings moved online. It made it easier for ICON fellows to take part in programming. Simultaneously, the BLM protests of 2020 led to increased awareness of racial inequality. ***"I do feel that there is a very different environment in Corporate Canada before and after George Floyd's death,"*** says Derrick. One notable difference is the demand for organizations to diversify their corporate structures. As a result, ICON has received an outpour of support from corporations and individuals alike. Derrick says, "it's kind of a surreal moment to be here now, but it took a lot of hard work from myself and Marilyn." They now train and help place top-tier talent in investment banking, asset management, management consulting, corporate law, venture capital, and tech start-ups.

Building an ICONIC future

As ICON grows, the Raphaels continue to think of new ways to help diverse talent find meaningful work. In this endeavour, connecting with community partners has been of great help. The Brampton Entrepreneur Centre has been a source of support as they make connections in Brampton. Fasken also remains an active ICON talent partner. Notably, they have created a scholarship program for incoming Black and Indigenous first-year students attending Canadian law schools in the fall of 2021.

The program provides students with tangible opportunities to succeed through mentorship, financial support, and access to people in the law profession. As Marilyn and Derrick continue to develop ICON, their continued passion for a better community remains key to their success.

Marilyn's advice for aspiring entrepreneurs: ***"just do it, get out of your own way... get in the habit of doing it, because as the first law of motion suggests, an object at rest will stay at rest and an object in motion will continue in motion. So, it's important to get in motion."***

***To find out more about ICON Talent Partners,
you can head to their website.***