

This Nerds for hire

Call it revenge of the nerds.

Until Nov. 30th, four young men – Paul Iafolla of Scarborough, Shane Thompson, Aaron Wood and Ryan Winsborrow of Markham, - worked for Interlog, a big internet provider with offices in Toronto.

Thompson and Wood worked extra hours for what was called Interlog's On-Site department – they did house calls to setup computer networks, get printers to work, or make reaching the internet easier to reach for users.

"It's very easy to fix a computer if you're right there in front of it." Wood said recently. "We got a lot of repeat calls."

But then a bigger outfit called PSINet snapped up Interlog and, in November, it let the whole technical support department go.



From Left to right (Paul Iafolla, Ryan Winsborrow, Shane Thompson, Aaron Wood)

The four nerds (as they are affectionately known to a lot of their friends) decided to start their own outfit. They took the Young Entrepreneurs Program, co-sponsored by the town of Markham, which could teach them how.

They spent \$125 apiece and two Saturdays on the course and finished last month. It taught the nerds about the free resources available to people who want to start their own business, how to do market research, prepare a business plan and where to advertise.

"We help people with pretty much any kind of computer problem," Iafolla said.

By today's standards, a nerd is someone who is understanding and familiar with computers.

"It's not as derogatory a word as it used to be," Wood said.

Is it a term of pride yet?

"It will be when where done," Wood vowed this month.

The 12-hour workshop, preceded by a \$25 introductory session lasting two hours, is a requirement for getting a \$7,500 Young Entrepreneurs loan from the province. More information is available from the town's small business consultant, Ailene Holder, at 475-4890.

"If you have a dream, just go for it. That's what I think," Winsborrow said.