

## For the Love of Alpacas: Spotlight on a Unique Passion

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A normal day for Andrew Schilling-Payne consists of meeting with internal client teams and updating them on the progress of their projects. But before he even makes it to the office, Andrew meets with 18 four-legged friends—alpacas, in fact.

As a solutions architect for [Epsilon](#), Andrew is constantly looking for new ways to solve problems for clients whether that be choosing a database platform or business intelligence vendor. Taking care of a farm is a different animal but still requires thinking on your toes.

Andrew Schilling-Payne and some of his alpacas

Andrew and his wife Rachael hail from rural parts of the United Kingdom. So when they made the move to New Hampshire, they wanted to bring a little bit of home along with them. Their farm, Shechem Alpacas, started out as just one acre and four alpacas but has grown to 23 acres with 18 alpacas (and counting).

“Things grow pretty fast around here,” Andrew joked.

Angel and her Cria (baby Alpaca) Truffle

“I’m a very technology oriented person. Finding new ways to solve client problems is my passion. But, at the farm, I’m using totally different skills,” Andrew explained. “I’m not the handiest guy, so I’m learning to fix things as I go. It’s so far removed from what I do that it’s relaxing.”

He feeds every animal their own bowl of alpaca-formulated grain in the morning and puts out fresh hay and water for them. Once a month, Andrew conducts “herd maintenance” which includes checking their weight, toenails and giving dewormer injections. Andrew hires a professional shearer to shear the alpacas once a year and sends it to a nearby mill that makes the fleece into winter wear which he then sells at the farm store and during the craft fair held at the Epsilon Wakefield office every year.

“I love the outdoors, working with the animals, and knowing that I’m building something. I’m ultimately responsible for all the decisions around the farm and the success and quality of my herd is a result of choices I make,” Andrew said.

The skills Andrew gains in the farm have its place in Andrew’s 8-to-5, too. “It’s given me a greater appreciation for the amount of work required to effectively identify a target market and engage that audience of consumers.

“Though the scale of marketing initiatives for Shechem Alpacas is much smaller than anything we do at Epsilon, the same principles apply to connecting my brand to my customers, maintaining that engagement and growing the business,” Andrew said. “For my business, seeing all of this from the ‘client’ perspective provides some interesting insight into the challenges our Epsilon clients face with their own marketing efforts.”

“It’s enormously challenging, but I love it!”

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