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**Get the job you want faster
with your ultimate career handbook**

Plus contact info for over 400 Employment Equity employers
who encourage applications from

**Visible Minorities ❖ Aboriginal Peoples
People with Disabilities ❖ Women**

Export Development Canada (EDC)



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Who we are

Export Development Canada (EDC) provides trade finance and risk management services to Canadian exporters and investors in up to 200 markets. Founded in 1944, EDC is a Crown corporation that operates as a commercial financial institution. EDC is financially self-sustaining and is a recognized leader in financial reporting, economic analysis and human resource management. EDC includes the largest pool of specialists in foreign-trade financing support in Canada. Our organization has been recognized by Maclean's magazine as one of *Canada's Top 100 Employers* for a fifth consecutive year and offers competitive compensation and benefits.

What we look for

- Bachelor of Commerce/Business Administration and/or MBA with a concentration in Finance, Accounting, International Business or related field
- Individuals who have a desire to work in a fast-paced environment with competing priorities and deadlines
- Ability to interpret financial statements and strong analytical skills
- Strong interpersonal and influencing skills with the ability to successfully deal with challenging situations
- Team player, willing to act as a problem solver within the unit to achieve team solutions
- Ability to communicate effectively in both official languages
- Other languages an asset
- Relevant work experience in a financial setting is an asset

Want to work for one of Canada's Top 100 Employers?

You can view our current opportunities and submit your application on our website: www.edc.ca/careers. EDC is committed to employment equity and actively encourages applications from women, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and visible minorities.

Exportation et développement Canada (EDC)



Un monde d'opportunités à saisir

edc.ca/carrieres

Qui nous sommes

Organisme de crédit à l'exportation du Canada, Exportation et développement Canada (EDC) offre des services de financement du commerce extérieur et de gestion des risques aux exportateurs et aux investisseurs canadiens actifs sur quelque 200 marchés. Créée en 1944, EDC est une société d'État qui fonctionne comme une institution financière commerciale. Pour une cinquième année consécutive, la Société fait partie de la liste des 100 meilleurs employeurs au Canada établie par le magazine Maclean's. Elle offre en outre une rémunération et des avantages sociaux concurrentiels.

Ce que nous recherchons

- Baccalauréat en commerce/Administration des affaires et/ou MBA (finances, comptabilité, affaires internationales) ou dans un domaine connexe
- Désir de travailler dans un milieu affairé, où les priorités peuvent être divergentes, et les échéances, serrées
- Très bon esprit d'analyse et capacité d'interpréter des états financiers
- Entregent et capacité de traiter les situations difficiles
- Esprit d'équipe, capacité à résoudre les problèmes
- Aptitude à communiquer dans les deux langues officielles
- Autres langues est un atout
- Expérience de travail ou stage pertinent dans un cadre financier est un atout

Vous voulez travailler pour l'un des 100 meilleurs employeurs au Canada?

Vous pouvez consulter la liste des postes à pourvoir et soumettre votre demande sur notre site web: www.edc.ca/carrieres. EDC souscrit au principe de l'équité en matière d'emploi et invite les femmes, les autochtones, les personnes handicapées et les membres d'un groupe de minorité visible à poser leur candidature.

Canada

EDC

DiversityCanada.com's

Employers Want YOU 2007

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Be part of Canada's changes

by Celia Sankar

Diversity is in my blood — literally. Born of a mother whose ancestors came from Africa and of a father whose ancestors came from India, I feel privileged to be so personally acquainted with the issue. Through my parents' 45 years (and counting) of togetherness, I have witnessed that different cultures can come together harmoniously and that life is, in fact, richer, more interesting and more beautiful because of the mixture.

It was not only at home that diversity was an integral part of my life.

I grew up in Trinidad, an island of under two million souls, who can trace their origins back to almost every corner of the planet. "Here every creed and race finds an equal place," each citizen affirms in singing Trinidad's national anthem. And although my homeland is not perfect, it has achieved a remarkable level of integration and harmony, which so impressed South African anti-apartheid fighter Archbishop Desmond Tutu that he dubbed us a "rainbow country".

Even with that background, when I came to Canada, diversity was nowhere on my agenda. But as fate would have it, it was a subject I could not ignore.

Canada had held out a promise as a land where I could advance my writing career. It lived up to that promise, and enabled me to set out on a cross-country book promotion tour. As I travelled across this vast, rich and beautiful land, I had the opportunity to speak with literally thousands of people, many of them immigrants. Along the way, I also met people with disabilities and members of Aboriginal communities.

The picture that emerged from their stories was rather disturbing.

For many, life in Canada was marked by dashed hopes, daily humiliation and, in some cases, near destitution.

It's one thing to be aware on a purely intellectual level that fellow Canadians who come from certain backgrounds face tremendous hardships. It's quite another to actually listen to their frustration at a system that seems indifferent to their potential, that seems to say they are not worthy.

Although I belong to the demographic, I had been one of the fortunate ones. But why had it been so for me? And what could be done — and more specifically, what could I do — to help those who are just as deserving of the opportunity to make their contribution to society?

It was a question I set out to explore the next year as

I embarked on a more extensive book tour.

The picture that emerged, in the end, was encouraging.

I feel proud as a Canadian to say much is being done, by official authorities, by corporate Canada and by traditionally under-represented groups and individuals to bring about a more inclusive society.

This is as it should be. You see, it takes a concerted effort by all of us to bring into being a world where diversity is embraced and people of every background live in harmony.

The DiversityCanada Foundation was born to play a part in making that vision a reality.

Our discussions with Canadians on both sides of the equation pointed to the formula for success in diversity at work. Jobseekers must not only be qualified, but also need to be equipped with specific skills required for job-search and on-the-job success. Employers need to not only state they support diversity, but to actively invite traditionally under-represented groups to join their team and implement policies to make them feel welcome.

This handbook is one of the resources we offer to bring together diverse job seekers and employers who value diversity. Another important resource is our website, which you can visit at <http://DiversityCanada.com>. There, you will find more career development tips, multimedia and interactive tools, information on companies seeking to diversify, and most crucially for jobseekers, actual job offers.

Canada is changing, opportunities are opening up and it is those who adapt today that will reap the greatest rewards. Count yourself among them.



Inspirational author Celia Sankar is the founder and executive director of the DiversityCanada Foundation.



Kareena Felker recently graduated from Ryerson's Photography program. She won Yorkdale Mall's national fashion photography contest. She is a

freelance photographer and assistant to Toronto's top fashion photographers. Web: kareenafelker.com



Anne Sowden is a certified professional member of the Association of Image Consultants International, one of only ten in Canada, and

is the immediate past president of the Toronto Chapter of the association. Web: hereslookingatyou.ca



Photographer **Jeff Hui** is a co-founder and the creative director of Fizheye Creative Inc., a Toronto new media solutions company. He

was inspired eight years ago to follow in the footsteps of his father, a well-known photographer in the advertising industry. Web: fizheye.com



Amanda Reid has a BA in criminology from the University of Toronto, and is a graduate of The School of Makeup Art. In addition to modeling for our

"Dressing for Success" spread, she did the make-up for the shoot. Her dream is to go to Hollywood and be a make-up artist to the stars.

Cammy Fung, who attends the Ontario College of Art & Design, models just for fun; she plans to be an art director.

Percy Gallegos, a mortgage specialist, attended York University and Glendon College. He enjoys reading and traveling. This was his first photo shoot.

Lisa Santo is completing a Bachelor of Design in Fashion Communications at Ryerson Univeristy. She models part time, but her goal is to run her own business.

Writer **Johannah Kristolaitis**, a graduate of the University of Toronto, was born in the Big Smoke and now makes her home in North Bay in Northern Ontario.

Chief writer **Deborah Aarts** graduated from Queen's University with a BA in History and promptly launched herself as one of Canada's bright young journalists.

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Scanning the Canadian job scene

6.3: Canadian unemployment rate in November, 2006; a reduction of 0.3 % over the last year's rate, meaning more people are working.

18.2: Percentage, in 2001, of the Canadian population born in other countries (some 5,645,800 people).

51.2: Percentage of disabled population with jobs (versus 82 per cent for those without disabilities).

63: Employment rate of immigrants of prime working age (24 to 44) after two years in the country; of these, 41 per cent found a job in their chosen career.

67.7: Percentage of women of working age in Canada who were employed in 2003.



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Embracing diversity as strength

Montreal students volunteer to boost multiculturalism

When as a McGill student Eva Vanek saw a need to support diversity in her community, she didn't wait for someone else to do something about it. Instead, she rolled up her sleeves, assembled a crew of volunteers, took on a pile of paperwork, and led the effort herself.

Vanek is the founder and former president of Community Outreach For Immigrants (COFI) McGill, a non-profit volunteer organization that links recent (and even not-so-recent) immigrants to Montreal with students at McGill University. Modeled on the federal HOST program (which runs under Citizenship and Immigration Canada), COFI seeks to empower people from diverse backgrounds and foster a positive experience of adaptation and settlement in Canada through social interaction and friendship.

Essentially, it's a "buddy system" designed to help acquaint individuals with what the country has to offer.

Diversity has long been a passion for Vanek. The 24-year-old's travels have taken her across Canada and all over the world, from diving reefs in Thailand to remote rural villages in Costa Rica to English academies in the Czech Republic. Along the way, she has met hundreds of individuals from all sorts of backgrounds, securing her faith in the value of multiculturalism.

COFI originally emerged as a supplement to Vanek's academic thesis. As the project gained momentum, however, it gained community partners and official recognition by the Student's Society of McGill.

"We aim to bridge gaps between peoples of different backgrounds," Vanek says, "and actively embrace the concept of diversity as a strength."

Those accessing the services range in age from seven to 70. They have arrived in Montreal for a variety of reasons; some to be with family, some for freedom from different types of oppression, and many seeking better job opportunities. This last reason is the source of most of the frustration among COFI participants, Vanek says. She has met lawyers working as nannies and surgeons driving taxis, all struggling to make ends meet while trying to launch a career.



EVA VANEK

continued...

“Most have their own horror stories of barriers,” Vanek says. “This is so unfortunate, because I believe there are so many ways to actively address these issues.”

Together, the clients and volunteers participate in everything from massive potluck dinners to quiet cups of coffee. In linking young Canadians at the university with those striving to succeed in their new country, COFI delivers a message of hope — something sorely needed for anyone taking on a new endeavour.

“It seeks to break helplessness,” Vanek explains. “For example, if a person participating in the program comes home after a long day of defeat, a friendly, sincere volunteer can hopefully make some difference in finding strength. (We) provide a familiar person to contact through thick and thin, someone who can help combat the lows — the failed job interviews, the discrimination encountered, etc.”

It’s a simple solution, one which Vanek believes can work across the country.

Vanek can be contacted at:
evaevaland@gmail.com



YOUTH SPEAK:

"(I hope) to get into the advertising industry, work at an agency, and live life!" - Vivien Wong



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Athabasca University is committed to diversity not just in its student body, but in the terrific jobs that people from all backgrounds and walks of life can experience here.

AU, specializing in offering distance and online education courses to 34,000 students each year, is fully committed to employment equity. We encourage applications from women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities. We feel a great responsibility to offer equitable working conditions to individuals who are traditionally underrepresented in universities. This includes fair pay practices, fairness in training and promotion, and opportunities for meaningful career advancement.

We invite you to bring your unique talents and experiences to AU, where your skills and ambitions will flourish in an environment of respect and dignity. For a complete list of current career opportunities, please visit us online at:



www1.athabascau.ca/hr/careers/jobs

Assessing and planning

You know it. It's time for a new career. Whether you've only recently decided to find a new occupation or you've been casually hunting for years, it's time to take action.

If you're heading out of university with no experience, facing a serious disability, trying to raise a child, or struggling to learn English or French in a new country, starting a new job search may seem daunting, exhausting, even frightening.

But the situation need not be discouraging.

With proper planning, hard work, attention to

detail, and, yes, a bit of luck, you should be on a promising career path in no time. The key to success is making a good start: pinpointing what you want and determining the steps you need to take to achieve your goal.

"You could do a self-analysis, if you knew the things to ask yourself," suggests Lorraine Pura, labour market analyst at Saskatchewan-based Metis Employment and Training of Saskatoon, Inc. "For example, (ask yourself) if you know how to look in the papers for jobs, or if you know how to use computers."

As communications and marketing specialist for Toronto-based Accessible Community Counselling and Employment Services (ACCES), Shawn Mintz witnesses as many as 10,000 clients make a go at starting over their lives and careers each year.

While 80 per cent of ACCES' services are geared toward new Canadians, the agency is open to anyone (it also operates the City of Toronto-funded START program, to help single mothers on social assistance get job-related computer skills).

In Mintz's experience, a good search starts immediately after you've made the decision to change career paths.

"The faster you access the services, the better," he stresses.

Job hunters should explore different options first, using a mixture of interests, prior training, and feasibility. From there, perseverance is key. It might be a lengthy process, and you must be willing to approach it with strong resolve.

"It's about not giving up," Mintz explains. "It's about remembering that it's going to be challenging. It's about persevering and maintaining a positive outlook."

By starting with the right attitude and taking the proper steps, you'll be amazed how far you'll go. It's a strategy that pays off: 82 per cent of all ACCES clients find a good job.

It's about not giving up!

"The advice we give people," Mintz says, "is that you really can do it."

Here are a few more tips to help you get started:

Get online...

The truth is, an enormous amount of career information is available online. Virtually every modern industry has a slew of sites devoted to it, many with detailed facts and employee testimonials. Visit <http://DiversityCanada.com> and go to the Career Center to find links to a multitude of helpful sites that will point you to various career options. Are you technologically illiterate? No matter. Even if you don't know the difference between a URL and a USB, it's a good idea to book an appointment at an agency like ACCES or Job Connect or with your school's career counsellor. They're there to help you through it all, including navigating the digital maze.

...but don't get bogged down.

While online research can provide plenty of background information, it doesn't show the whole picture. There's more to career research than words on a screen (or on paper). You

might want to explore alternative means of investigating whether a certain career path is right for you. Even something as simple as testing out a hypothetical job routine – for example, trying out a 5:00 a.m. wake-up call or spending the entire day crunching numbers – can be an awesome way to gauge if a certain career is for you.

Get out there...

A hands-on approach to occupational study is almost always the best way to see if a particular industry is for you. Go talk to employers and workers in an industry you're interested in, and check out what it's all about. Say you're interested in becoming a surveyor. Establish contact with some contractors or foremen, preferably (but not necessarily) someone with whom you already have some sort of contact. Offer to buy the person a coffee so the two of you can discuss the nuts and bolts of the industry. While this approach may seem intimidating or presumptuous, more often than not employers are receptive to the questions of newcomers; after all, you may be the future of their industry. Just remember to work around their schedules, and not to take it personally if they're too busy to fit you in right away.

continued...

...but don't get discouraged.

Even if you've never had a meaningful job, there's no need to panic as you explore possible job paths. Industry inexperience is far more common than you may think it is. There's no need to lose hope. A lack of experience can be compensated for by upgrading your education or volunteering for a local non-profit organization. Also, there are some government-sponsored wage subsidies available for employers who hire inexperienced workers, making it an appealing option for many companies. Your local career center should be able to provide you with more information on such programs. All in all, a visit to a career center is a good idea. You may be surprised at how far simply having someone listen to your career hopes (or even confusion) will help to make the way forward clearer, and will help to keep your spirits up.

**YOUTH SPEAK:**

"The U of T 'extern' program helped me find a volunteer position with a social worker in Toronto, at a rehab hospital. I found the experience both enriching and educational, and it helped me reconsider my career options."

- Nadine McDonald

Oh where can my new job be?

Here's where to look for your next job:

The Internet:

Ever since the digital revolution took root in the 1990s, job-hunters have been speeding down the information superhighway in search of the perfect position. Virtually every major company has a "careers" section on their site, and there are several job boards where you will find announcements from a large number of employers. The DiversityCanada Foundation, publisher of this handbook, operates a website specifically designed to bring you career offers from employers looking to diversify their workforce. Visit <http://DiversityCanada.com>.

Pro: Volume, volume, volume. You'll have access to more postings than you can fathom. Plus, you can hunt in your pyjamas.

Con: When looking online, you may find something fantastic, only to scroll down and find out it's a three-year contract in Antarctica. Also, on certain sites, the anonymity of the 'Net can attract some shady employers.

The bottom line: As long as you proceed with caution and stick with reputable sources, the Internet could be your best friend as you aim toward employment.

Classified ads:

This one's been around for generations of career crusaders. Turn toward the back of your newspaper and you'll find an assortment of neatly-indexed, condensed postings of openings in your area.

Pro: You won't find many postings for Antarctica here, especially if it's a community-based publication.

Con: It's usually slim pickings if

you're looking for anything outside your hometown.

The bottom line: With such a brief format, the classifieds are still a great resource, particularly if you're pressed for time or hunting casually.

Career fairs:

The career fair presents a familiar sight for many veteran job seekers – vast convention centers packed to the gills with perky, smiling ambassadors for dozens of different companies. Loud, bustling, and often chaotic, career fairs are there explicitly for hunters like you.

Pro: With so many options available, you may find yourself drawn to an industry you may have never considered before. Many accessible and diverse employers choose to seek workers in this forum, since fairs tend to attract a broad range of applicants. Also, some companies accept resumes and interview on-site.

Con: In some cases, much of what you encounter will not be actual employers, but rather temp agencies or training organizations after your wallet, not your services.

The bottom line: Career fairs are never a bad idea to check out, but they're best used to complement, rather than replace, a more specific search.

On-campus recruitment:

This is a great option for individuals currently upgrading their education. As the school year progresses, many companies hold recruitment sessions for potential future employees at

continued...

campuses across the country. These sessions will often be smaller, more informal affairs, with presentations, plenty of glad-handing, and, quite often, free food.

Pro: Hey, the employer is coming to YOU! How much easier could it get?

Con: Companies are often looking for highly specific candidates, usually in professional or skilled trade areas. General arts and science students are usually out of luck.

The bottom line: On-campus recruiting makes a difficult process a breeze, provided you've got the specific skills they're looking for.

Cold calling:

For the truly brave, there is always the dark horse of the job hunt – the cold call. Rather than wait for a position to come up, cold callers use phone, email or snail mail to put their name in at their companies of choice.

Pro: Unsolicited resumes tend to stand out, causing employers to remember you as a genuinely interested candidate when a position opens up. Occasionally, if they're really impressed, they'll create a new position, just for you.

Con: You're likely going to get a lot of polite statements like, "We're not accepting resumes at this time," and the occasional ego-crushing hang-up. At times frustrating and downright demoralizing, this one ain't for the faint of heart.

The bottom line: If you're really determined to work at ABC Corp, cold calls can be a great way to show your enthusiasm – who knows what may happen.

Networking:

This is an excellent and effective method to get your name out there. Tell everyone from your hairdresser to your new neighbour to the kid selling lemonade on the corner that you're looking for work, and ask if they might have any idea about potential leads. Connections are invaluable in this day and age – actually they've always been – and you never know



YOUTH SPEAK:

"We know what we want to be," says Baseer Yasseen, an aspiring pharmacist (right), hanging out with friend Orville D'Souza. "But we're not sure if we'll get in (to the program)."

who the person you're speaking with knows.

Pro: Your doctor's brother's wife could be a partner in that law firm you've been checking out. With a few strategically placed phone calls, you may be able to net a lunch meeting. Plus, you'll build a solid roster of industry contacts that you'll likely be able to use throughout your career.

Con: "Selling" yourself at all times can be exhausting. After awhile, you may just want to make small talk about the latest Oilers game instead.

The bottom line: Networking is a wise idea in any job search. It shows you are keen, committed, resourceful and confident in your own abilities – attributes most employers are looking for.

No connections? No problem

Networking plays an important part in the job search. But if you don't know anyone in your industry of choice there are still ways to gain a competitive advantage in the job market.

Volunteer. Get out there and take part in as many related events as possible. Thinking of being a teacher? Sign on to teach a children's class at the library. Interested in public relations? Serve cocktails at the industry's big schmooze-fest. And if your heart is set on working at your local radio station, be the first in line to help out with their charity run. These activities provide a double-whammy – not only does volunteering look fabulous on a resume, but you'll be making fantastic connections as well.

Meet people. This may seem simplistic, but the best way to make connections is to get out there and make connections. If there is an association for your chosen field, find out if you can attend any of their events as a guest or if you can become an associate member at a reduced cost. Try to meet as many people as you can who are working in the career you're interested in. Ask what the climate is like for young workers and what new skills you'll need to succeed. Chances are the person you're talking to knows someone, who knows someone who's got the job for you.



YOUTH SPEAK:

"Letting people know you are looking for employment can be very useful. I quite often will put the word out when I'm looking for employment in a specific community or field. This has helped me to be referred to jobs, have my name recommended for interviews and ultimately connected me with employment."

- Shannon Simpson

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Crafting the perfect resume

The resume or curriculum vitae is a crucial document. It's a one-page encapsulation of who you are, what you've done, and why you'd be good for the job on offer.

If you have major gaps in employment, education or experience, you may want to adopt a resume style emphasizing skills rather than the traditional chronological accounts of employment.

"The most important thing is to sell your skills," suggests Karen Lamothe, Edmonton-based project coordinator for Alberta Learning Information Service. "And when you back up your skills, you have to back it up with the 'prove-it' theory."

Each statement of accomplishment should answer the 'Five w's' (who, what, where, why and when), and every achievement should be put into numbers as far as possible.

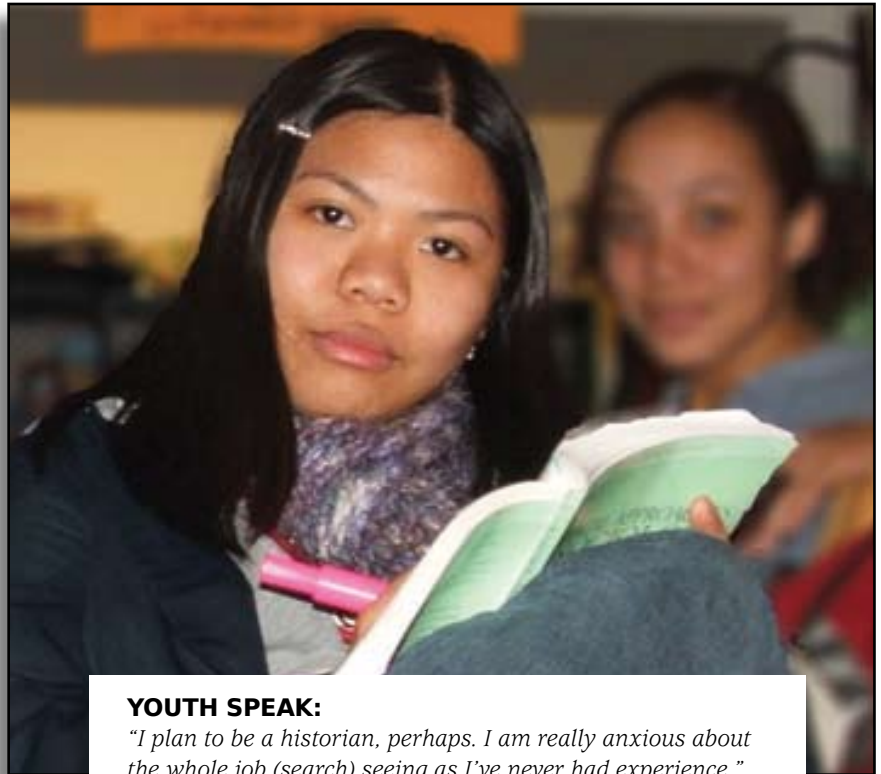
"Giving the numbers will help employers see the depth and breadth of your skills," Lamothe explains. "You need to sell (the employer) the skills, to let them know that you can do the task."

She also recommends starting the document off with a personal profile, detailing the number of years you've been in the industry, your credentials and skills, a few accomplishments related to the job in question, and a brief list of personal characteristics.

Here are some more tried-and-true tips to make your resume as powerful as possible:

Avoid empty statements. Don't just say, "Functions as a good leader." Explain how you have proven your leadership in the past. Employers get loads of these empty statements, and they tell very little about how you perform on the job. If you can't think of at least one example or experience (not necessarily job-related) that explains your statement, take it off your resume.

Tailor your resume to the job you're applying to. While you learned



YOUTH SPEAK:

"I plan to be a historian, perhaps. I am really anxious about the whole job (search) seeing as I've never had experience."

- Mikaela Valenzuela

a lot as a typist in Tehran or a cook in Calgary, the executives at the accounting firm to which you're now applying may not care. Perhaps driven by insecurity or lack of experience, many prospective employees choose to list every job they've ever had. However, in these instances, quality is more important than quantity. It's much more effective to prioritize and expand on relevant experience.

Highlight soft skills. Don't have any direct experience to list? Don't panic. More and more employers are placing value on a worker's ability to function within the organization. You can teach someone to do a task, but you can't teach them how to get along with co-workers. Communication skills, organizational expertise, and the ability to function amicably in the workplace are all qualities many

of today's bosses seek. So highlight these.

Avoid computer templates like the plague. Sure, that resume template that came with your software makes your resume look pretty spiffy on the screen. It's not going to help you out much, however, when your list of credentials looks exactly like hundreds of others. Use computer templates or resume packages to learn the basic structure of a resume; don't use them for style or design. Take some time to develop a clean, crisp, and unique format of your own. Get professional help, if necessary: it will almost certainly be a worthwhile investment.

Make your first page easy on the eye. Nothing distracts a potential employer more than a cluttered, unorganized resume. To avoid this, make your spacing and formatting

consistent, and be sure to leave plenty of white space. This is particularly important on the first page, which should present your most hireable attributes to your future boss. For an extra punch, place the stronger points of your resume in the middle of the page, which is a space to which a reader's eyes tend to naturally gravitate.

Watch your length. While it may be tempting to keep writing about how well-qualified you are, most employers are very, very busy. As such, it's best to keep things short and sweet. A two-page C.V. has long been the standard; however, if you can condense it even more, all the better. Anything longer than a pair of pages is too much.

Call in your proofreaders. Having a second, or third, or even fourth pair of eyes peruse your product may seem a bit of an inconvenience, but it's essential that you have proper spelling and grammar if you want to get your foot in the door. To keep things clean and easy to read, it's best to stick to point-form text, with consistent use of voices and verb tenses. Such things are easy to forget, so enlisting some proofreaders is a great idea.

Keep things positive. Lack of confidence can be a problem for anyone having difficulty finding work. But developing the confidence to boast of your skills is important. Even if you're convinced your resume is weak, you should never call attention to any perceived flaws. You don't want to give an employer a reason not to call you. Focus on the best you have to offer.

Should you self-identify?

Many companies today are making a concerted effort to include in their workforce people who have been traditionally under-represented. These employers encourage applications from visible minorities, Aboriginal people, women, and people with disabilities.

How would they know you belong to one or more of these groups? You've got to tell them, or "self-identify", as they say.

Some career experts believe the fact that you belong to an equity group should not be stated at all in your resume or cover letter, but that your qualifications alone should get you into an interview.

Other career experts would encourage you to self-identify, especially when applying to Equal Opportunity Employers. These experts say, at the very least, you should fill in the optional portion of application forms which ask whether you belong to an equity group.

But there is one thing almost everybody agrees on, and this includes employers interviewed by the DiversityCanada Foundation, publisher of this handbook. The fact that you belong to an employment equity group *should not be your one distinguishing characteristic*. The skills you have to offer should be a good

There is one thing almost everybody agrees on...

match for the position in question, regardless of your cultural background or status as a person with a disability.

You may find, however, that the fact that you belong to an equity group allows you to offer the employer

something extra. In such a case, you would do well to show up your winning qualities and skills.

If you were an employer, what would you think after reading cover letters with statements like these, for example?

Candidate A:

"As a result of an accident, I lost most of my hearing as a teenager. Since then, I have worn a hearing aid and have learned to read lips, which allows me to function as any fully-hearing person. This has made me more attentive to and considerate of others. I believe this will serve me well in the role as receptionist at your company."

Candidate B:

"I was pleased to note that XYZ Finance Corp is an Equal Opportunity Employer. As a person of Chinese heritage who is fluent in Cantonese, I believe I would be an asset to your marketing department in Vancouver, where the Chinese community forms a substantial part of your potential market."

Keeping your cover letter in check

Now that you've got a solid-gold resume, you've got to think of how you're going to present it. A good cover letter can say volumes about who you are and what you want – if you let it. Here are some tips to ensure your first contact with an employer is a memorable memo.

Keep it short: A cover letter should never, ever be longer than one page.

Keep it in perspective: As you're writing, remind yourself of what it is you want from this letter, and how you would interpret it if you were the employer.

Keep it relevant: You don't have to discuss everything on your resume. Only highlight experiences and skills that directly pertain to the position at hand – and cap it at two or three examples.

Keep it on track: It's easy to get carried away when writing about yourself, but no one wants to read a five-sentence account of some presentation you delivered two years ago. Save the play-by-play for your autobiography.

Keep it correct: There's nothing quite so jarring as a typo or grammatical error in the first sentence of a cover letter. And it happens far more often than you'd think.

Keep it polite: Use proper titles (Sir/Madam, Mr./Ms./Mrs./Miss). Introduce yourself in the first paragraph, and be sure to thank the employer for considering your application.

See the next two pages for examples of good and not-so-good resumes and cover letters.

1. Jane is using a typical, bland computer software template here. It's boring, and will likely get lost in the pile.
2. The volley_grrl_743 email address is unprofessional and juvenile. She needs to pitch it in favour of something more grown-up.
3. Jane is not at all consistent in her formatting. Note how some bullet points are missing, while others are out of alignment with the rest of the document.
4. She also shifts between point-form and full sentences, making her tone confusing.
5. Not only is it unnecessary for Jane to mention her reasons for leaving Northern Career College (it's the sort of thing best left to an interview), she uses negative language in doing so – a big no-no on any resume.
6. With the possible exception of her time at Global Athletic, none of her jobs here is relevant to the position she wants.
7. She states in her objective that she wants to be a personal trainer, but makes no mention of any qualification for this until the final sentence on the page.

On the whole, this is an amateurish, poorly constructed document. Jane has not presented her skills in a way that will even capture the employer's eye, much less his or her attention.

123 Boreal Blvd, Timmins, ON (705)555-1234
volley_grrl_743@northmail.com

Jane Doe

Objective I want to find a good job as a personal trainer that pays well.

Experience

2004–2005 Global Athletic Sault Ste. Marie, ON
Sales clerk

- Stacked shoes and other inventory on store shelves
- Operated till
- I helped customers find what they were looking for
- Promoted to weekend Assistant Manager

2004 Flare's Fashions Timmins, ON
Sales clerk

- Helped to dress mannequins after hours, operated till

Regular overtime in back-to-school season

2003-2004 Big Burger Timmins, ON
Cook

- Worked grill and deep fryer
- Did opening checklist and evening clean-up
- Got Smart Serve

1999-2002 Cuppa Coffee Timmins, ON
Cook and dishwasher

- Helped make deserts and lunches
- Operated dishwashing equipment
- Got WHIMS training

Education

2002-2003 Northern Career College Sault Ste. Marie, ON
 Finished first year of Child and Youth Worker program before dropping out because it wasn't for me

1998-2002 Northern Secondary School Timmins, ON
 Graduated with high school diploma
 Given award for being captain of volleyball team

Interests Volleyball, running, cycling, climbing, softball, socializing. Finished a certified personal trainer program in 2005

JANE DOE

123 Boreal Blvd. Timmins, ON
 Phone: (705) 555-1234
 Email: j_doe@northmail.com

OBJECTIVE

- To start a career as a personal trainer in an energetic and stimulating environment

SKILLS

- Excellent people skills, enhanced by a friendly and upbeat personality
- Proven leadership abilities aimed at ensuring optimum customer service
- Able to motivate co-workers and customers with energetic approach to work
- Certified in Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and Smart Serve training

EDUCATION

- 2004 Canadian Fitness Organization, Ottawa, Ontario
- Completed three-month Certified Fitness Trainer program through correspondence study
 - Received Honours designation for excellent course performance
- 2002-2003 Northern Career College, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario
- Completed introductory year of Child and Youth Worker program
 - Demonstrated excellent work habits and study skills in a challenging academic environment
- 1998-2002 Northern Secondary School, Timmins, Ontario
- Completed Ontario Secondary School Diploma with a 75% average
 - Earned the prestigious Leadership Award for efforts as captain of the Senior Girls Volleyball Team

INTERESTS

- Passion for sports, especially volleyball and running
- Enjoy meeting and interacting with different people every day

1. Jane's name and contact information are cleanly — and prominently — displayed here. Note the new, professional email address.
2. Her objective is concise, accurate, and professional. The formatting and tone are both consistent, and the layout is clean, unique, and easy to read.
3. Since Jane does not have a lot of experience, she is wise to highlight her skills at the focal point of the page. Her leadership abilities, friendly personality, and training were all referenced in her first resume, but not in a way that made employers take notice.
4. As it should be, Jane's recent Canadian Fitness Organization education is listed prominently, with her other training included mainly to support it.
5. In selectively highlighting interests that support her aptitude for this position, she's presenting a well-rounded candidate for the job.
6. No employment history is listed here, but since she has no direct experience correlating to the job at hand, such information is best held for the second page of a resume.

This is a marked improvement over Jane's first effort. It's succinct and clean, and does a fine job of representing her true abilities. While her lack of experience may still hinder her hunt, this resume should at least pique the curiosity of any employer.

Jane Doe

123 Boreal Blvd., Timmins, ON

January 16, 2007

PowerGym
555 Energy Drive
Sault Ste. Marie, ON

Dear PowerGym:

I believe I am a good person to work at your gym.

I love sports a lot. For all of my life I have played volleyball and softball. I also love running, biking and climbing.

I have lots of work experience. I recently worked as sales clerk at Global Athletic, where I dealt with a lot of sports related issues, such as helping athletes find the right equipment. I have also worked as a sales clerk at Flare's Fashions, as a cook at Big Burger, and as a cook and dishwasher at Cuppa Coffee.

I graduated from high school and finished one year of a Child and Youth Worker program at Northern Career College in Sault Ste. Marie. Over a year ago, I finished a Personal Trainer program with the Canadian Fitness Organization.

I think I would be an excellent fit in your organization. Please call me if you are interested at (705) 555-1234.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Jane Doe

1. Again, Jane is using a generic template here, and again, her application will likely get lost in the pile.
2. Addressing the letter to 'Dear PowerGym' makes Jane appear to have done no research at all on the company.
3. Her writing is basic and dull. In starting every sentence with 'I', she has created a repetitive and uninteresting read.
4. Jane does not list any skills or expand on any anecdotes in this letter, making it little more than a repeat of her resume.
5. She writes her letter in chronological order. While this isn't necessarily a bad idea, in this instance it places irrelevant information near the front.

This cover letter is poorly written, sparse, and boring. There is nothing in it to suggest she's done any research on PowerGym at all, and, aside from her sentence explaining her training, nothing to prove she's qualified. The letter is formulaic and cold; in no way does she come across as the 'excellent fit' she claims to be.

1. Jane starts this off strongly; she has done some research to learn that Jim Flex is her contact for the job, and addresses him professionally and appropriately.
2. Her opening paragraph is sharp and concise: she lists her name, what she is writing, and why she is doing so.
3. The third paragraph is Jane's 'meat and bones.' Here she lists two highlights from her resume (her training at the Canadian Fitness Organization and her high school captainship), briefly annotating each with positive results (Honours status and the Leadership Award).
4. Jane's fourth paragraph proves she's done some research on the company. She locates its mission and explains why she would fit well with it.
5. She concludes her letter with a professional (yet friendly!) note to explain how to contact her.

This letter is a vast improvement. Instead of listing everything she's done, Jane has carefully chosen a few experiences to truly show her aptitude for the job. She has tailored this letter specifically towards PowerGym, taking extra care to emphasize why she would be a good fit for the company. She selectively lists her experience, training, and goals; in the process, she makes a strong case for her employability.

JANE DOE

123 Boreal Blvd. Timmins, ON
Phone: (705) 555-1234
Email: j_doe@northmail.com

January 16, 2006

Jim Flex, Manager
PowerGym
555 Energy Drive
Sault Ste. Marie, ON

Dear Mr. Flex;

My name is Jane Doe, and I am writing to express my interest in the position of personal trainer at PowerGym. As an enthusiastic and energetic Certified Personal Trainer, I feel I would be an excellent fit in PowerGym's active, results-based fitness environment.

In my training at the Canadian Fitness Organization (CFO), I developed an exceptional knowledge of physical exercise while creating unique workout programs for a wide range of clients. Strong course performance earned me Honours status and personal commendation from three different instructors. In addition, my years of captaining sports teams have made me a natural leader and motivator. As captain of Northern Secondary School's Senior Girls volleyball team, I guided a relatively inexperienced group of athletes through intense practices, team-building exercises, and confidence-boosting lessons. To honour this, a delegation of coaches chose to present me with the prestigious Leadership Award.

I truly believe in PowerGym's mandate of connecting individual needs with individual achievement. As an active athlete, I understand the importance of tailoring unique programs to suit each client's goals, abilities, and needs. With my keen attitude and proven qualifications, I think I would be a perfect fit with the PowerGym team.

If you are interested in discussing my career options at PowerGym further, I can be reached any time at (705)-555-1234.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Jane Doe

How to Ace That Interview: Part I

What the career experts say

So, you found a posting for a company you're really interested in. You worked hard to craft a perfect resume and cover letter for the job. And, lo and behold, it worked – you've been called in for an interview.

You're on cloud nine.

The company has expressed interest in you, and you are flattered and proud. As the interview date draws closer, however, excitement morphs into dread.

Now what?

The interview is considered by most job hunters to be the most intimidating part of the hunt. And understandably so. There's a lot riding on that first face-to-face meeting, and it's easy to get overwhelmed by the situation.

This doesn't have to be the case. With enough forethought and planning, that terrifying meeting with your potential bosses can even become an enjoyable experience – and a smash success.

To ensure this, you're wise to adopt one simple mantra: prepare, prepare, prepare.

"You need to know the details of the job you're applying for," advises Sharon Blackwell, Calgary-based regional communications and operations manager for Alberta Human Resources and Employment. "And you must have a good understanding of how your skills and experiences fit in with that particular job."

You must be prepared to give examples of how your skills fit into the needs of the company. And the experiences you list need not be gleaned from employment. "It doesn't have to be work-related," Blackwell comments.

"There are many, many other ways to show experience. In your volunteer life, how you manage your home, your experience overseas, things like that."



Here are a few more tips:

Do your homework. By getting to know the organization, you'll be better prepared for the meeting. This can be accomplished in a number of different ways. A company website is a fabulous way to learn about the history and ethos of a business. If possible, it's a great idea to visit the physical job site itself. There, you can gather brochures, speak to reception personnel, and get a general sense of the office environment. Basically, you want to get a good sense of the organizational structure.

Dress the part. Jeans and a T-shirt won't cut it, no matter how laid-back the job at hand appears to be. No matter what business you're applying for, it is always, always appropriate to dress up. To play it safe, stick with

business casual – clean dress pants, a conservative skirt, a smart jacket, and/or a buttoned-up, collared, and pressed shirt. Personal grooming is also important – clip those fingernails, tidy your hair, and be sure to brush your teeth. A neat appearance suggests much more than aesthetic considerations – it shows you have respect for yourself, you respect the company and its representatives and you understand what's required. These are all things employers look for when hiring.

Put your best foot forward. The biggest mistake any applicant can make is showing up late. Aside from displaying poor time-management and organizational skills, it's just plain inconsiderate – after all, these people are taking time out to help YOU. Always show up at least ten minutes

early. Period. Once at the interview, be friendly, polite, and respectful. Remember the basics – always say please and thank-you, and smile as often as possible. Interviewers look for a positive attitude, and there's no better way to impress than that in an interview.

Know your own history. There's nothing as awkward as a blank stare following a question. Before you even enter the meeting, you should be prepared to rattle off work experiences with ease. Try to come up with relevant anecdotes that are both interesting and informative. For example, if you're applying to work as a nurse, talk about that high school blood donor clinic you helped organize. While you can't predict what exactly your interviewer will ask, you can assume there will be at least one inquiry about your past – and you

There's nothing as awkward as a blank stare following a question

should know it well. To further prove your preparatory prowess, bring extra resumes (in case there is more than one interviewer) and a portfolio of your work (if applicable). Also, have a list of references on hand – it'll bring you one step closer to being hired.

Ask away. No matter what the job, you're going to want to know a few things before you start working – and not just how much cash you'll bring home. You might want to know what the office environment is like. What kind of turn-over rate is there? What major projects does the company have

lined up? What is the busiest time of year? Is it an accessible environment for physically disabled employees? Asking similar questions will do more than satisfy your curiosity. It will also prove you're bright, thorough, motivated and genuinely attracted to the company.

Keep upbeat. If it all seems to go terribly wrong, it is essential to keep things in perspective. No matter how badly the interview may have seemed to have gone, no matter how rejected you feel, a healthy attitude can work wonders. Sit down, relax, and don't be too hard on yourself. Remain positive. Even if you felt the interview went badly, it taught you something, preparing you all the more for your perfect meeting. And who knows, unlike you, the interviewer may have felt the interview went remarkably well.

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What to do after the interview

Once out of the interview room, many applicants assume their work is done.

Not so.

If you don't follow up on your meeting, you run the risk of seeming indifferent or, even worse, uninterested in the company that interviewed you.

Many employers have said they are surprised at how few job candidates stay in touch after the interview. Those who do, of course, stand out.

By taking the following approaches, you can place yourself back into the thoughts of your interviewer and boost your chances of being selected.

Thank the interviewer. A proper thank you is certainly in order for every company representative who took time out to discuss your interest in joining their team. The note should

be brief (no point-by-point recounting of the entire interview necessary), sincere (avoid gushing sentiments), appropriate for a work environment (don't use any nicknames or jokes), and timely (write it immediately after the meeting).

Pass along more of your best work. This is an alternative to the simple thank you note and would be appropriate according to the nature of the interview. Say you discussed a course you took last winter. Send along a copy of your diploma. Or, maybe the interviewer showed particular interest in a project you mentioned you finished in your first year. Print out a copy and ship it off. Add a simple note detailing why you're sending the information along: "As we discussed my XYZ project in our interview, I thought

you may be interested in reading a copy. I look forward to hearing your impressions...." You'll really prove you're keen on the job.

Pick up the phone. Most job-hunters interpret a lack of response from the potential employer as lack of interest, but that's not always the case. The hiring process at many organizations is long, detailed, and simply not accomplished overnight. Ringing up to check on the status of your application if you haven't heard back within the time specified during the interview or within a reasonable time frame keeps your name fresh in the memory of those who hire. Frame your conversation as a polite enquiry rather than a demand. Try to be as humble and patient as possible during that call. Smile when you speak to convey friendliness over the phone.



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How to Ace That Interview: Part II

What the employers say

It may seem insignificant, but your shirt or skirt, your tie or lack of one can cost you a job.

That's the word from over 100 hiring managers and Human Resource professionals representing employers from St John's to Vancouver and ranging from modest mom-and-pop operations in Northern Ontario to billion-dollar Bay Street corporations.

The DiversityCanada Foundation, the publisher of this handbook, went straight to the source. We asked employers what advice they would give job seekers if they could provide only three tips.

Almost universally, employers said candidates must dress appropriately if they are to have any hope of success.

It may seem an obvious point, but the managers indicated a significant number of people they interviewed over the years have torpedoed their chances by showing up in jeans, in soiled or rumpled clothes, or with too-trendy hairstyles.

Why do employers place so much emphasis on appearances?

It's not at all that they are being shallow or picky, suggested Anne Sowden, president of the Toronto chapter of the Association of Image Consultants International. She pointed to studies conducted at Harvard University which showed that within 30 seconds, a person is able to judge someone's competence within about 80 per cent of accuracy.

"Whether we like it or not, people make decisions about us and our abilities based on the way we look," Sowden said. "Our appearance is one of the most powerful non-verbal communication tools we can use. The image you project can affect your ability to inspire trust and confidence."

So the message is clear. Your job

interview attire cannot be whatever is hanging around in the closet on the big day. Employers want to see that you have given thought to the clothes and hairstyle you choose to show up with for the interview.

You CAN dress to impress if you remember these three words that many employers said they look for in a job candidate's appearance: Clean, Appropriate, Neat.

What is appropriate varies from business to business, of course.

So job candidates have to educate themselves on what their potential

employer would approve of, said Linda Lewis, chair of Ryerson University's School of Fashion.

Lewis noted that because of the influx of immigrants into the Canadian workforce, employers have become more accepting of people

showing up dressed in non-Western styled outfits that would be acceptable in workplaces in other parts of the world. However, she warns that many employers may frown on a person who is not of a certain culture adopting these styles simply to be fashionable.

"You have to investigate the culture of the company," she said. "Look at the corporate reports or brochures to see the image they project. If you can, go down to the office and walk around. Get to know the environment."

Such an approach falls right into line with the two other most frequently suggested tips from employers.

Hiring managers and employers were quite consistent in emphasizing that candidates do their homework before coming in to talk about getting a job.

The second most popular tip was that candidates research the company. The third was that job seekers fully understand and ensure they are qualified for the position for which they are applying.

More tips that come directly from people who do the hiring:

- Remove unnecessary jewellery (eg tongue, nose, eyebrow piercings)
- Be pleasant
- Give the impression that you can handle yourself
- Have confidence in yourself
- Show initiative
- Have a real interest in what you say and in the questions you ask
- Have a positive outlook
- Act professional
- Make yourself personable
- Have good composure
- Be willing to WORK!!!!
- Be polite!
- Use proper English
- Express yourself, be responsive
- Be alert
- Shake hands firmly and make eye contact
- Be yourself
- Be mindful of your body language
- Keep your answers concise and clear
- Leave bad language at the door
- Don't come looking untidy or with strong body odour
- Don't wear strong perfume
- Don't come dressed in jeans
- Don't be sloppy
- Don't have blue hair
- Don't be assuming
- Don't just sit there meekly
- Don't have the "know it all" attitude
- Don't talk in slang
- Don't oversell yourself or act like you know more than you do
- Don't be shy when speaking
- Don't act arrogantly
- Don't be fidgety
- Don't lead the conversation
- Don't start off by making demands
- Don't be late for the interview

Dressing for

You've heard it from the employers themselves. The way you show up dressed for the interview will play a big part in whether or not you will get the nod. Here are the wrong looks and the right looks for interviews and for work. Outfits are courtesy The (Hudson's) Bay store. Comments are by Anne Sowden, immediate past president of the Toronto chapter of the Association of Image Consultants International. Go online to the Career Center at DiversityCanada.com to see more great looks for snagging that job.

Photos: Kareena Felker and Jeff Hui.

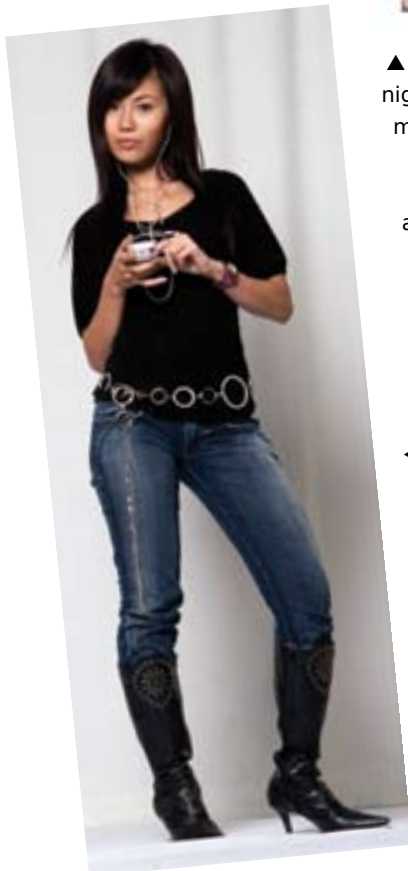


▲ Ready for yoga class or a night of clubbing? That's the message this body-hugging outfit sends even though our model looks confident and approachable. It is too casual for an interview, or even for just dropping off your resume.



▲ This is summer weekend wear. No one will take you seriously if you dress like this for an interview or for work. The more skin you show, the less professional you look.

▶ A big no-no. Skirts for an interview or for work should be about knee length, a flattering length for most women, which doesn't show too much leg.



◀ Jeans should not be worn to a job interview. This outfit is too casual for even after you've got the job, except for IT, media or fashion companies, which will let you wear jeans as long as they fit, aren't torn or dirty. Oh, and leave the iPod at home. Employers will expect your full attention.

▶ The clothing and body language say it all — "I don't want to work. I just want to hang out." If you turn up dressed like this, that's what you will probably end up doing.



or Success



◀ Cropped pants are more casual than full length but can look very professional when paired with boots.

However, this look is more appropriate for after you've got the job.

To impress during an interview, you need to step things up a bit more.



▶ Here's a great look for an interview or the workplace. The pants fit well and there is no tummy showing. A brightly coloured shirt will draw attention to your face and to what you have to say, and can give you energy if you need it.



▲ This is the perfect outfit for the young professional going places; it is fashionable, smart and very professional. The jacket and pants are conservative but the red turtleneck adds interest and indicates creativity.



◀ This combination is just right for an interview or for the workplace. It is neat, looks professional and says, "I'm ready to work."



◀ This can take you from the interview to the workplace. It gives the impression of power and authority. One way to soften the look and show your personality would be to wear a brighter patterned tie. However, stay away from ties with cartoon designs as they would only make you look silly.

Shining on the job

Finally, your long and detailed journey has culminated in success. You've been offered a job. Not just any job – a great job. Something you'd like to make a career of.

While you are understandably excited, this is no time to sit back and relax. The first six to twelve weeks of employment – commonly known as a probationary period – are crucial. In this time, you must acquaint yourself with

your new workplace, become comfortable in your new position, and confident in your new role. Essentially, you must prove to your new bosses that they've made the right decision.

Since you've already convinced them you were a safe bet, this needn't be too difficult. By following your instinct – and the tips on pages 22 to 24 – you should be a workplace star in no time!

Handling first day jitters

Nearly every new employee is nervous on the first day of work. It's natural. You're starting a fresh career in an unfamiliar setting, and you naturally want to do well. As with starting any new venture, it's wise to prepare, relax, and listen.

You'll want to start by getting comfortable. Chances are your supervisor or manager will take you for an extended tour of the jobsite on your first day. Get to know your environment by asking questions, stopping to introduce yourself to each of your new co-workers, and adopting the company code of behaviour. Is it a professional environment? Keep it formal. Is it more casual? Share an amusing anecdote about one of your experiences in the industry. Adapting to the company culture takes time, but it is crucial in establishing a positive early impression.

Enthusiasm is essential. Employers love to see their newest recruit is excited to be there. Ask for your first assignment or task – don't wait for your supervisor to hand it to you. When you complete your first duty, ask if there's anything else you can do. Whatever you do, do not sit at your new desk and stare at the

continued...

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YOUTH SPEAK:

"The ability to network and maintain professional relationships has opened many doors for me."

- Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo



wall. Showing initiative is always important, but especially so in the earliest stages of a new job.

A good way of doing this is by making an effort to connect with clients. There is an element of customer service in nearly every industry, whether it be changing tires or preparing income tax statements. No matter what you're doing, you are, in some way, interacting with the people who keep your new workplace in business. As such, you have to show you can deal with people from the start. Ask to deal with a client or customer as soon as you feel comfortable to do so. Be as friendly, helpful and considerate as possible. If you're unsure of something, explain that it's your first day of work, and that you appreciate their patience. Most customers will understand, and your employer will be thrilled to see you making the extra effort.

As your first day comes to an end, be sure to ask your boss how you did. If he or she replies "great," good for you! You're likely on your way to a stellar career in the company.

However, in the far more likely instance that he or she has a few comments or suggestions, you shouldn't take it personally. It's your first day, after all, and you do still have a good deal to learn. Listen carefully to employer feedback, and make efforts to implement their ideas.

What employers are looking for

Who better to advise you what to do on your first days than people who have experience dealing with new employees? Here are a few tips gleaned from hiring veterans across the country.

"I always like to see someone who shows initiative...someone who likes to keep busy. Sometimes when you start a new job, you're nervous, you're not sure what to do, you're uncertain. It's nice to see someone who can finish a job at hand, bring it to (his or her) supervisor and say, 'I'm done this now, is there anything else I can do.' It's nice to see."

– Wendy Wells, a St. John's, Newfoundland-based office administrator for Maritime consulting company SGE Acres Limited.

"The first and most important thing is to smile. I hire nice people and train them to do the job, as opposed to trained people who have the wrong attitude. If managers aren't smart enough to realize that, they're going to be in trouble. Human relations are not taught in school. They teach math, English, all the rest of that stuff, but they should be teaching human relations."

– Arnold Asham, president and owner of Winnipeg, Manitoba-based manufacturer ASHAM Curling Supplies.

"Punctuality, effort, communication, (being a) team player. All these things are good to see. As to the way a person works, you can tell if someone wants to put their heart into it, or if they're going through the motions."

– Bruce Zacard, vice president of Litho Quebec, a Pointe-Claire, Quebec-based printing firm.

Be a class act on the job

As you settle into your new job, you will find that your workplace has its own particular dynamic. You may find that you click with your colleagues right away and that your boss is as approachable as your favourite uncle. Or, you might feel as if you have nothing in common with your co-workers and that your boss is rude and impatient. If it is not all smooth sailing in your new work environment, it may be easy to become discouraged. However, Pierre Perreault, employment consultant at the Employment Center at Collège Boréal in Sudbury, Ontario, assures that you can transcend most sticky situations. With the right attitude and practices, he says, you can avoid undue distress and the office politics of any position. Here are a few simple tips:

- ▶ Always arrive on time, and don't be the first out the door at the end of the day.
- ▶ Have a positive attitude; smile a lot.
- ▶ Say a smiling "Hello" to everyone you meet.
- ▶ Try to remember the name of everyone you are introduced to. Repeat it two or three times in your initial conversation, and, smilingly, look in the person's eyes while doing so.
- ▶ Dress conservatively. One of the best ways to make the right impression is through clean, classy, appropriate clothing.
- ▶ Study the company culture and its particular management style. This may help you understand decisions you might otherwise dismiss as questionable.
- ▶ Master your responsibilities as quickly as possible. You will best be able to do so by focusing squarely on the task at hand. So, while it is important to establish friendly relationships with your colleagues, ensure you devote the majority of your time and attention to the actual work to be done.
- ▶ Seek out unofficial "mentors" who can show you the ropes. Study and emulate those with outstanding track records; most will feel flattered and be willing to help.
- ▶ Be a team player, and try not to be selfish.
- ▶ Practise diplomacy. Tread lightly when offering ideas for improving something, and avoid bossy or preachy opinions.
- ▶ Write down your projects and achievements from day one on the job. In doing so, you'll have a solid work record to discuss with your employers at the end of your probation, when they are deciding whether or not to keep you on.
- ▶ Where possible, plan your day and duties in advance. You, and your supervisor, will be impressed at how a few minutes of planning ahead will allow you to make efficient use of your time.
- ▶ Arrive at meetings on time. Furthermore, don't doodle or daydream in them.
- ▶ Don't lie. Your mother was right; honesty is the best policy. In the same vein, avoid making excuses.
- ▶ Be a class act. Never tell dirty, racist or sexist jokes. Don't use profanity, even when others do. If a conversation turns into gossip, politely excuse yourself and leave immediately.
- ▶ Don't take anything personally. Remember if someone is unkind to you, it's often because he or she is facing some stress that may have nothing to do with you.

Finding your rhythm and balance

While it may be tempting to focus entirely on fitting into your new work environment, it's important not to lose sight of your personal goals. Your new job may be the biggest thing on your mind in the first months, but it's important to take a step back to assess what's really important.

Get the most out of each day.

Try and learn something new on every shift. Shake up your schedule. Make new contacts. Explore alternative ideas. The more you work to make your job interesting, the more you'll get out of your time on the job.

Don't expect to be perfect.

In other words, don't pressure yourself to be a pro right away. Say you're working to become a hairdresser, and you can't seem to master the complete art of highlighting. Instead of giving up, try to learn a little every day. Memorize one colour combination on Monday; practise timing or application on Tuesday. Before long, you'll be well on the way to expertness – and you'll be far more likely to retain what you've learned.

Find balance.

In the quest to be the best, many new employees devote too much energy into their new position and not enough on their personal lives. While it is important to pour extra effort into the workplace early on, it is essential to maintain balance with your personal life. Instead of spending your nights stressing about that project due tomorrow, go for a walk. Rather than rushing out the door, wake up an hour earlier and prepare yourself a wholesome breakfast. Taking time for yourself will improve your mental and physical well-being, making you a better (and more efficient!) employee.

How to gracefully bow out of a company

Leave 'em smiling

Jobs are a lot like relationships. Sometimes, it just comes time to break it off. Perhaps your financial responsibilities have increased and you need a higher salary. Maybe your work environment has changed and it's no longer a productive place for you to be. Perhaps you're moving, or going back to school, or simply looking for a new career.

Handling such a situation can be awkward. While it may be tempting to storm out in a blaze of triumphant defiance, it's best to use a more discreet approach.

Here's how to move on without burning bridges.

You're debating leaving the company. To help make up your mind, you:

- Discuss it with everyone you meet to try and gain a broad range of advice.
- Mention it to co-workers on your coffee break.
- Carefully weigh the pros and cons on your own, perhaps with some input from a trusted friend outside the company.

Best bet: c)

Why it's wise: You never know who might overhear your contemplations, so until you've made a decision, it's best to keep things quiet. Chatting on the job is a particularly risky move, as employment-related gossip can spread like wildfire. Nothing makes you look more unprofessional to your employer than discussing these things behind his or her back. Think it over, call in a close pal (not a co-worker!) for advice, and proceed from there.

You've decided to go. Who do you tell first?

- Your best friend on the job.

- Your supervisor or manager.
- The president of the company.

Best bet: b)

Why it's wise: As a general rule, it's best to make things official with your immediate superior before taking the message elsewhere. Your manager or supervisor is there for a reason – to manage or supervise the activity of employees, including their comings and goings. As such, going above him or her to the company chief is a bad idea. Not only will it burn the pride of your immediate superior, it may make you appear dishonest or conniving to your boss. And no matter how much you want to gab with your co-worker, the message can wait until things are official.

How much notice are you giving before you leave?

- Mere minutes, baby – you're outta there!
- The customary two weeks – it's the standard for a reason.
- A month or more – you're in no rush.

Best bet: b) or c), depending.

Why it's wise: This is a tough one, highly dependent on the particular situation you're in. If you have a far-sighted plan, and you know it will take the company some time to find the right replacement, it would be courteous to let your superiors know of your intent well in advance. However, if your decision came out of a rapidly changing circumstance – for example, you've been offered a better position that must commence as soon as possible – two weeks is considered adequate warning. Quitting on the spot is never, ever a good idea – at least if you ever want to call in a favour (like a reference) from the organization again.

You've given your notice, and are now in your final period in the position. How do you conduct yourself in the workplace?

- Conduct business as usual – with a bit of downtime to clean your desk and go to farewell luncheons.
- Grumble frequently, count down your days, and watch the clock.
- Spend the remaining time left goofing off with your workplace pals – after all, your time with them is numbered.

Best bet: a)

Why it's wise: You don't want to be remembered by your co-workers as a goof-off or a sourpuss. You may not want to be there, but the fact is, you're still being paid to do a job – and not doing it isn't acceptable, even if you are on your way out.

It's your last day. How do you say farewell to your boss?

- Coldly. He or she isn't your boss any more, so a quick "goodbye" should suffice.
- Emotionally. Hugs, kisses, tears, the whole works. It's a sad day for both you and the company, so why not let it show?
- Warmly. A firm handshake, with heartfelt thanks and a cheerful farewell.

Best bet: c)

Why it's wise: You want to leave on an upbeat tone. An abrupt departure is tacky and rude, and leaves a bad impression of you. However, an hour-long blubber-fest is also inappropriate for the workplace. Smile, say kind words (no matter how hard it may be to do so), and be sure to get your boss' contact info to nail that reference!

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