

BURNABY WORKPLACE AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

In 2012 Burnaby hosted a remarkable program aimed at identifying and addressing some of the problems that immigrants to Canada face in the employment marketplace: the Burnaby Workplace Ambassadors Program. The project followed from research and experience with the prior Breaking Down the Barriers program showing that both employers and new immigrants lack a clear understanding of all that's required to support immigrant workforce integration. Employers often have no easy way of assessing experience and credentials acquired in another country, and hold reservations or uncertainty when meeting new immigrants trying to enter the job market. Immigrants sometimes not only lack the networking and communication skills necessary to break into the Canadian workforce but fail to fully recognize how crucial these are.

The program sought to dig straight into problems like these with a unique "ambassadors" approach using both jobseekers and employers as active participants. Thirty five internationally trained professionals (ITPs) new to Burnaby received focussed training and supporting resources on communication and networking, and then were introduced to a professional within their field and a 45 minute meeting was set up. This professional would then introduce the ITP to two more professionals – and so on. The purpose of the meetings was twofold; first, participants exchanged information about their shared occupational field and second, they discussed some of the existing barriers to immigrant workforce integration. The intent of the project was not employment but awareness raising - some of the immigrant ambassadors met with as many as 10 local professionals and most received at least five meetings. At project end, more than 240 employers had been engaged in discussions about immigrant workforce integration, many reviewed and discussed their own recruiting and hiring practices and shared the experience with their colleagues.

Here, in their own words, a few representatives of both types of ambassadors recount their experiences with the program. They are organized into six professional sectors important to Burnaby's economy. As a result of the Burnaby Workplace Ambassador Program, the ball is definitely rolling. The challenge now is to push it as fast and far as possible.

SECTOR OVERVIEW - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS

It's no surprise that this field has grown both steadily and rapidly over the past three decades, except for a sharp but relatively brief downturn following the bursting of the tech bubble in 2001. Skilled immigrants occupy a central role in the industry, accounting for almost a fifth of jobs in 2006.



KEY OCCUPATIONS IN THE ITC SECTOR

- Computer and information system managers
- Telecommunication carriers managers
- Electrical and electronics engineers
- Computer engineers (except software engineers)
- Information systems analysts and consultants
- Database analysts and data administrators
- Software engineers and designers
- Computer programmers and interactive media developers
- Web designers and developers
- Electrical & electronics engineering technologists & technicians
- Computer network technicians
- User support technicians
- Systems testing technicians
- Broadcast technicians

Some 7,200 B.C. companies operate in the field, which accounts for about 50,000 jobs, more than two-thirds of them in Metro Vancouver. Prominent specializations include mobile technologies, security, mobile gaming, remote communications, applications, Software-as-a-Service, hosted solutions, e-commerce, and wireless products. Most jobs are service-oriented, although software companies can be significant exporters, especially to the U.S.

A large proportion of employers are small companies, and an unusually large proportion of their IT employees are full time, although self-employment is also common. Forecasts vary by specialization, but the general outlook for the sector is for continued growth. Prospects through 2016 for the 14 core ITC occupations can be found here - http://www.ictc-ctic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/ICTC_IEP_SA_BC_EN_03-12.pdf.

THE AMBASSADORS

Immigrant Ambassador - Nadim Slim

I arrived here in September, 2010, from Mexico, where I worked in IT for 12 years. I had some contract work back in Mexico so it didn't bother me too much at first, but it's hard for an immigrant to find work here. It doesn't matter how good a résumé is, your experience in another country just doesn't count for much.

I started taking programs to figure out what I was doing wrong. The Ambassador Project helped me in several ways, but the best is, one of the informational interviews helped me figure out what my main problem was. Almost all my IT work has been for governments, so that's the kind of work I'd been applying for. I sent out 30, 40, 50 resumes and never heard a word. But my degree is in economics, and I don't have a lot of specific IT training. He told me that in a government environment, I'd never be hired. So I started targeting private companies and I got a job just a month or so later.

The project, I think, is really valuable in that you get to meet more people. One of the other programs used a long-term mentor. This was more like speed-dating. Maybe something in between would be best, but two or three of the interviews worked out really well.

Employer Ambassador – Richard Eskandar, Information Technology Manager, School District 42

We set up an interview that got extended to almost three hours. He was actually very experienced — director of IT for two cities. Unfortunately I didn't have an opening here. The project didn't say anything about offering employment, but if I had an opening I definitely would have considered him. I gave him some tips about what level of position he was looking at and I recommended him to a couple of employers, then handed him off to them.

I was happy to spend the time because I see this as a program that benefits us both. You are almost getting a short list and an interview out of it. Looking at resumes and boiling hundreds down to 10 — sometimes the resume doesn't show you exactly what you're looking for, so meeting the person first can be a good idea. If I had an observation, I'd suggest that people should try to keep in touch — you never know what might come along.



MR. NADIM SLIM

BEST PRACTICES OF WORKPLACE INTEGRATION - EMPLOYERS IN THE ITC SECTOR

In 2012, forty employers across Canada were recognized for their initiatives around recent immigrants as part of the Best Employers for New Canadians list by Mediacorp Canada. Promising practices of best employers in ITC sectors are summarized and listed below.

Source: <http://www.canadastop100.com/immigrants/>

RECRUITMENT

- Proactively taps into immigrant talents pool by outreaching to community organizations and posting job openings on ethnic media (Medtronic of Canada Ltd., NTT Data Canada, Inc. and Telus)
- Selects candidates with the most relevant education and work experience - regardless of where it was obtained (i 3 DVR International Inc.)
- Provides bias-free selection training to employees and ensures the inclusion of an employee who is new to Canada on the interview team for the Xerox Research Centre (Xerox Canada Inc.)

ORIENTATION

- Establish "Buddy Program" to connect new hired immigrant employees (and their family) with another of has a similar cultural background to ease the process of transition (Medtronic of Canada Ltd. Telus and NTT Data Canada, Inc.)
- Offers support for employees and their family who are new to Canada to help them adjust to Canadian life, such as the Employee and Family Assistance Program, which includes career and change counselling (Telus)

RETENTION

- Establish in-house diversity and employment equity advisory panel or council (Telus Corporation, and Medtronic of Canada Ltd.)
- Provides in-house trainings to managers and or employees to increase understanding of immigrants and workplace inclusiveness practices" (Nordion Inc., and NTT Data Canada, Inc.)
- Utilizes resources offered by service providers, such as free English as a Second Language training (NTT Data Canada, Inc.)

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - BEING A GOOD COMMUNITY CITIZEN

- Participates in service provider's programs, i.e. mentoring program, workshops and bridging program, to assist newcomers in their job search in Canada (Nordion Inc., Telus, Tetra Tech WEI Inc. and Xerox Canada Inc)
- Organizes and hosts coaching and networking events to provide new Canadian job-seekers with support (Nordion Inc. and Xerox Canada Inc.)



ITC SECTOR IN BURNABY

The City of Burnaby recognizes the ITC sector as one of its signature industries with a large cluster of firms and jobs. These existing strengths, combined with a well-developed post-secondary education sector, give the city an edge in attracting more companies in the future. BCIT and SFU not only produce new graduates in the field of information technology and communication but also act as engines for research and development. The City of Burnaby's Economic Development Strategy 2020 identified the ITC industry as one of the emerging industries in Burnaby.

NOTABLE ITC EMPLOYERS IN BURNABY

COMPANY	WEBSITE
Alpha Technologies Ltd. 7700 Riverfront Gate, Burnaby	http://www.alpha.ca/web2/company/careers
Best Buy Canada Ltd. 8800 Glenlyon Pkwy, Burnaby	http://www.bestbuycanadaltd.ca/career/default.asp
Creation Technologies Inc. 3939 North Fraser Way, Burnaby	http://www.creationtech.com/careers.aspx
Digital Payment Technologies 330-4260 Still Creek Drive, Burnaby	http://www.digitalpaytech.com/about-us/careers.aspx
Electronic Arts 4330 Sanderson Way, Burnaby	http://www.ea.com/ca/jobs
Glentel Inc. 8501 Commerce Crt. Burnaby	http://glentelcareers.com/
IBM Canada Ltd. 4601 Canada Way, Burnaby	http://www-03.ibm.com/employment/ca/en/
Infowave Software 4664 Lougheed Highway, Burnaby	N/A
Kodak Graphic Communications Group 3700 Gilmore Way, Burnaby	http://www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/careers/index.jhtml
PMC Sierra 8555 Baxter Pl, Burnaby	http://pmcs.com/careers/
Quartech Systems Ltd. 2160 Springer Ave, Burnaby	http://www.quartech.com/Pages/Opportunities.aspx
Rogers Communications 4710 Kingsway, Burnaby	http://www.rogers.com/web/Careers.portal
Snaptech Marketing and Communications 2465 Beta Ave, Burnaby	http://www.snaptech.com/careers/index.asp
Squirrel Systems 8585 Baxter Pl, Burnaby	http://www.squirrelsistemas.com/Company/Careers
Spectrum Signal Processing 300-2700 Production Way, Burnaby	http://www.spectrumsignal.com/category/about-spectrum/careers/
Telus Corporation 1795 Willingdon Ave, Burnaby	http://about.telus.com/community/english/careers
The Active Network 6400 Roberts St. Burnaby	http://www.activenetwork.com/about-us/careers.htm
WebTech Wireless Inc. 4299 Canada Way, Burnaby	http://www.webtechwireless.com/en/company/careers/

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE FOR IMMIGRANTS IN BURNABY

SKILLS CONNECT FOR IMMIGRANTS PROGRAM

- **Back in Motion**
<http://www.skillsconnect.ca/>
- **Douglas College**
<http://www.douglas.bc.ca/training-community-education/skills-connect.html>
- **Training Innovations**
<http://www.skillsconnectbc.com/>

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES AND PROFILES

- **WelcomeBC's Occupational Guides for Immigrants**
http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/immigration/work/occupational_guides.page#Technology
- **Skilled Immigrants InfoCentre – Vancouver Public Library**
<http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>
- **WorkBC Career Profile**
<http://www.workbc.ca/Careers/Career-Profiles/Pages/Career-Profiles.aspx>

REGULATORY BODIES AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- **Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC**
<http://www.apeg.bc.ca/>
- **British Columbia Technology Industry Association**
<http://www.bctia.org/>
- **Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC**
<http://www.asttbc.org/>
- **Information and Communications Technology Council**
<http://www.ictc-ctic.ca/>