

# 4.

## Marketing your skills

# What does a Canadian resume look like?

A resume is a summary of your education, training, skills and experience. It is sent to an employer to give them an understanding of whether you might be suited for a job and qualified to move on to the interview stage.

In Canada, job seekers tend to keep their resumes quite short – sometimes just one or two pages. Your resume may need to be longer if you attach such things as translated education documents and professional credentials.

**There are a number of ways of drafting a resume, but most contain the following information:**

- **Contact information** – name, address, phone numbers, email address.
- **A list of skills** – what are your greatest strengths and abilities. Don't forget to mention those "transferable skills" listed on page 9.
- **Past employment** – list the names of companies, addresses, the dates you worked there, as well as the job position and the duties you performed.
- **Education information** – the institutions you attended, the year of graduation and the degree, diploma or certificate you achieved. If you have had your education documents assessed, you may also include that information. If your documents are in a language other than English (or sometimes French) you will need to have them translated.
- **A list of references** – people who can attest to your skills, ability and good character. Include names, titles, addresses and phone numbers, including country code. If some are Canadian, that would be helpful. You can use supervisors at a place where you volunteer, or instructors in training programs you have attended. References can be listed in your resume or in a separate document. Remember, employers are most interested in work-related references.

## Some Tips for Preparing a Resume

- ✓ Begin as soon as you can to collect references. Trying to get these from your country of origin may take time.
- ✓ Print your resume on high-quality white paper. Use the same paper for your cover letter and if possible use a laser printer.
- ✓ Do not include personal information such as age, marital status or religion. You also do not have to mention your country of origin or ethnicity, although it may be clear by your education and work record. Do not include a photograph of yourself.
- ✓ Have an employment counsellor review your resume with you and have someone check it carefully for spelling and typographic errors.
- ✓ Always tell the truth.

*Maria Guiomar Cabra,  
a Law Clerk at Lerners*



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### What should a cover letter say?

A cover letter is one that accompanies a resume that you send to an employer. The cover letter acts as an introduction, telling the employer you are interested in working for their company.

If you can, take the time to write an individualized cover letter for each resume you send. Learn about the company and the job that you are seeking. Then you can tell the employer why you are the right person to work there.

- You should clearly state the job that you are seeking.
- It should include a reference on how your skills match what the employer is looking for.
- Your letter should look professional but friendly. It should be no more than one page.
- It should contain no spelling, grammar or punctuation errors. Have someone check it for you.
- It should show the employer that your communication skills are strong.
- It should contain a brief statement about your skills and experience, but not go into the detail the employer will find in the resume.
- Avoid clichés – the kinds of things that everybody says. Just use your own words and try to allow your personality to shine through!

- Avoid the use of the word “I” too much. You want to boast a bit, but not too much.
- You might try to use what are called “power words” such as innovation, advanced, professional, proven, inspired, introduced, directed, launched, and delivered. These words may help catch the attention of an employer.

You will find some examples of cover letters, resumes and other job search information at [www.links2work.on.ca](http://www.links2work.on.ca) and many other websites on job searching.

#### Why isn't my phone ringing?

If you have sent a number of resumes and letters to employers, and have not had any responses, perhaps it is for these reasons:

Employers who have not advertised or requested applications seldom respond to unsolicited applications.

Even if an employer has advertised or asked for applications, in most cases, only applicants who qualify for an interview are contacted.

**Don't be disappointed and don't give up.  
Keep on trying!**



Name:

**Syed Haider**

Country of Origin:

**Pakistan**

Past Employment/Education:

**Commerce degree,  
Building Store Owner**

London Region Employer:

**Checker Limousine**

Name:

**Dafalla Yousif**

Country of Origin:

**Sudan**

Past Employment/Education:

**Researcher, Many degrees**

London Region Employer:

**Checker Limousine**

Name:

**Yahya Almoufadh**

Country of Origin:

**Iraq**

Past Employment:

**Lawyer**

London Region Employer:

**Checker Limousine**

Sometimes what begins as what newcomers refer to as a 'survival job', turns into an excellent opportunity.

Such is the case at Voyageur Transportation's Checker Limousine division, where some newcomers started by accepting what they thought would be a temporary driving job, only to find a well paying career as an independent broker. At Checker, brokers can own and manage more than one car and can make the contract a successful entrepreneurship.

Syed Haider, from Pakistan, has a Commerce degree and owned a building material store. When he came to Canada, his English skills and global knowledge of building products were not enough to get him the job he desired. A friend encouraged him to seek his cab license and he began driving for Checker five years ago. Today, Syed is a broker with five cars and eleven drivers working for him!

"My priority was my children's education, and I am happy with the way things have turned out. One son has graduated from Western, another is in second year and a third is still in high school."

Dafalla Yousif came to Canada with an engineering degree in his home country of Sudan, a diploma from Italy, a Master's degree from Holland, and a PhD from England. He too came to provide a better life for his children. Dafalla had a placement and some contract work as a research scientist with a London company, while driving part time for Checker. As his Checker work increased and he acquired another two cars, Dafalla came to enjoy the business opportunity and the chance to control his own destiny.

Yahya Almoufadh had just started to practice law in his native Iraq when the Gulf War drove him to Saudi Arabia as a refugee. He landed in Vancouver but was lured to London by a friend. Here he spent some time in a "survival job", then studied at Western before joining Checker, where he recently became a broker. Yahya is not sure how long he will stay in Canada, but enjoys his work for Checker.

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### Networking to increase opportunities

One very good way to find a job is through networking – building relationships with people who can help you find a job.

Many jobs in the London region are not advertised. They are part of what is called the “hidden job market”. News of these jobs is communicated just by people talking to each other about suitable candidates. That is why it is important to network – to meet and interact with as many people as you can. As you increase the number of people you know, you increase the chance of hearing about jobs that may not be advertised.

The people you meet may also offer advice or assistance in finding a job.

You can network by meeting and talking to teachers, counsellors, neighbours, people in your place of worship or at the school or sports centre where your children go. You can network at social occasions such as parties or weddings, or you can network by joining business organizations or community clubs.

#### How to Network

- Networking is a way to make friends and business connections – not to ask people to give you a job. If you ask for a job your new contacts may grow uncomfortable and not want to meet with you.
- Networking is for the benefit of both people. You may be able to offer advice or assistance too. Ask new contacts about the type of work they do.

- Take the opportunity to tell them that you are new to Canada and that your goal is to find employment.
- Tell them about your skills and experience. Tell them how much you look forward to putting those skills to work for an employer.
- Then, if it feels right, you might ask them if they have any advice on how you might find a job in your field.

You’ll also find that networking will build other skills. You will be able to practice your language skills and your self confidence will increase. You may also make some new friends and learn more about the Canadian culture and the London region.

#### Good Places to Network

- The Chamber of Commerce (London, Woodstock, St. Thomas, Strathroy)
- Business clubs and organizations
- Groups at churches, mosques, temples, synagogues and other places of worship
- Organizations that require volunteers
- Sport, recreation and business events
- For a list of networking organizations in the London area visit [www.networkingtoday.on.ca](http://www.networkingtoday.on.ca).

## Tips for Networking Effectively

- ✓ Spend as much time as you can with people who can teach you about the Canadian culture and help you develop language skills. Seek out new friends and new associates.
- ✓ Be prepared to confidently answer questions such as, “What kind of job do you want?” or “What are your skills?”
- ✓ You may want to print business cards with your contact information on it. When you meet new people, offer your card and ask for theirs so that you can contact them in the future if appropriate.
- ✓ Don’t be afraid to ask new acquaintances for advice. An example might be, “Have you got any advice for me that might help me find work more quickly?” or “Do you know anyone I should be talking to?” Do not ask your new contacts to give you a job. This is not considered good business etiquette.



Names:

**Maria Guiomar Cabra and Edgar Marquez**

Country of Origin:

**Colombia**

Past Employment:

**Lawyers**

London Region Employer and Position:

**Lerners, Law Clerks**

Edgar and Guiomar and their young son came to Canada via the U.S. as refugees. In Colombia, they were threatened with death by guerillas who opposed their involvement in an organization working with the poor of their community. Leaving their country meant leaving their home, their money, their family and friends.

They began their Canadian employment in jobs to pay the bills – a retail clerk for Guiomar, and waiting on tables for Edgar. London lawyer Mark Lerner met Edgar at the restaurant where he worked, and helped arrange a contract training placement for both Edgar and Guiomar at Lerners – a London law firm. Both are now working at Lerners as law clerks.

“There have been days in our journey when we thought, ‘We are safe, we are alive – that is all that is important,’ but we also want to work and build a new life for our family,” says Guiomar.

Edgar agrees, “Every day we are thinking how lucky we are to be given the chance to work in this company. We have been given the opportunity to show Canada what we can do.”

Both agree that the major challenges have been improving their language skills, and learning the ‘social rules’ of their new country.

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### Skills International

This innovative website connects employers with internationally trained and educated professionals.

At Skills International, employers will find the resumes and credentials of hundreds of pre-screened and qualified applicants.

To be profiled on the Skills International website, you must work with an employment preparation agency that specializes in services for immigrant jobseekers. Skills International only profiles workers who have been prescreened and prequalified as ready-to-work, job candidates.

Visit the Skills International website at [www.skillsinternational.ca](http://www.skillsinternational.ca) to learn more and complete an agency referral form to get started.

Once you have satisfied the conditions of being ready for work, the agency can publish your profile on the Skills International website and provide you with the information you need to sign in on the website.

Newcomers who have already completed or are enrolled in an Employment Preparation Program for Newcomers may also be registered.

#### Know Your Rights

Ontario has human rights laws that protect employees from unfair treatment by employers based on sex, age, race, religion or disability. Employers cannot refuse to hire you because they don't like your skin colour or your religion.

On the website [www.settlement.org](http://www.settlement.org) you will find information on human rights in Ontario and on many other topics of interest to newcomers who settle in Ontario.

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[www.welcome.london.ca](http://www.welcome.london.ca)

Welcome London, a website at [www.welcome.london.ca](http://www.welcome.london.ca) points you to information that can help you move here, get settled and start your new life. It's a one-stop website for links to services, programs and resources for newcomers to London and Middlesex County.



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### How does a candidate prepare for an interview?

Congratulations! If you have been asked to come for an interview it means that an employer has seen your qualifications and is interested in meeting you and knowing more. You may be among the top candidates who applied for the job.

A job interview in Canada is probably very different from any job interviews you have done before. Here are some tips to help you perform well in an interview:

- An interview in Canada is the most important step in getting a job. Sometimes people who have excellent skills, experience and education are not chosen for a job just because they did not perform well in the interview.
- When an employer asks you a question in a job interview, they are interested in the answer, but also want to get to know you better. Try to show them the type of person you are.
- An interviewer is also looking to see if you have what are called “soft skills” or “transferable skills”. These include such things as:
  - Communication skills
  - Problem solving skills
  - Ability to work as part of a team
  - Ability to handle change

*Rosario Ortega,  
an Administrator at  
Gamma-Dynacare*

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It is difficult to know in advance what form the interview will take. Sometimes only one person will conduct the interview, or you may be asked to meet with a group. You may also be asked to demonstrate skills that are relevant to the job, through some form of testing.

There are many resources on the Internet to help you prepare for an interview, including practice questions. Do an Internet search using the words "prepare for an interview". There are also good organizations in the London region that can offer information and workshops to help you prepare.

Here are more tips to make that job interview the best it can be.

- **Try to think the way an employer would think.** They will be wondering if you are reliable, easy to get along with, hard working, smart and highly skilled. Prepare answers that will show the employer you are all of those things.
- **Understand the job and the company.** Learn as much as you can about the company or organization and its customers. Review the job requirements and be ready to explain how past experience has prepared you. Come to the interview with questions that will help you better understand the job and the expectations they will have for you.
- **Talk about your "transferable skills".** All work experience is valuable.
- **Canadians like to shake hands.** Whether you are interviewed by a man or a woman, when they meet you they will want to shake your hand. People like firm, but not hard handshakes. Canadians also often use first names. Don't be surprised!
- **Smile!** "You don't get a second chance to make a first impression!"
- **Appropriate dress and cleanliness** is important to employers. Look your best.
- **Don't be afraid to talk about yourself.** In some countries, you are expected to be modest in an interview. In Canada, employers look for confidence, and an ability to talk clearly about your achievements. Be prepared to tell the interviewers why you are sure you can do this job.
- **Make eye contact with the interviewer.** If you avoid eye-contact, Canadians may believe that you are not interested or may think you are not being fully truthful. If there are a number of people conducting the interview, look and speak to all of them, not just the main interviewer.
- **Practise for your interview.** Being nervous before an interview is common, but it will help if you come prepared. Practise answers to questions that are commonly asked and have a friend perform a practise interview. There are many Internet resources outlining the questions employers like to ask.
- **Answer the questions that you are asked.** Make your answers clear and to the point. Show you understand. If you are not sure what information the interviewer is seeking, ask for an explanation.
- **Be sure to say thank you.** It is also a good idea to send a thank you letter.

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Name:

**Annaliza Arriola**

Country of Origin:

**Philippines**

Past Employment:

**Legal secretary at a commercial bank**

London Region Employer and Position:

**Trudell Medical International,  
Administrator**

Name:

**Joseph Arriola**

Country of Origin:

**Philippines**

Past Employment/Education:

**Quality engineer, Engineering degree**

London Region Employer and Position:

**Trudell Medical International,  
Quality Technologist**

In their early 20s with a young baby, Annaliza and Joseph Arriola came to Canada in 2001, eager to begin a new life.

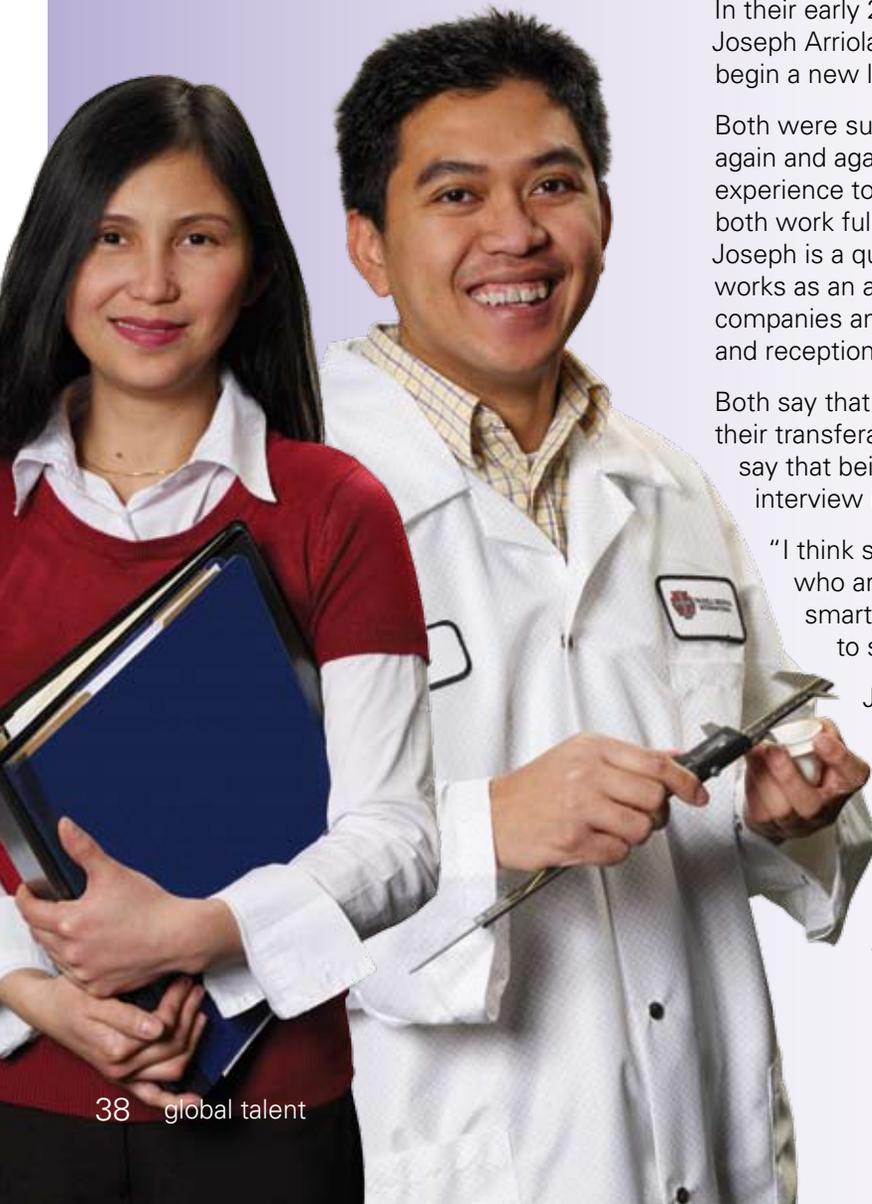
Both were surprised to hear employers tell them again and again that they needed Canadian experience to get a job. They persisted and today, both work full-time at Trudell Medical International. Joseph is a quality technologist and Annaliza works as an administrator, preparing reports for companies and suppliers and doing computer work and reception relief duties.

Both say that identifying, promoting and using their transferable skills were important, and they say that being able to perform well in a job interview is critical.

"I think some employers can mistake people who are quiet for people who are not smart," observes Annaliza. "It is important to speak up and be confident."

Joseph agrees, "If you don't make a strong impression in an interview, finding a job will be difficult."

Both say it may help newcomers to know that many others have passed through hard times while searching for employment, but that success may be behind the next door.



# Employers are requiring Canadian work experience

As you apply for jobs, many employers will tell you that you must have Canadian work experience. Here are some reasons they ask for Canadian experience:

- They want to know you are comfortable in a Canadian workplace environment, so you can do your job well.
- They may not understand how your international work experience compares with the duties you will be asked to perform at their company.
- Volunteer to work without pay for a company to gain experience. Some newcomers ask for permission to “job shadow” – work alongside an employee in the same position for a period of time. If an employer will allow you to volunteer, you will develop language skills and learn about the company’s work culture.
- You may consider a survival or transition job (one that pays the bills but is not your chosen occupation). If possible, try to find a job that is related somehow to your occupation or one that gives you the opportunity to put your skills to work.

This is why it is important to do all you can, in your resume, cover letter and interview, to communicate clearly and tell them what you can do. Any information that shows the kind of work you are able to perform will increase your chances of getting a job.

But how can you get Canadian work experience if no one will offer you a job?

- Take an employment preparation workshop that offers a co-op or volunteer opportunity.
- Ask an employer for a short-term contract position. If they like your work, they can offer you a full-time job. If they are not satisfied, there is no risk to the employer.
- Volunteer at local charities and community organizations. In Canada, volunteering is very common. Employers respect individuals who volunteer their time in the community.

Remember, any success in a Canadian workplace can be helpful to show a prospective employer.

### Volunteering

Volunteering in your new community is a good way to meet new people, practice your language skills, build a work record to help you gain employment and to feel good about yourself. If you are interested in learning more about the volunteering opportunities available in the London Region visit [www.pillarv.com](http://www.pillarv.com).