

Job Development for Today - A Sector Specific Approach

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Abstract

Job Developers and Career Practitioners promote job seekers to employers in order to help them find meaningful employment. Because of today's complexity in the labour-market and specificity of job requirements, the task of job developers is getting more complicated. So, a sector specific approach may help Job Developers understand the needs of the labour market and lead them towards success in assisting job seekers find jobs. In order to build effective client promotion strategies, Job Developers need to clearly understand the current trends in the labour market, and then try to match their clients' skills with the requirements of the vacant jobs. Once this match is successfully made, they can start promoting job seekers to the employers. This article has been prepared on the basis of experience obtained as a Job Developer and Project Coordinator of a bridging program for internationally educated engineers called "Engineering Connections", which ACCES Employment has been running for over 4 years. This article reveals how a sector-specific job development approach can help Job Developers match job seekers' skills with the labour market requirements, and eventually promote them to the employers.

Every year embraces a large number of immigrants who eventually integrate into Canadian workforce and contribute to the economic growth of the country. greeted 247,202 permanent residents in the year 2008 which was well inside the government's intended range of 240,000 to 265,000 new permanent residents for the year. Further 79,459 foreign students and 193,061 temporary foreign workers resulted in a collective total of 519,722 newcomers in for the year 2008 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009). It is predictable that will greet between 240,000 to 265,000 new permanent residents in

2011 (Canada Immigration Plan 2011, 2010). It is often challenging for many of these immigrants to find professional jobs in the Canadian labour market because of various barriers including cultural shock, language, lack of labour market information, inability to promote marketable skills, unrecognized foreign credentials etc.

A number of not-for-profit organizations are delivering various government funded programs to help internationally educated professionals find meaningful jobs in Canada. While Employment Consultants in the not-for-profit industry are providing employment preparation services to these newcomers, Job Developers are continuously promoting their clients as well as their services to local employers - which often results in helping internationally educated professionals find jobs in specific sectors. Traditionally job development involved a general approach of offering services to newcomers without focusing on occupational specifications; however, with an increased number of clients demanding access to specific sectors, it has become imperative that a sector-specific approach should be formulated for job development. Responding to this need, a number of not-for-profit organizations in the GTA have launched sector specific bridging programs for internationally educated newcomers. This involves skilled immigrants' completing in-class training and work placements to bridge their prior education and work experience so they meet the requirements to practice within their professions in (hireimmigrants.ca, 2010). To name a few - ACCES Employment, Skills for Change, Microskills, JVS and also some community colleges and universities like Humber, Seneca, Ryerson are offering bridge-to-work programs for internationally educated professionals in various sectors including engineering, finance, accounting, HR, sales and marketing etc.

Successful job development needs to be comprised of a structured, step by step approach. To succeed, the professional development should be integrated in a progressive approach that is well-structured. It's a true/real reflexive practice because a combination of technical knowledge and basic scientific principles apply to the activities of vocations assessment and evaluation, job analysis, and contract development (Bissonnette, 1994). For promoting internationally educated newcomers to local employers, the JD (Job Developer) must first determine necessary steps or the process, and then formulate strategies for promoting clients in the local market.

A Sector-specific Job Development Process

In order to be able to promote internationally educated newcomers to the Canadian labour market a JD needs to follow the below outlined process:

A. Steps so that the training/education given to professionals trained out of the country has support/help from a sector-based approach provides/gives results

Following are two essential steps of job development for promoting an internationally educated professional in a particular sector:

1. Identify clients' sector-specific skills

- Internationally educated professionals bring a variety of hard and soft skills specific to different sectors. Each Canadian sector looks for specific hard skills. Following are some examples of sector specific hard skills:
- Engineering: Design skills using AutoCAD, Solid Works, PLC programming, Primavera
- Accounting: ACCPAC, Simply Accounting, Quick Books



- Information Technology: C +, .Net, SQL, SAP

Clients' skills can often be identified in workshop settings, through one-on-one counseling, resume reviews, etc. Mock interviews, technical presentations, and role playing can also be used for identifying clients' skills. For example – a Workshop Facilitator or JD may simply ask the clients to introduce themselves focusing on their professional experience and technical skills. During mock interviews, the interviewer may ask questions about hard skills, or may provide opportunities for clients to describe their relevant skills during technical presentations or role playing. A JD may also learn about clients' skills by asking questions relating to specific hard skills.

2. Match clients' skills with job requirements

At this stage the JD needs to demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the specific sectors for matching clients' skills with job requirements. Before beginning the matching process, the JD should already be aware of the skills that comprise the client pool, so this process can start only after the clients' skills have been identified.

Understand the labour market: The JD also needs to understand the labour market, industry standards, and current situation in terms of trends of the specific industry, and most importantly – vacancies with employers in the sector in order to be able to start matching clients' skills with position requirements. While researching jobs for Mechanical Designers, the JD should determine demand for this role in the labour market. The JD needs to know which industries are looking for designers, for example – automotive, aerospace, metal fabrication, manufacturing etc. Again, the JD needs to take into consideration other relevant factors in terms of how the automotive industry is doing, whether there are any aerospace companies operating in the GTA, and finally – whether these industries are hiring or not. The JD should also check what type of mechanical designing skills are in demand in the industry, for example whether the employers are looking for Solid Works, Catia, Pro En-

gineering or other similar skills.

Obtain information: Details relating to job requirements can be obtained by checking job postings and company websites, reading professional journals, newspapers and periodicals and also by directly contacting employers. However, in order to do the latter, the JD should work to build an effective relationship with the employer first.

Understand clients' experience: The JD requires understanding that in addition to hard skills, the employers look for relevant experience and education/training. Usually the employers tend to be specific in terms of relevant experience. They not only ask for similar experience, but also experience in the same industry. Sometimes they ask for experience in using a particular type of machine or software. For example, when an employer is looking for an engineer with piping design experience – they may get very specific by indicating that the candidate needs to have experience in the oil and gas industry and skills in P & ID (Piping and Instrumentation Design). Similarly, sometimes an employer may look for an electrical en-

labour market. For example – some Asian countries are ahead of in the field of telecommunications. So, candidates coming from those countries tend to be in great demand in Canadian telecom companies. Similarly, lacks engineers with transportation background. So, internationally educated civil engineers with experience in transportation may have great potential in .

B. Build a Client Promotion Strategy

Once a JD finds suitable clients for any particular organization, the next step will be to formulate a strategy for promoting the clients effectively to the employer. It is very important for the JD to interest employers in respective programs (for example – bridging programs) and also to interest employers in the programs' clients. With the words we speak we must inform, educate, inspire, communicate value, express enthusiasm and demonstrate good judgment (p. 165, Bissonnette, 1994). The picture/design/image of figure 1 below can help to understand the necessary tasks associated with successful promotion:

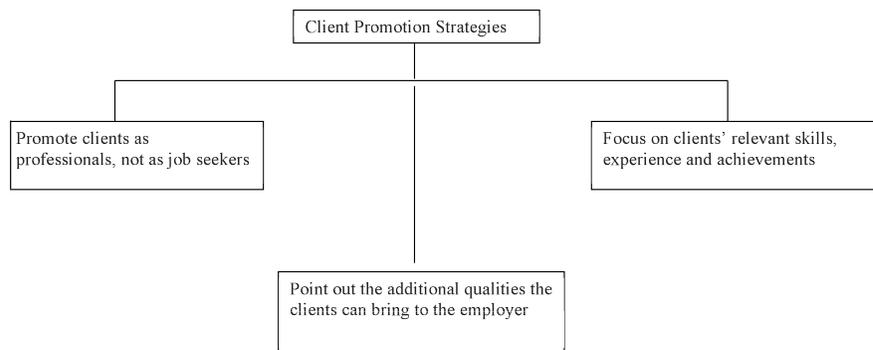


Figure 1. Successful Client Promotion

gineer with experience in using PLC programming either in Allan Bradley, or Siemens.

It is very important that prior to sending any resumes the JD confirms that the candidate fulfills all the above requirements. Sometimes it is easier to promote clients whose skills are in demand, but in low supply in the Canadian

1. Promote clients as professionals, not as job seekers: We know that employers have needs for skilled professionals and we have clients with necessary education, skills and experience. Now we need to connect these clients with the labour market. When promoting



clients, we need to address clients' professional competence rather than promoting them as internationally educated professionals. For example, when we promote an accounting professional, we need to focus on the client's professional qualities as they match job requirements, rather than telling the employer that the client had a good career in their home country and now she/he is looking for a relevant job in . Fortunately a large number of internationally educated professionals now hold important positions with various Canadian organizations, and they are quite aware of the competence of internationally educated professionals. They tend to be open to these types of candidates despite the fact that these candidates don't have Canadian experience.

1. 2 Focus on clients' relevant skills, experience and achievements: This refers to the common theme of targeting and customizing a client's resume, but can also be used for promoting the client to the employer. The employers always want the client to have experience in the same industry, in a similar environment, and with industry-specific software/technologies. For example, if we have a client who we are promoting to a construction firm for a GO transit extension project, we can say that our client has civil engineering project management experience, combined with past experience in railway construction projects.
1. 3. Point out the additional qualities that clients can bring to the employers: Employers are approached by many people from programs like ours in the course of a year, so it is crucial to tell the employer what will be different about working with you (p. 177, Bissonnette, 1994). We can try to promote clients to employers emphasizing the additional skills that the clients hold. For example – when an employer is looking for a telecom professional with some experience in wireless networking,

we can also highlight other relevant experience. Moreover, when a client has experience with advanced technology in another country – the experience may benefit the Canadian employer. There is a common theme in sales and marketing literature: People do not buy features, they buy benefits (p. 178, Bissonnette, 1994). Although over-qualification is considered a barrier for foreign trained professionals in , sometimes this can also be promoted as an additional qualification. For example - a mechanical engineer may have bachelor level education in mechanical engineering, but a specialized education in Computational Fluid Dynamics during master level studies may benefit some employers. In 2008, 42% of immigrant workers aged 25 to 54 had a higher level of education than their job required, while 28% of Canadian-born workers were similarly over-qualified. Regardless of period of landing, immigrants had higher shares of over-qualification (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/091123/dq091123b-eng.htm>, Study: Quality of employment in the Canadian immigrant labour market). This over-qualification can be presented to the employer in a way which views it as an additional strength.

A sector specific job development approach will not only be effective for bridging programs, but for any programs dealing with internationally educated professionals. All the JD needs to do is determine the professional affiliation of each client, research the labour market and finally, follow through the steps of promoting internationally educated professionals. This approach will not only help the JD learn more about the labour market and industrial details of different sectors, but also help gain employers' trust. The JD will talk their language as a result of becoming familiarized with the sector through this strategic job development process.

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