

Winter 2010

IN THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Moving your Career to Canada | 1 |
| Hats off to: | 3 |
| Our Thanks to: | 3 |
| Mark your Calendars! | 4 |

MOSAIC

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**Workplace
Connections**

Mentorship Program

This program pairs job-seeking, skilled immigrants with Canadian professionals who volunteer as mentors. Mentors offer informal, one-on-one support to their newcomer partners for three months.

Working Papers

A newsletter for
Workplace Connections Participants

Moving your Career to Canada

By Susan Main www.mainwriter.com

Eight months ago, Enrique Maza left his home in Lima and moved to Vancouver. He says it's been hard to adjust to the cold, rainy weather, but he's looking forward to seeing snow for the first time this winter in Vancouver.

Back in Peru, Enrique worked as a translator. He translated documents mainly between English and Spanish and he also studied French at the Alliance Francaise and German at Ricardo Palma University.

Like many other newcomers, Enrique has taken an entry level job to earn a living while he figures out his long-term career plans. He is enrolled in the Court Interpreting Certificate Program at Vancouver Community College, starting in 2010. This 10-month, part-time program is recognized as proof of accreditation by the Ministry of the Attorney General, Court Services. Graduates work as accredited court interpreters and in other interpreting jobs. "It's related to my career and I can use my knowledge of languages there," he says.

Four weeks ago, Enrique started his entry level job as a product demonstrator at Costco. "It's a lot of work, involving a lot of mechanical tasks – and my back is killing me," Enrique says. "But the bright side is that I have the opportunity to practice my English when I talk to Costco members about the products. That's the thing I enjoy about my work."

Workplace Connections celebrates its first year of service

Enrique is one of 50 newcomers who took part in a new program for skilled immigrants that started in Vancouver in September, 2008. MOSAIC's Workplace Connections program matches skilled immigrants with Canadian professionals who volunteer as mentors. Each pair works together on the newcomer's employment goals – two hours a week for three months, via phone, email, and in person.

Adjusting to a new workplace culture

Tiffany Riel was a TV producer in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia before she moved to Vancouver two years ago. In Vancouver, Tiffany wanted to connect with local TV and advertising agencies, but she found it difficult. The industry in Vancouver is relatively small compared to what it is in the urban centre of 7.2 million people in Greater Kuala Lumpur – and few are hiring due to the slowed economy.

Tiffany got together with Workplace Connections mentor Felicia Granger, a marketing specialist for Kodak. Together they looked at options, and Tiffany considered communications before enrolling in the Masters of Business Administration program at Simon Fraser University.

"I applied for school because I was getting a lot of feedback that they wanted Canadian education and I don't have that," Tiffy says. "That's why I decided to pursue my masters and see if that expands my opportunities for getting a good job here."

Felicia was one of the first mentors in the program and she will soon be on her third match. She volunteered with other MOSAIC programs before Workplace Connections and recently gave a talk on using social media tools Facebook and LinkedIn.

"You provide them an insider point of view on working in Vancouver," Felicia says. "Newcomers in the program are very job-ready in terms of language, but obviously that's just the beginning of really getting a sense of what it's like to try to find a job in a brand new culture."

Tiffy says Felicia gave her important insight into Canadian workplace culture. "Felicia helped me understand a lot about the cultural values here. It's culturally extremely different than where I come from, and that's invaluable information on how to carry yourself and talk to people," Tiffy says. "I come from a hierarchical structure where you don't speak your opinion to the bosses. They just want you to listen to them. It's different here. They expect you to talk and give feedback to your employer."

"Felicia helped me understand a lot about the cultural values here... I come from a hierarchical structure where you don't speak your opinion to the bosses."

Focus on resumes, job search skills, and interviews with employers

Volunteer mentor Kim Crow is on her third match. She says her partners focus on resumes, job search skills, and practising job interviews.

Kim started volunteering at MOSAIC when she was working in Starbucks' recruitment department and taking part in a workplace program in which staff volunteer during work hours. Today Kim works as a human resources generalist at NGRAIN Corporation and she is designated as a "Certified Human Resources Professional" (CHRP).

"Part of the reason I'm in HR is that people's work lives affect the rest of their lives too," Kim says. "If you're happy at work, you're happy everywhere else."

Kim says her last mentee taught her a lot about job search and being organized.

"She's just found her dream job and it's rewarding to see the value this has for people and how it affects their lives," Kim says, referring to Fanny Boulesteix – a language teacher who moved to Vancouver from Rennes, France.

Fanny asked Kim to proofread the English version of her resume and to help her identify potential employers. She wanted everything in order – all her transcripts and other paperwork – so she could start applying for jobs as soon as her work visa came.

Within two weeks of receiving her visa, Fanny was hired as an instructor at Douglas College and Alliance Francaise. "Kim was a great mentor. We managed very well together," Fanny says. "It was helpful in the sense that it was a good way for me to check that I was going in the right direction. It was good feedback."

Do you want to volunteer as a mentor or sign up for a mentor?

Email: mentors@mosaicbc.com or phone: 604 254 9626 for more information.

Our hats are off to:

Sophie Soo Hee Yoon, who accepted a position as an assistant accountant. Sophie's long term goal is to become an accountant. She had some training and experience, but was applying for administrative positions. Her mentor, Sham, encouraged her to apply for junior accounting positions and helped her to rework her resume accordingly. In a very short time, she was celebrating her new position.

Germania Djimino has a new job as in customer service and sales with a telephone company. Her mentor was able to help her build her confidence with interviews.

Enrique Maza's first job in Canada was for a telemarketing company. He quickly found himself another position as a product demonstrator with CostCo. He is much happier there and enjoys the opportunity to practice his English. He will soon take courses to become a court interpreter.

Armin Kashefi has accepted an offer as a structural engineer with Hatch Energy Ltd. It's a very good company and exactly what he was looking for!

Elizeth Usaqui is now working at her part time job with MOSAIC as a program assistant. She says having a positive outlook helped her to win this position. She continues to study and work towards her long term goals.

"Hats off to you" is an expression of respect. It is usually said to someone who has done a good job.



Workplace Connections is grateful for the ongoing support of the following organizations and individuals:

Independent Contractors and Businesses Association ICBA

Health Match BC

Society of Graphic Designers

Vancouver Board of Trade

BC Human Resources Management Association

Health Record Association of British Columbia

Monique Steensma of The Neutral Zone

Susan Main Writer/Web Content Specialist

Better Business Bureau, Mainland British Columbia

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Mark your calendars!

Working Sessions

Each month we hold meetings for all mentors, newcomers and interested guests. The evening centers around an activity, discussion or presentation related to job search and workplace culture.

All meetings held at:

MOSAIC
1522 Commercial Drive
6:30-8:30 pm

Thursday January 21st

Who would you Interview?

Learn more about writing resumes that win interviews. In this meeting we will 'turn the tables' and look at resumes from the perspective of the employer.

Thursday February 18th

Three Types of Bosses

Test your English listening skills with a podcast about different management styles. Learn some workplace idioms and discuss management styles.

Thursday March 18th

Communication in the Workplace

With Guest Speaker: Monique Steensma
We will learn and practice effective communication skills for Canadian workplace settings.

Register by:

Phone: 604-254-9626 ext. 483

Email: mentors@mosaicbc.com



Upcoming Orientations

For Newcomers:

Friday Mornings
9:30 am – 12:30 am

January 29th
February 26th
March 19th

In the MOSAIC office
1720 Grant Street

For Mentors:

Saturdays
9:30 am – 3:30 pm

January 30th
February 20th
March 20th

In MOSAIC's
Community Room
1720 Grant Street
Ground floor