



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

A Guide to Achieving Career Success
in Canada and the United States

E-GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

How do you take charge of your professional development? To get ahead in your career, especially in a new country, you need to invest in yourself by pursuing further education, professional training, and hands-on experience.

Getting started may seem challenging, but if you take one step toward achieving your goals every day, it will not be long before you are a valued employee at a Canadian or U.S. business or organization. This e-guide provides many of the strategies, tips, and resources you need to pursue your future career in Canada or the United States.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Before embarking on your professional development journey, you must first fully understand the sector in which you work and the labour market in Canada or the United States. You may find that job titles, compensation, skills, and education requirements are different from those in the country where you previously worked. You will need to educate yourself to make informed decisions about the direction of your career. Start by asking yourself these questions:

- Are my skills in demand?
- What is the employment rate for my profession in my chosen destination?
- Where in the country are my job prospects highest?
- What is the forecast for the future of my profession in Canada or the U.S.?

The answers to these questions will guide your next steps as you learn about the labour market in your new country. For example, you may find that job prospects are better in a certain region, such as western Canada as opposed to central or eastern Canada. Research may reveal that there is an oversupply of professionals with your skills in Ontario, but a great need for your skill set in Nova Scotia.

Research Tools

Job Bank is a free tool designed to help you conduct this type of research. It will provide you with needed information on a wide range of occupations in Canada. You can use Job Bank to search labour market information in a variety of ways, including:

- Occupation or profession
- Outlook
- Field of study
- Geographic location
- Wages or salary

Popular job search websites such as **LinkedIn**, **Monster**, **CareerBuilder**, and **Indeed** can also be useful resources for researching common job titles, responsibilities, and salaries for your desired role in Canada or the U.S.

Where to Perform Research

Many of the larger Canadian and U.S. public libraries have extensive career and learning resources, including a dedicated section for job search and career books. Some public libraries run job search workshops and provide resource centers for job seekers.

IDENTIFY YOUR SKILLS—AND SKILL GAPS



After you have conducted research to determine the skills employers are looking for, the next step is to assess whether you have those skills. Remember to consider your entire range of skills, including communication, leadership, teamwork, and technical abilities, as well as any **transferable skills**.

Understanding where you have current gaps in your skill set will help you to determine your next course of action.

The Government of Canada offers a free **self-assessment tool** that can help you identify essential skills, strengths, and areas that need improvement. Make a list of the skills you currently possess and the ones you need to acquire. In the U.S., there is a tool similar to Canada's called the **MAPP Test**. This free career test identifies jobs that may be a good fit based on your personality, interests, and skills.

After doing an assessment, you will have a more thorough understanding of your skills and abilities, and you will be in a better position to market yourself to employers. You will also know how best to target your résumé to specific job openings and to more effectively prepare for interviews.

To address any gaps in your skills, look for resources that can help. For example, you can find an appropriate group on **Meetup** to practice your language skills, or join a local **Toastmasters** club to improve your public speaking and leadership ability. There are a variety of ways to upgrade your skills — not just through formal education — and these options are often free or low cost.

UPGRADE YOUR SKILLS

Depending on your profession, upgrading your skills may require further education, on-the-job training, or both. You can acquire the skills you need in any number of ways, including the following:

Professional Development Training

This training can range from short courses (a few hours or a couple of days) to longer and even ongoing training. Professional development training can be specific to your industry or may focus on acquiring “soft” skills, such as communication, leadership, or working with others. You may receive a certificate or some other acknowledgement of participation upon completion, depending on the nature of the training. The training may also lead to other professional development opportunities. Keep track of the certificates you earn and any other accomplishments you achieve, so you can market them to prospective employers.

If you are looking for stackable credentials — those that can be combined or “stacked” towards a degree — you may want to earn a certificate in your field, or look for management and administration certificate programs. For example, you can hone your project management and communication skills through a **Project Management Professional (PMP) certification**, which is recognized around the world. Not only is it a great addition to your résumé, the PMP certification can also help you develop leadership skills, stand out as a candidate in your job search, become a more well-rounded worker, and advance in your career.

Courses

Whether you take a college or university course on campus or pursue education online, courses can help you develop the theoretical and practical knowledge you need to upgrade your skills. Consider courses that have a practical component so you can immediately put into practice any skills you acquire.

Additional Study

You can expand your professional options by obtaining additional education in Canada or the U.S. Degrees earned abroad have recognized value — especially when authenticated by a credential evaluation report. But earning additional Canadian or U.S. credentials — for instance, credentials related to technical language needed by professionals in your field of expertise or credentials that enhance or attest to other technical skills — can increase the likelihood of finding a job in your desired professional field. This type of additional study has other benefits as well. These include an expanded personal and professional network and exposure to alternative and related careers that make use of the training and experience you earned in other countries.

Volunteering

You can find opportunities to learn, hone, and use new skills through volunteer work. If you are currently employed, volunteer for new tasks at your place of employment. Employers appreciate their staff taking initiative; your doing so will help your employer see you in a positive light.

FIND A MENTOR OR COACH

Mentors and coaches have different functions, but both can exert a huge influence on your professional life. With their deep knowledge, experience, connections, and insight, they can guide you or be a sounding board for your ideas. They can help put the difficulties of the present in perspective and help expand your sense of what is possible. Developing a mentoring relationship could be one of the most valuable investments of your career.

How do you find a mentor or coach? Start by looking within your networks. A mentor or coach can be a former or current manager, teacher, or co-worker. The person can be older or younger than you are. You can also meet prospective mentors and coaches by networking (read more about professional associations and networks below), asking for referrals, or using online platforms such as **LinkedIn** or **Meetup**.

Organizations that specialize in mentorships can pair you with a mentor who provides insider knowledge of the field you want to get into. That person may also provide advice and connections to others in your industry.

Below are some organizations in Canada that can connect you with mentors in your field:

- **Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)**
- **Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC)**
- **Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) Mentoring Partnership**
- **Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC)**
- **Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO)**
- **Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) MentorConnect**

In the U.S., the following organization can help connect you with mentors in your field:

- **Upwardly Global**



DID YOU KNOW?

According to the New York Times, people who have mentors are more likely to:

- Get promotions
- Have more social capital and exposure to new networks
- Be exposed to new ideas and perspectives

JOIN A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OR NETWORK

A great way to meet a prospective mentor is to join a professional association or network. Professional associations seek to promote and support the interests of a particular profession. They keep their members informed by providing updates and training. They also function as a resource for those who want to enter the field.

By providing courses, networking events, volunteer opportunities, and more, professional associations connect you with others in your industry. They offer key insights that can help you determine your next training or career move. Your involvement in a professional association should be included on your résumé to indicate your relevance and investment in the field.

Professional associations offer a wide array of services, some of which include the following:

- Mentorship
- Research and insights into current trends
- Professional development
- Networking events
- Job boards
- Resources and tools

To choose the right association, research the various types and consider the following before joining:

- Membership fees and other associated costs
- Whether your profession requires membership in a particular association
- Types of activities and events offered
- Reputation of the association
- Opportunities to get involved

By doing thoughtful research, you will find the association that best aligns with your profession. You can find a comprehensive — though not exhaustive — list of professional associations in Canada by visiting the website for **CharityVillage**, a top source for non-profit news, non-profit jobs, non-profit funding, non-profit resources, and non-profit training in Canada.

In the U.S., there are professional associations at the national, state, regional, and local levels. The following websites list U.S. trade organizations and professional associations:

- **Jobstars**: This resource lists national professional associations and organizations by industry.
- **Directory of Associations**: This database lets you search professional associations by state, type, category, and size.


OBTAIN A CREDENTIAL EVALUATION

Because educational systems vary from country to country, degrees and diplomas from another country may be viewed differently in Canada or the U.S. A credential evaluation verifies your qualifications, assesses and describes each of your credentials, and provides an equivalency statement comparing your credentials to those in Canada or the U.S. The equivalency statement helps Canadian and U.S. employers understand the value of your education, enabling you to achieve your academic and professional goals in your new country.

A credential evaluation can be used for:

- Immigration
- Admission to higher education institutions
- Credit transfer
- Professional licensure
- Employment

Obtaining a credential evaluation to assess your international education and training is the first step you can take toward gaining access to educational and employment opportunities in Canada and the U.S. Before requesting a credential evaluation from any agency, contact the admissions office, regulatory body, or employer requesting the evaluation. The institution requesting the evaluation ultimately decides whether to recognize your academic documents and may require that a specific credential evaluator, such as World Education Services (WES), issue the report, and that you order a specific type of evaluation.



A Course-by-Course report is usually required for applications to post-graduate programs, students interested in transferring schools before completing their degree, and licensing board applications.

CREDENTIAL EVALUATION AND AUTHENTICATION REPORT

Name: SAMPLE, Sample
Date of Birth: Month 01, 1993

Date: September 29, 2017
Ref #: _____
Page: 1 of 2

The names on one or more of the academic credentials submitted for evaluation differ from the name indicated above.

U.S. EQUIVALENCY SUMMARY

Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution


CREDENTIAL ANALYSIS

- Name On Credential:** Sample Sample
Credential Authentication: Official transcripts were sent directly by the institution
Country: India
Credential: Bachelor of Engineering
Year: 2016
Awarded by: University of Mumbai
Status: Accredited Institution
Admission requirements: High school graduation
Length of program: Four years
Major/Specialization: Mechanical Engineering

U.S. Equivalency: Bachelor's degree

This report identifies and describes each credential, including: name of credential, requirements for entry and program length, and the equivalent degree in terms of U.S. education.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THIS REPORT: An explanation of the terms used in this report can be found on the reverse side. This report is valid only when printed on watermarked paper and sealed with an official WES stamp on each page.



COURSE-BY-COURSE ANALYSIS

Name: SAMPLE, Sample
Date of Birth: Month 01, 1993

Date: September 29, 2017
Ref #: _____
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INSTITUTIONS - DATES - SUBJECTS	U.S. Semester Credits	U.S. Grades
2015-2016		
(U) Machine Design II	3.0	B
(U) Machine Design Lab	1.0	A
(U) CAD/ CAM/CAE	3.0	C
(U) CAD/ CAM/CAE Lab	1.0	A
(U) Mechanical Utility Systems	3.0	B
(U) Mechanical Utility Systems Lab	1.0	A
(U) Production, Planning and Control	3.0	B
(U) Production Planning and Control La	1.0	A
(U) Power Plant Engineering	3.0	B
(U) Power Plant Engineering Lab	1.0	A
(U) Project I	3.0	A
(U) Design of Mechanical Systems	3.0	C
(U) Design of Mechanical Systems Lab	1.0	A
(U) Industrial Engineering and Manager	3.0	B
(U) Industrial Engineering and Manager	1.0	A
(U) Refrigeration and Air Conditioning	3.0	B
(U) Refrigeration and Air Conditioning L	1.0	A
(U) Renewable Energy Sources	3.0	B
(U) Renewable Energy Sources Lab	1.0	A
(U) Project II	4.0	A

This report lists each course you have taken, a designation of the level (upper or lower) of each undergraduate course, a U.S. semester credit, and U.S. grade equivalent.

SUMMARY

Total Undergraduate Semester Credits: 176.0 GPA: 2.76

This report includes a U.S. grade point average (GPA).

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To learn more about WES credential evaluations and the credential evaluation process, visit our [Help Centre](#).

If a job you are applying for requires a certain level of education, you should obtain a credential evaluation report and indicate your Canadian or U.S. equivalency on your résumé. Because human resources professionals are not typically trained in assessing the value of international academic credentials, having your equivalency on your résumé will assist them in determining your level of education.

Besides adding your Canadian or U.S. equivalency to your résumé, it is a good idea to include the equivalency in your cover letter. Also, you might consider submitting, online or otherwise, a copy of the evaluation report with your cover letter and résumé.

It is important to share your academic equivalency information as early as possible in the job application process. Do not wait until the job interview — you may not get past the initial screening or background check without an evaluation that accurately documents your credentials. Simply put, with an evaluation report, you increase your chances that employers will screen you in rather than out.

A credential evaluation helps employers understand your education so they can decide whether they want to hire you and, if they do, determine the position you are qualified for. An evaluation report helps to level the playing field so that international job applicants can more fairly compete with applicants educated in Canada or the U.S.



Are you ready to start the credential evaluation process? [Apply now](#).

CONCLUSION

Maximizing your professional development is a way of investing in yourself and your future. Through self-analysis and self-assessment, you can determine your strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan to improve your existing skill set or learn new skills. To take control of your career development, you must make use of every opportunity to keep learning and growing. By investing time and energy in your professional development, you will ensure that you are keeping up to date in your field and opening the door to new employment opportunities. Best of luck in your career!

RESOURCES

- **[How Upgrading Your Skills Improves Your Career Prospects](#)**
- **[Essential Strategies for Building a Successful Career in Canada](#)**
- **[The Value of Professional Associations for Newcomers to Canada](#)**
- **[Finding Value in Community with Professional Immigrant Networks](#)**
- **[10 Essential Tips for Career Success](#)**
- **[Navigating Employment Services in Canada](#)**
- **[Credentials to Support the Skilled Immigrant Workforce](#)**
- **[How a Credential Evaluation Can Help You Find Employment](#)**



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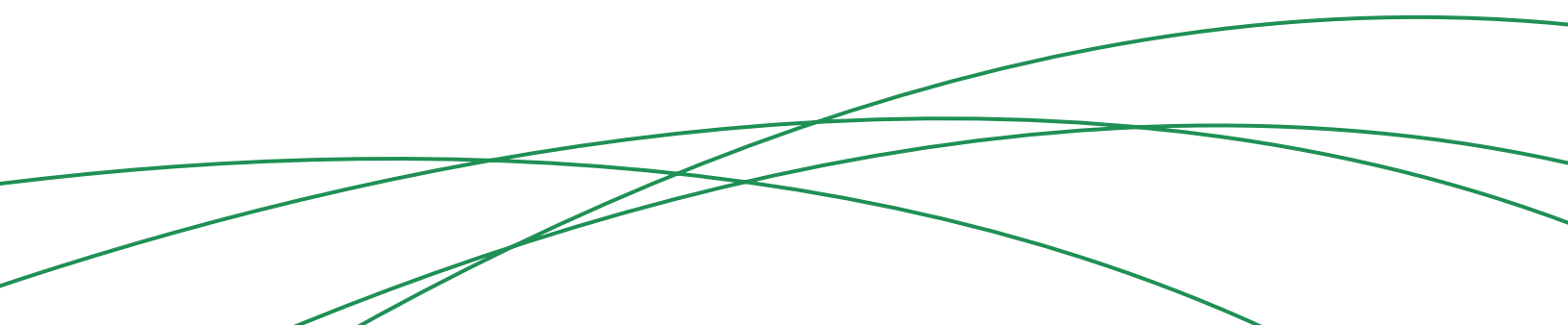
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