

**Enhanced Language Training Initiative  
Public Report  
Business for Professionals Bridging to Employment Program**

Summary of the process used in the project:

The Business Communication for Professionals program was offered to 45 newcomers to Canada who presented previous training and experience in accounting, management or human resource management professions, and Canadian Language Benchmarks of at least 6 in all four skill areas. This 28-week program, developed their communication, cross-cultural, employability and professional skills to a level at which they could access employment opportunities, or specialized training, appropriate to their previous training and experience in accounting, management, or human resources.

Expected Participant Outcomes:

1. relevant career goals, as indicated by a personal Career plan;
2. enhanced English language proficiency, as indicated by increases in Canadian Language Benchmark scores;
3. enhanced Business Communication skills, as indicated by a score of 80% in the English and Business Communication module final assessment;
4. confidence in the Canadian workplace, as indicated by successful completion of a Work Experience placement in a Calgary workplace relevant to their profession, and a letter of approval from the work experience supervisor;
5. a plan for Life-Long Learning;
6. understanding of the Canadian labour market, as indicated by success in finding employment or occupation-specific training within three months of the completion of the program;
7. a plan for obtaining membership in a professional association, and completion of the application process for such membership.

Participants were offered these Learning Components:

1. Module A: Business English and Professional Communication: 16 weeks;
2. Module B: The Canadian Workplace: 16 weeks, concurrent with A;
3. Module C: Computer Training: 4 weeks;
4. Module D: Employment Readiness Training and assistance in obtaining membership in a professional association: 2 weeks;
5. Module E: Work Experience: 6 weeks.

A program syllabus was created for the use of students who were applying to membership with Certified General Accountants (CGA). The CGA then gave credits for this course. (Attached as appendix)

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## Resources

Staffing resources included a Program Coordinator responsible for all aspects of program implementation, an instructor for the Business Communications Curriculum, and a job developer to instruct for job readiness curriculum, and market program participants to employers. During the course of the project this model changed from part-time program coordinator and program assistant to fulltime coordinator.

Partnerships with professional associations were developed to provide information about the industry and benefits of membership and included:

- Certified Management Accountants (CMA) provided speakers to present at relevant class sessions
- Certified General Accountants of Alberta association (CGA) provided speakers to present at relevant class sessions and invitations to their association's wine and cheese events which afforded participants networking opportunities with accounting professionals
- Human Resources Institute of Alberta (HRIA) provided speakers to attend relevant sessions
- 34 business and organizations hosted work placements or hired participants

Recruitment companies specializing in Accounting and Management staffing also provided speakers on the topics of labour market information for financial and management staff, and the role of recruiting companies in finding work. Other guest speakers in the classes were: employers, HR specialists, managers and accountants. It was important for participants to be able to meet and talk with other professionals to learn about the workplace structure and what to expect from the workplace. Other opportunities to network were afforded such as career fairs and association meetings.

The main products and publications produced during this project included:

- 43 student portfolios which include resumes, IQAS assessment, certificates and other documentation.
- marketing materials, posters, course syllabus, brochures, program cards
- written projects such as business cases studies
- Calgary Herald article

## Outcomes

A total of forty three of forty five participants were accepted into the program. Of the 43 participants 34 completed the program. The majority of those who left the program found employment. Participants, in most cases, achieved a personal Career Plan; enhanced English language proficiency, as indicated by improved Canadian Language Benchmark scores; enhanced Business Communication skills; an understanding of and confidence in the Canadian Workplace; a plan for Life-Long Learning; understanding of the Canadian labour market; a plan for obtaining membership in a professional association; and employment or acceptance into training related to their professions.

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Program Success of the 34 who completed the program:

1. 100% had relevant career goals, as indicated by a personal Career plan;
2. 88% had enhanced English language proficiency, as indicated by increases in Canadian Language Benchmark scores;
3. 94% had enhanced Business Communication skills, as indicated by a score of 80% in the English and Business Communication module final assessment;
4. 88% had greater confidence in the Canadian workplace, as indicated by successful completion of a Work Experience placement in a Calgary workplace relevant to their profession,
5. 100% had a plan for Life-Long Learning;
6. 79% had an understanding of the Canadian labour market, as indicated by success in finding employment in their occupational area
7. At the end of the program none of the participants had completed application process for membership in a professional association.

Class assignments included case studies, portfolios, oral and written reports, and other communication activities appropriate to the office environment. Portfolios were used by the participants in their job search and IQAS assessments included in the portfolios were important in indicator to employers of the participants' background and training.

Challenges:

Although the program originally targeted 45 participants, the first intake did not attract the 15 applicants needed. The initial start up of the program could likely have been extended by another four weeks to ensure sufficient time for hiring staff, initial start up activities and marketing to occur.

Enhanced language proficiency was not always indicated in the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) pre and post test results. In some instances participant's benchmarks were reduced to a lower level, in other cases student's benchmarks increased by more than one level. A better indication of English language proficiency was the ongoing evaluation in classroom activity and work experience.

A lower than expected number of participants began the process of membership in professional associations. Those who joined accounting associations tended to apply after they had left the program. Management and HR occupations are not regulated and none indicated applying for membership in the HRIA.

The Calgary labour market itself was a challenge with an unemployment rate hovering around 3%. During the program, some participants found jobs and left early. Recruiting students was also a challenge as many found work after initial acceptance in the program and turn around time to select other candidates was very short. Another key challenge related to the labour market was recruitment of staff, and in particular the job developer was a difficult position to fill.

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Overall, most participants were able to find work in the occupations for which they had experience and training with a high success rate of seventy-nine per cent employment in positions appropriate to occupational training.

What Clients said:

A particular success story is about an individual who was placed in an internship with the City of Calgary and then was hired as Junior Business Analyst. She stated: “ *I find myself smiling on the way to work every morning and at night I am smiling all the way home, I never thought I would reach such a position*”.

Her placement with the City of Calgary was very timely and was instrumental in establishing a better working relationship with the City. In a successive project, the HR department passed on resumes of the program participants to other hiring managers. Other participants have stated that the program helped them to find a professional job in their field.

Another student stated “*Over 10 years I was working as a chief accountant for Representative Offices of Finish and Korean companies in Ukraine. Despite successful career in Ukraine, it was very hard for me to find a first professional job in Canada. I was so thankful to get training with the Business Communication Program, because this program introduced me to cross-cultural communication and employability skills that helped me to restart my career in Canada.*

*During 28 weeks of this program I was trained in Business English, introduced to professional Canadian workplace culture and taught to write resume. It helped me to get a good work placement. Ukrainian experience and knowledge of accounting software, Microsoft Office WORD and EXCEL which I received during this program helped me to keep my job. It is very important for all the newcomers to get a chance to restart a career and I consider the best way is The Business Communication Program which can help a lot of people to rich their goals.*

*Therefore, I would like to recommend that the BCP program offers more programs of this type to help immigrant professionals find employment in their fields*”.

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## Appendix

### Syllabus for Business Communication for Professional program

**Prerequisites:** 4 year university degree and work experience in Accounting, Human Resources or Management.

#### Course Information:

This 28 week program for internationally trained professionals will help develop communication, cross-cultural, employability and professional skills to be able to access employment opportunities or specialized training in the occupations of accounting, administration and management including Human Resource Management appropriate to their previous training and experience.

Instruction Hours:   English upgrading:   480 hours  
                                  Computer skills:       120 hours  
                                  Job readiness:         60 hours

Course Schedule: 22 weeks 9:00 – 4:00 M-F. Work experience hours will be determined by the employer and is equivalent to full time working hours.

Program content: 16 weeks of English instruction in reading, speaking, listening and writing, Canadian work place skills, 2 weeks of Job readiness skills, 4 weeks of computer instruction in Microsoft office suite and Simply Accounting. The final phase of the program is a short term work experience (6 weeks) to be arranged with local employers. Texts and materials are at College-level instruction.

- **Textbooks:** Thill, John V. Courtlane, L.Bovee and Cross, Ava. Excellence in Business Communication. 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Edition. Toronto: Prentice-Hall, 2002  
Langan, John; Winstanley, Sharon; English Skills with Reading, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

#### Teaching Materials:

- Listening, Speaking and cultural components from Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers: Professional Communications for Internationally Educated Professionals
- Learn to Listen, Listen to Learn; textbook and tapes
- Business Idioms text book
- Idioms for Academic and Social success
- Articles and other materials from teacher selected websites
- Reading comprehension student exercises produced by the Edmonton Centre for Newcomers.

Tip Sheets on Simply Accounting

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