

Finding a Job in the British Columbia Construction Industry

The information contained in this document is provided as a guide to help you better prepare for your search for employment in the province of British Columbia, Canada.

JOB SEARCH

How to organize your job search

It is a good idea to dedicate an allotment of time every day to look for a job until you complete your search. Choose a space that is comfortable and free of distractions to maximize the time spent looking for a job. You may want to keep a journal detailing the actions taken and the persons contacted to ensure that you follow every possible lead.

Information to record and track would be:

- ~ Who did you speak to?
- ~ When?
- ~ How? (Email, telephone)
- ~ Where? (Information from a website, personal contact, etc.)
- ~ Why? (Possible job, first contact, response to an ad, etc.)
- ~ What? (Type of job offered, when does it start)

Practical tools: internet, websites, phone, copier, printer, web cam

To effectively conduct your job search, you will need regular access to a computer, internet, a phone, possibly a photocopier/printer, as well as a web camera for potential online job interviews. You might not have all of it at home, but they can sometimes be found in libraries, post offices, and internet cafés. A computer is especially important as it will allow you to create your resume, research various employers on the internet, as well as contact the ones that are likely to be interested in your profile.

Internet is one of the most important resources for your job search. With thousands of websites and web pages available to you, you will be able to conduct an in-depth job search, network and research licensing and credential requirements for your profession.

You might want to print and make copies of your resume and supporting documents i.e. trade certificates, tickets, licenses, etc. if you are going to attend a job fair, or if you are in Canada and contacting or meeting with employers. Otherwise, distributing your resume by email is the easiest and fastest way to connect with employers.

A web cam might be required if an employer is conducting webcast online interview for candidates located outside British Columbia or Canada. If you don't have access to one, some internet cafes may rent one as part of their internet services, usually on an hourly basis.

Licensing and credentials

One factor that could affect your chances of gaining employment in British Columbia is whether or not you have the required certification or licensing for your occupation.

The requirement to have your qualifications assessed depends on two factors: your occupation and where you obtained your qualifications.

Over 200 occupations in BC are regulated. If you want to work in one of these professions, you will need to be certified and registered for the occupation. This process is managed by bodies called regulatory authorities. Each regulated occupation has different standards, and each one has a regulatory authority to establish and uphold these standards. The regulatory authorities will assess your qualifications for certification and registration. This is called the FQR assessment process.

A non-regulated occupation is a profession or trade for which there is no legal requirements or restriction on practice with regards to license, certificates, or registration. In non-regulated occupations, the employer decides whether or not your qualifications will be recognized. If you are interested in a non-regulated occupation, the employer may ask for an assessment of your education and credentials, as well as an assessment of your work experience.

To find out if your occupation is governed by a regulatory authority in BC [click here](#)

The **Industry Training Authority (ITA)** is the provincial government agency that governs and manages BC's industry trades training and certification system. They work with employers, employees, industry, labour, training providers and government to issue credentials, manage apprenticeships, set program standards, and increase opportunities in the trades. The ITA registers apprentices and employer sponsors, maintains apprentice records, oversees exams and other assessments, issues credentials and funds training at public and private institutions.

For more information about the Industry Training Authority please visit their website at <http://www.itabc.ca/>

If you are a skilled tradesperson who was trained outside of Canada, and you have the right experience and qualifications, you may be eligible to 'sit' or 'challenge' the **Red Seal** examination. The Red Seal is the national standard of excellence for the skilled trades in Canada. Qualified skilled journeypersons, who have obtained a Red Seal endorsement by passing the Red Seal examination in their chosen trade, can start using the RSE acronym after their name as an easy way to reflect your qualifications!

NOTE: you can submit an application to take your Red Seal exam from outside Canada but you must be physically present to sit the exam.

For more information about the Red Seal program please visit: <http://www.red-seal.ca>.

NOTE: If you require clarification on your specific occupation and how it relates to working in British Columbia feel free to contact us at <https://www.bccasn.com/jobs-&-careers/bcca-integrating-newcomers/>, we are happy to guide you in the right direction.

Your resume

Your resume is one of the most important pieces to gaining employment. If you have not yet found employment in British Columbia, Canada you will need to ensure you have a resume that not only stands out from the others but one that captures the attention of an employer right away. Quite often it is a very busy owner or manager who reviews the resumes so be sure it is detailed but to the point. Below is a recommended format appropriate for employers.

Name
Address
Email, Phone Number

JOB OBJECTIVE: In one line, describe the position(s) you hope to be matched up with.

SKILLS:

- In bullet points
- Indicate skills *relevant to your intended job* which you have developed through your experience and education
- Example: Finish carpentry, kitchen fitter, stair construction, shuttering
- Example: Project management skills (*describe*)
- Example: Safety training (*describe*)

WORK HISTORY: (most recent first, listing only the relevant experience)

ABC Construction, Dublin, Ireland **2011 - 2012**

- List and describe primary activities and your contributions to major projects
- Formwork, Pour Concrete, Framing

John Friel Construction, London, UK **2010 - 2011**

- Stairs, Operating heavy duty tools, Cabinet Making, Cabinet Fitting

Fergus Mc Guinness Construction, Dublin, Ireland **2005 - 2010**

- Roofing, Formwork, Finish Carpentry, Shuttering
- Supervised 25 workers on 100 successful projects, at or under budget

Bert Duncan Construction, Cork, Ireland **2000 - 2004**

- Labouring, Roofing, Finish Carpentry, Building
- Etc.

EDUCATION / TRAINING / CREDENTIALS:

- In bullet points, list your most recent certifications first, including approximate dates, the subject/description of the qualification, and the organization you received the certification from
- 2010 – 2011 Stair Construction Bob’s Carpentry School
- 2005 – 2009 Carpentry Apprenticeship Jim’s Carpentry School
- Leaving/High School Certificate
- Clean driver’s license (indicate license class(es), country of issue)
- Safety certifications (site safety, First Aid, etc.)

REFERENCES:

(The people you ask for a personal/professional reference from do not necessarily have to write a reference letter: you can simply list them as a “personal reference” by offering their name, title and direct telephone number)

LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

Establish your needs and expectations for the job

Before you apply to any company, it is important to research the job market for your occupation in the preferred location. Before sending out your resume, you should have a clear picture of:

- ~ The needs for your profession
- ~ The type of companies currently hiring
- ~ The level of salary you can expect
- ~ The certification and licensing required

Big cities vs. small towns

To have the greatest chance of success for your job search, you may want to consider where the jobs are. The more flexible you are with your job search location and options, the more likely you are to be successful in your job search.

There is a common belief that if you focus only on the major cities you will have a better chance of finding your dream job as many big-name international companies have their head offices located in these bustling metropolises. While you are looking for work, remember this: you are not the only one looking for jobs in the “Big City”. The competition will be increased for any jobs that are available.

You may want to keep your options open and explore the opportunities for work that are located in the more remote areas of Canada; some jobs in smaller towns can go vacant for months because the employer cannot find a candidate who is suitably trained for the job. Be sure to research all regions of British Columbia to find out where your skills are in demand so that you will know where your target market is. Once you have identified the regions or cities where your occupation is in the greatest demand, you will know exactly where to target your job search.

Search for job vacancies online

You will find a lot of websites where employers post job opportunities. Keeping in mind that before an employer in Canada can seek an overseas candidate to fill their vacancy they must advertise their position on the government of Canada's Job Bank. Here are a few of the more popular job websites in Canada:

- ~ Canada's Job Bank: <http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/>
- ~ Monster: <http://www.monster.ca/>
- ~ Workopolis: <http://www.workopolis.com/jobsearch/>
- ~ Craigslist and Kijiji are also used for local/regional advertising i.e. Prince George, Victoria, Kelowna

Keys to a great job search

- ~ Devising a targeted job search – where the demand is for your skills
- ~ Using as many different job search methods as possible: ads in newspapers, job websites, etc.
- ~ Contacting as many employers as possible
- ~ Networking or building relationships with employers and people in your industry
- ~ Keeping an open mind and being flexible

Common job search methods

- ~ Networking
- ~ Cold-calling
- ~ Newspaper job listings
- ~ Career/job websites
- ~ LinkedIn

Hidden Market/ Networking and LinkedIn

Why network? It's an excellent way to gain information about jobs that are not advertised (called hidden market). The majority of Canadians who are employed obtained their jobs by networking or learning about job opportunities from associates in their profession.

LinkedIn is an online social networking site for professionals and it allows you to manage your professional online identity by creating a profile. It is a great way to access industry knowledge, insights and opportunities.

In the past it has been more popular for business and marketing fields, but it has gained popularity in such industries as construction. With this resource, you can find key contacts such as company owners or HR managers. When looking through the job postings, LinkedIn can feature links to the HR manager's profile or show you other key contacts connected to the company. There will be opportunities to reach out directly through this tool.

When reaching out to key contacts through LinkedIn, keep it professional. These interactions are all opportunities to show your personality. You're representing yourself to a future employer or someone who could provide a useful recommendation – make a great impression!

INTERVIEWS

Preparation

Do your homework about a potential employer's company. Research, research, research! You should know about the company you are applying to. The employer will want to know that you are familiar with their industry. You want to be as prepared as possible for the interview. Part of this preparation can include questions you have for the employer. Perhaps you'd like to hear about someone who started in this position and how they were able to grow professionally within the company. Or perhaps you'd like to hear more about one of their successful projects.

Job interview

During your interview be sure to make eye contact with the interviewer and respond to their questions confidently. The employer may ask you about specific examples of your work or types of jobs you have performed/completed. Answer interview questions truthfully and completely. Never make a negative statement about yourself or your previous employers or co-workers.

Your answers should always be prepared ahead of time. Be ready to provide examples of: a problem at your previous job, the action you took to resolve that problem, and the successful result of your action.

An employer will evaluate how you answer these and other questions to determine how well you work with others, how well you solve problems on your own and how well you work under supervision.

Six questions you should be able to answer in the interview:

- 1. Tell me about yourself:** a question that usually starts the interview to get to know you. Prepare a brief overview of your qualifications and keep it focused on your professional profile (no personal information): professional skills, education, past work experience.
- 2. Why should we hire you?** Take some time in advance to see why you are a good fit to the company, and show the employer that you can contribute to the growth of their enterprise.
- 3. What are your greatest strengths?** Mention one or 2 strengths that are work-related, and explain about a past successful work experience when you used those strengths.
- 4. What is your greatest weakness?** Turn the negative into a positive – identify the challenge and explain how you overcame it.
- 5. Why do you want to work for this company/what do you know about our company?** This is where your research about the company is important. You must show to the employer why you are a good fit.
- 6. Do you work better alone or as part of a team?** Depending on the nature of your job, give an example on how you are an independent worker but also how you successfully worked as part of a team.

Online job interviews

If you are not yet in Canada your interview might happen online, through Skype for example. Before setting up an interview with an employer, make sure that your **Skype ID** looks

professional. It's easy to create an ID for interview if you don't want to use your personal ID, or if the current one doesn't fit for a job search. Your internet connection should be reliable, and strong enough to handle both an image (video camera) as well as the sound. Choose a quiet place where you will not be disturbed, and dress appropriately. Even if the interview is taking place in the comfort of your own home, the first impression you make on an employer is crucial and applies both for online and in person interviews.

Interview follow up: thank you letter/email

Once completed, you may want to make some notes about the relevant items you discussed in your interview. This information could be beneficial should you be offered a job and want to review your conversation. While it is not required, you may wish to create and send a 'thank you' letter to your interviewer. In some cases this can make the difference between being asked for a second interview or not. Your letter should state that you are interested in the position and that you appreciate the employer's time.

NOTE: unless the employer asks you to contact them, the only contact you should make after the interview is to send a thank you letter. You can send your thank you via email. Do not send a thank you greeting card to the employer, as this is inappropriate.

Be sure to record the necessary details in your job search journal. It's also a good idea to include points about your interview i.e. areas you could improve upon, questions that you did not have answers for, etc. A successful job interview is like any skill - it can be perfected with practice.

Remember to be patient! It may take as long as 4 to 6 weeks for the employer to contact you again. In the meantime, continue to send your resume to other employers.

Accepting or refusing a job offer

An employer will review your resume, interview you, contact your personal and professional references and possibly conducted some pre-employment screening. If an employer decides that you are the best candidate for the position and wants to offer you the job you will likely be contacted by telephone or email.

Now it is time for you to consider if this is truly the company you would like to work for, in a location where you would like to work, and for the salary that you think is suitable for the position and your set of skills.

At the time you are offered the job, you can let the employer know that you are interested in the job and need a day or two to review the job offer. This is your right. You may want to evaluate the job offer and perhaps discuss it with your family or simply think about the job offer for a day or two.

When reviewing the job offer, you will want to consider:

- ~ Is the salary appropriate for you?
- ~ Is the location of the job a good location for you?
- ~ Does the job require a lot of long hours?

If the job offer is suitable for you, be sure to advise the employer that you are interested in accepting their offer and await the employer's formal **Job Offer**. Most job offer letters are quite straightforward and should outline what the duties of the job are, when the job starts and what the salary and benefits are. More recent additions to the standard job offer letter may also include such clauses such as a **non-competition agreement** which will require that you agree not to work for the employer's competitors within a certain time frame, or a **confidentiality agreement** where you will be asked to not disclose to anyone the company's private matters or trade secrets. There could be other agreements or contracts that the employer requests you to sign. These agreements are always crafted to benefit the company's interests, so be sure you read and understand any contract you sign. **Always request a mutually signed copy for your own personal files.**

If you decide that the job is just not right for you let the employer know as soon as you have made the decision. Always highlight something positive while declining the offer of employment. It is important for your career to leave a professional and positive impression on people in your industry at all times. If you decide to decline the job offer, then be confident that you have made the best decision. Continue with your job search until you find a job that is perfect for you. It is obvious that you have skills that are marketable and that employers want.

Salary negotiation: average salary, cost of living

In general, it's best to leave the salary negotiation to the second interview, if you know that there will be a second one. Do not state your salary expectation or your previous salaries in your cover letter or your resume.

Researching salary information can provide job seekers with a realistic understanding of the average pay for their occupation in the region where they reside. Having an understanding of the appropriate salary level for your profession is important for both the job interview and for relating it to the cost of living in the city or town where the job is.

How much is the average income is for your profession? This is critical to know when the employer asks you what salary you expect to earn. To prepare you for your job interview and also so you have an idea of how much money you can expect to earn, it is a good idea to do some research on an average salary range for your position.

Information you should know about Canadian salaries:

- ~ Salaries are either a monthly or annual amount for most positions, although some salaries will be quoted at an hourly rate. Generally, salaries are quoted as a whole, before deductions for taxes.

- ~ At most jobs, you will be paid every two weeks or twice a month - on the 1st day of the month and the 15th day of the month, or every second Friday. You will get paid either by cheque or your employer may automatically deposit your pay directly and electronically into your bank account.
- ~ Some employers provide medical insurance, which covers a portion of your healthcare costs, as what is called a “benefit” to their employees. These benefits are paid by employers to attract quality staff, to foster a sense of loyalty, and to encourage their employees not to look elsewhere for jobs.
- ~ The amount of salary paid for the same position can range greatly from one region to another and also from employer to employer.
- ~ When viewing job advertisements, it is important that you consider the experience that the employer requires for the position and whether the salary offered is suitable for the experience required. When researching your salary, consider the location of the job, the size of the company you are applying to, and your experience and education.

The cost of living can range greatly from large cities where rent for a house and amenities are priced higher, to smaller, more rural towns where costs are lower. An excellent website to research the expected salary for your position is the Canadian government Job Bank website: <http://www.jobbank.gc.ca>.

You can view specific salary details for your occupation in the region where you live or plan to live. In the event that the website does not display the salary information for your region, the website will list other related provincial websites that you can refer to that will show the wage information for your area.

The **Cost of Living Calculator** is also a helpful tool for your research purposes: <http://www.costofliving.welcomebc.ca/>

IMPROVING YOUR CHANCES

Abroad based search

If you are not already in Canada, it can be a bit more difficult to find a job. Be honest with the employer regarding your current status: do you already have a work permit, are you entitled to work in Canada, are you in the process of acquiring a work permit, etc.? It is one of the first things an employer will want to confirm when looking at hiring overseas candidates.

If you are not able to meet the employer in person it will be even more important to make a good impression with your cover letter and/or resume so the employer is willing to wait for you to arrive in Canada. Having a good connection for Skype interviews (or over the phone) is crucial to making a good impression, as it will allow you to connect with the employer.

Gaining Canadian experience

These are a few steps to help make sure you're work-ready:

- ~ If you do not have Canadian experience and are already in Canada, a viable option is to volunteer with an organization whose function is related to your education or previous work experience; this can provide you with work experience that can be listed on your resume.
- ~ Research the areas of Canada where your skills and expertise are in demand. Work experience requirements can vary with labour market conditions at different points in time and in various regions of the country. For example, in areas with a low labour supply and jobs that are in high demand, employers tend to lower their standards for entry to those occupations. The key is to find where your job has the **greatest demand** or to train for a new occupation that is in great demand and where Canadian employers will be more flexible about hiring applicants with limited experience.
- ~ Reference letters are important to employers, as well as examples of your previous work if applicable.
- ~ If your conversational English is not adequate for a job interview, one solution to a lack of English language skills is to do volunteer work with an English-speaking community organization. This will provide an opportunity for you to be around those who speak English fluently, and give you the chance to improve your English by listening and conversing. You can do research on the Internet to find volunteer organizations in your community.
- ~ This website <http://volunteer.ca/> has an excellent directory of non-profit organizations across Canada.

**** Contact newcomers@bccassn.com to connect with a REPS today ****