



**WORK
READY**

Tools

Case Studies

- Overcoming Underemployment as a Mature Worker
- Moving up from an Entry Level Job
- Transitioning to a New Occupation as a Mature Worker



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Overcoming Underemployment as a Mature Worker

Overview: Ahmad Ali moved to Canada three years ago. He is a foreign trained professional in his fifties with a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Cairo, Egypt. He has extensive experience in developing and delivering training programs for both the medical and banking industries. In his role as a trainer he was required to develop many kinds of multimedia tools to create effective training for both industries in his country. He had taken courses in graphic design, film directing and multimedia in Egypt which enabled him to create professional training and promotional resources such as training films, training guides and e-learning tools.

Obstacles: After three years in Canada, Ahmad Ali had still not found a job in his field of expertise. He had applied for several positions as a graphic designer or multimedia specialist and found that most employers were looking for young talent who had mastered both official languages. Most of the multimedia samples in his portfolio were created in Arabic which was not well received by Canadian employers. He was also faced with a three-year employment gap in his field since his arrival in Canada.

Activities: Ahmad Ali started ESL courses shortly after his arrival in Canada and improved his skills in both oral and written English. He also attended a Career Transition Program to assist him in evaluating which skills would best serve him in finding employment in Canada. He applied for educational equivalency to validate the diplomas and certifications he had obtained in Egypt. In the meantime, he volunteered for a local Social Enterprise by providing some of his e-learning and multimedia services, such as inserting Arabic subtitles into English training videos. His portfolio was revised to include mostly English samples of his work including the recent experience he had acquired as a volunteer. He was also coached in CV, cover letter and interview skills to assist him in understanding the Canadian job search process.

Outcomes: Ahmad Ali acquired recent Canadian experience in a Social Enterprise by volunteering onsite. He was then able to present this recent experience combined with his newly recognized certification and previous experience to potential employers. During the interview, he focussed on what he has done and the skills that he brings to the job rather than his age. This helped him acquire a temporary contract position as a project officer developing e-learning and multi-media tools. Although Ahmad is not doing the same level of work as he was in Egypt, he is now working in his field with the possibility of contract renewal.



Appreciation: The CCLB would like to thank Suzette Schmiedel for this contribution.

Moving up from an Entry Level Job

Overview: Iman arrived in Canada in 2000 with three small children. She had finished high school in Sudan but had no work experience. For her first few years in Canada Iman improved her language skills by attending a Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program that had daycare for her children. As soon as she was eligible Iman became a Canadian citizen.

When her children started school Iman needed to find a job to support her family.

Objectives: Iman needed to:

- Explore her options
- Learn how to write a resume
- Identify any transferable skills she might have
- Practise interview skills
- Find a job where she could get Canadian work experience

Activities: Iman met with an Intake and Assessment Counsellor at a local settlement agency. The initial 45 minute interview explored Iman's employment goals and needs. After the interview the counsellor referred Iman to several employment services for which she was eligible. These included:

- Career Access for Newcomers – this service included individual counselling sessions, job search tips, interview preparation coaching and networking events.
- A resume clinic that provided Iman with one-on-one assistance with writing resumes and cover letters.
- Access to the Employment Resource Centre where Iman had access to computers, fax machines, photocopying and printing for job search purposes.

Outcomes: Iman obtained an entry level job as a cashier in a supermarket. She soon demonstrated good people skills and an aptitude for figures. She was promoted to a higher-skilled position as head cashier and enrolled in a bookkeeping course at a local community college to improve her skills further.

Lessons Learned: The Career Access for Newcomers workshops really helped Iman identify skills she did not know she had. She had successfully managed her household budget, she was able to complete fairly complex forms, she could work with figures with ease and she liked talking to people. Iman was grateful for an entry level unskilled job. Since she had no work experience, she was happy to be able to demonstrate her skills knowing that if she continued her education or training she could obtain a more skilled position.



Appreciation: The CCLB would like to thank Astec Inc. for this contribution.

Transitioning to a New Occupation as a Mature Worker

Overview: Mohammed arrived in Canada from Afghanistan six years ago with his wife and four children. In his early fifties, Mohammed had been a teacher in Afghanistan and had some status in the community. He quickly realized that he would not be able to work as a teacher in Canada. His age and his poor English language skills were significant barriers; however, he needed to work to support his family and for his own self-esteem. As soon as his family was settled, Mohammed visited an immigrant settlement office near his home in Ottawa for help and advice. His counsellor discussed next steps with Mohammed. The reality was that there were many barriers but also many positive steps that Mohammed could take to establish himself in Canada.

Objectives: Language was the first barrier that Mohammed had to overcome. His counsellor sent Mohammed to the nearest assessment centre. As Mohammed was a fairly recent landed immigrant he was eligible for a free assessment and free language training. Mohammed enrolled full-time in a Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) program especially for older students.

Age was another barrier but only really in Mohammed's head. In Afghanistan Mohammed was regarded as a very old man because of life expectancy, but as he learned more about Canada he realized that in Canadian society being 50 is not old.

Pride was another barrier Mohammed had to overcome. He was fortunate that two of his children were working and were able to support the family but it was very hard for Mohammed to be dependent on them. He had had a good position in society but now had to look for less skilled work.

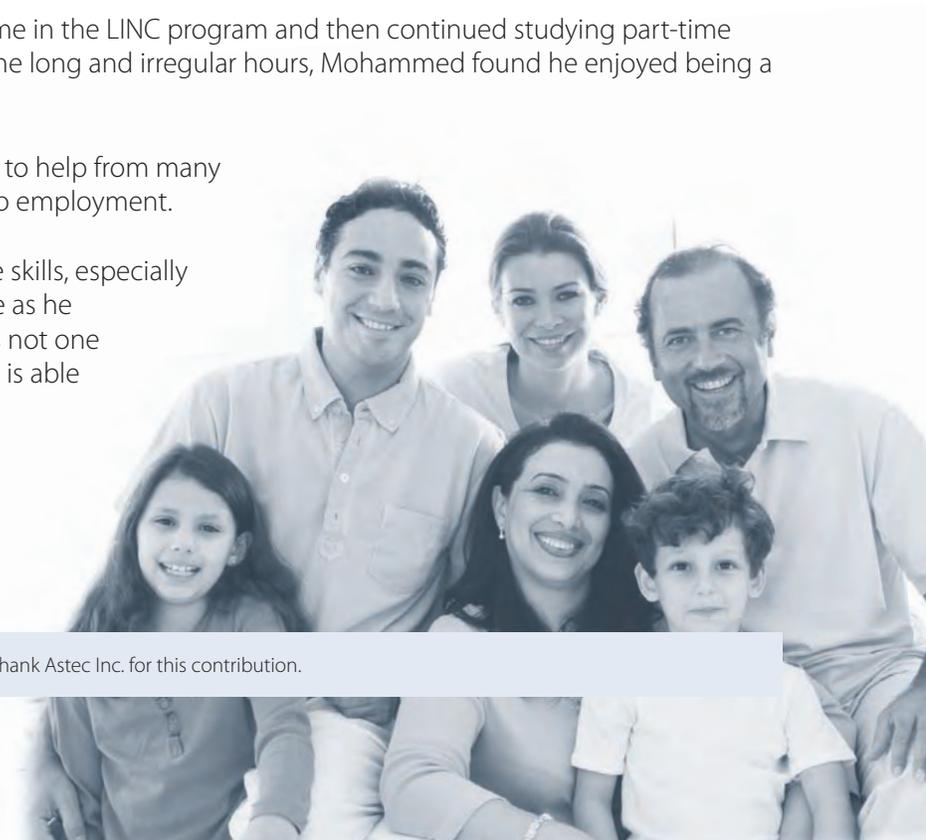
Activities: Mohammed really wanted to work so his teacher worked with him to determine what transferable skills he had. Together they found that he was good with people, was used to driving different kinds of vehicles, was willing to work odd hours and loved hard work.

Mohammed's teacher arranged for guest speakers to talk to the students about their jobs; one speaker was a taxi driver. Mohammed was interested so the teacher contacted Mohammed's counsellor who arranged for Mohammed to have an interview with a local taxi driving company. He found out the steps required to get his license and special courses to help him succeed.

Outcomes: Mohammed spent two years full-time in the LINC program and then continued studying part-time once he got a position as a taxi driver. Despite the long and irregular hours, Mohammed found he enjoyed being a taxi driver, especially talking to new people.

Lessons Learned: Cooperation and willingness to help from many different people facilitated Mohammed's path to employment.

Benefits: Mohammed feels useful. His language skills, especially his Speaking and Listening, continue to improve as he practices them daily at work. Although his job is not one that he ever expected to do, he is proud that he is able to support his family again.



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