

A Welcoming Community Supports Job Hunter's Success



Following the lead of his sister, Dean Christie came to Canada from Jamaica in 2002 to further his finance career and engage in Windsor's welcoming community.

Dean was first introduced to the community through the settlement services provided by the YMCA of Windsor and Essex County and the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County. The YMCA provided Dean with orientation to his community and the MCC identified his skill set providing local employment opportunities.

Dean, a former tax fraud investigations manager with the Government of Jamaica, came to Canada as a Certified Fraud Examiner and also has Master of Business Administration degree from the University of the West Indies. Dean decided he could use his transferrable skills to obtain Canadian work experience, taking an entry-level position with H & R Block, as an income tax preparer. He continued to seek local training opportunities from the community and discovered the Unemployed Help Centre from an acquaintance before checking out their website, uhc.ca

"I made a comment online suggesting they run a course in 'Simply Accounting' for newcomers," said Dean of the widely-used computer program for accounting and finance, he got a response from the executive director to come in and meet with the staff.

"It was the first time anyone had made an online comment about our services and it was great feedback on a growing need in the community," said the UHC's former executive director.

Based on that introduction and his skill set, Dean was given the chance to meet with the team, in a unique interview, and was offered work as a Finance Administrator. The job was out of his field but he continued to apply himself to his daily duties, working three days a week with the UHC and continuing to work for H & R Block, twice a week.

Over the course of a year, Dean was given more responsibility and more hours at the UHC, joining the financial department as a finance assistant. In January 2006, his patience paid off and a new position opened as the finance supervisor. He was the successful candidate, but he wouldn't stay in that role for long. With a year of experience in management, Dean's supervisor retired and her job was offered to him; he officially became the director of finance in 2008.

Looking back, Dean credits his volunteer work with Harmony in Action and being on the Board of Ten Friends Diner towards understanding Canadian workplace culture and business operations.

"It's so important to give back to the community because it is exposed me to different work environments and helped me create a network that lead me to opportunities."

"I could not do it all on my own. I needed to be a part of a community, in order to succeed."

Sacrifices for Success



Biljana Angelovski is the President of Symphonic Management, a company that provides a broad range of coaching and consulting services to individuals and organizations. Her passion is in leadership development, Human Resources management and professional consulting.

Biljana is a Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) with HR Professional Association of Canada. She holds a degree in Adult Education which was only the foundation for the path she chose. She has been a certified Facilitator with Development Dimensions International Learning Systems and Thomas International Personal Profile Analysis and Human Job Analysis. To enhance her analytical and pragmatic skills, she achieved Six Sigma Green Belt.

This is her story to success,

There are situations in life when it seems that we don't have any choices, but we do. We always do. We have a choice of doing nothing or a choice of taking an action.

When I came to Canada from Serbia, I had a choice of waiting for someone to guide me or taking initiative, I chose the latter.

I imagined Canada as a country of good foreign policy, tall evergreen trees and big lakes. On a more practical side, it was a country with a stable economic background and an inviting opportunity to become a citizen, in a relatively short time.

Upon arrival, I was unclear of my path. I had a bachelor's degree in adult education, from the University of Belgrade in Serbia, about five years of experience working in human resources; two years of experience working in a radio based educational program and a good command of the English language. I also was a wife and a mother of a 10-month old baby. I did not know where I was headed. What I did know was that I had a desire to succeed and the willingness to work hard to get there.

My professional path in Canada started with evaluating my degree with the Comparative Education Department at the University of Toronto, my education was equivalent to a four years bachelor's degree program with similar content. The University of Toronto also offered to evaluate me for an education degree, at the time I thought, "Teaching? Who can I teach with my accent and my 'imperfect' English?" Until this day, I have never evaluated my education for a Teacher's degree. That was one path that I could have taken. But I didn't.

The career I eventually took was as a human resources professional. My first Canadian education experience started at the St. Clair College. I began with an accounting course because the job title of a "bookkeeper" was repeatedly advertised in the local newspaper. Soon after I finished the course, I found my first job as a bookkeeper.

With an income, I was able to juggle life, work and school duties to complete my human resources certificate. Soon after, I applied for an HR assistant position and I was successful.

Sacrifices for success continued...

The job was with a good company but I wasn't satisfied with my work schedule, which was one of the compromises my husband and I had to make. My approach was, if you want to succeed you have to make sacrifices, my sacrifice was being at work while my husband and my kids were at home.

My sacrifice paid off, my path to success felt like it was established and I resumed taking courses towards professional certification with the Human Resources Professionals Association. When I received designation two years later, being a "certified HR professional" gave me the confidence to apply for management positions, which I landed in both the manufacturing and retail industry. I dedicated myself to learn every aspect of both positions. No matter with whom I was dealing or what amount of files landed on my desk; I wanted to make it flawless. I worked long hours, staying longer than anyone else. I was dedicated.

After about 10 years of working in the HR industry with Canadian corporations, I decided to start my own business. I had enough experience and the confidence to do it. I also equipped myself with the tools of the industry, the relevant certifications and a good network. From my experience, I found that it takes time to build a professional network, but you have to start somewhere. I built it through work experience, volunteering, and children's activities.

We love Windsor for its multiculturalism, its vicinity to the cultural venues in Detroit and it's the perfect size to raise a family.

Today, I enjoy what I do, facilitating workshops, consulting businesses on legislative requirements, coaching individuals and organizations, etc. and I've discovered I actually am a teacher, by skill set.

If you remember from the beginning of my story, I thought I would never be able to teach because of my accent. Now, I know that it does not matter what kind of accent you speak with, as long as the message you are sending is clear, articulate and smart.

Being a new Canadian, even if you are being told that your English is great, it is a very self-conscious state of mind. The idea that you are being noticed because of your accent and maybe some imperfection in annunciation sticks with you, for a very long time. Now, when someone who is new to Canada speaks with an accent, I just become more interested in talking to that person. I would like to tell everyone who is self-conscious, to think of their accent as a unique feature. The accent makes you special, and it's a starter of a conversation.

I've also learned that if you really want to succeed you have to:

1. Have the dedication to succeed.
2. Have the confidence that you can do it.
3. Work harder than the people whose first language is English.
4. Stand for yourself, but don't be defensive.
5. Do not give up when it becomes harder than you thought.
6. Be humble every time you reach your goal.
7. Balance your professional and personal life.

Everyone's path to success is unique, because success is very personal. You will succeed when you feel happy doing what you're doing. I hope you will find my story inspirational to continue your journey to success.

