

## Q&A Column

Author: Mark Swartz, MBA, M.Ed.

**Email Subject Line: Overcoming Lack of “Canadian” Experience**

[workopolis.com](http://workopolis.com) EN home page

**Headline: “Canadian” Experience for Newcomers**

### Summary:

I have recently come to Canada and I have been looking for employment in the accounting field. Several employers have said to me that I need “Canadian experience.” I am wondering how I will be able to get beyond this barrier.

Rohinton S., Timmins, Ontario

**Landing Page copy**

**Headline : “Canadian” Experience for Newcomers**

**Dear Mark,**

I have recently come to Canada and I have been looking for employment in the accounting field ever since. Though I have a high education and am willing to work very hard it has been difficult for me to find a job. Several employers have said to me that I need “Canadian experience” before they will hire me. This is frustrating and I am wondering how I will be able to get beyond this barrier.

Rohinton S., Timmins, Ontario

**Dear Rohinton,**

First of all, welcome to our great country! Unfortunately what you are hearing from these employers is not uncommon. People who hire seem to be more conservative in the choices they make these days. In part it’s because they are increasingly wary of selecting the wrong candidate - which can be a costly mistake for all. Therefore applicants who have already worked in Canada and have proven themselves here tend to have an advantage over those who have not, because (rightly or wrongly) it may reduce the uncertainty factor for the hiring person.

What can you do to overcome this obstacle? There are three main approaches to consider.

One is to increase your efforts and try to meet with even more employers than before, if that’s possible. In this way you boost your odds that at least one person will believe in you enough to hire you, even if you haven’t yet worked in our country.

Another route is to perform some volunteer work in the field of your expertise. For instance, since you have accounting skills you might volunteer to help out a not-for-profit organization with its bookkeeping or budget process. This would give you hands-on experience that you could add to your resume. Plus you would be making new contacts to help you expand your network locally. Also if you perform well your supervisor will likely provide you with a positive reference. Check out [volunteer.ca](http://volunteer.ca) and look for Volunteer Information Centres across Canada for starters.

The third way is to work for several months in a “Practice Firm.” A practice firm is “a realistic simulation of a business with all of its administrative functions,” according to the Canadian Practice Firms Network ([rcee-cpfn.ca](http://rcee-cpfn.ca)). You do the sort of work you are trained in and gain Canadian experience. Contact your local branch of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) for more details on how to qualify.

Try not to get discouraged early on, Rohinton. It does take newcomers longer to find employment on average. The key is to be persistent, maintain a positive attitude and overcome each potential barrier one at a time.

---



*Mark Swartz, MBA, M.Ed., is a speaker, career coach and author. He can be reached via his website, [www.careeractivist.com](http://www.careeractivist.com). The above article may contain material not included in the edited version.*

© Mark Swartz, 2003, 2007. All Rights Reserved. No part of this article may be reproduced, republished or redistributed without the prior written consent of the copyright holder. See [Reprint Policy](#) on [www.careeractivist.com](http://www.careeractivist.com) for details. Not-For-Profits exempted and may use the article in part or in full without contacting me - but please do, and kindly credit me as shown in the [Reprint Policy](#).