

# You're an Asset; Act Like One!

By Gwen Pawlikowski

Tim Hendy came to Canada and started part-time work almost immediately: organizing the billing for a family member's medical practice. So he has never truly been out of work.

It's just that his current responsibilities don't take much time and energy; he has a lot more he would like to give to a full-time job.

This 36-year-old exudes flexibility. He has worked in a wide range of jobs including business, freelance writing, clerical, retail, life insurance and his top choice and the topic of his Master's degree: archeology and art.

He's also shown flexibility in life choices: born in Ireland, he later immigrated to South Africa and in September of 2009 came to Canada. This is a man who's learned how to adapt.

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*“You need Canada and Canada needs you.”*

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So that's what he's done. The MAPLE 2.0 program from Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia has played a role in his adaptation.

Hendy settled near Crescent Beach in the south part of Greater Vancouver. He began integrating quickly, obviously encountering a similar language, and started looking for work after about three months.

His integration involved overcoming obstacles. At first, he was living too far geographically from jobs and so his family moved closer to opportunities. Transportation was an issue: they bought a car. While his partner settled into her practice, he put his job search on hold.

Next, he joined a soccer team and that helped him to build a network as he knew he had to. As he met more people, he shared his job search goals. He also searched for opportunities in the visible job market using websites such as Craigslist, looking beyond archeology with the intention of accepting any of the wide range of positions he'd tried before.

Unfortunately, he really wasn't sure where to look and persistent confusion plagued him. In an interview, he described it “...like running through a maze and you turn a corner and there's just a wall in front of you, so you have to turn back.”

In the midst of searching, he endured a significant back injury that kept him from job searching for months. He had to turn away from the maze while he recovered. He had no idea life would offer so many hurdles.

After he recovered, he found a mentor, then another mentor who was a job agency recruiter that he met for an hour a week to strategize. The mentor's suggestion was to start a small business. But Hendy didn't feel that was the right move for him. He had already operated a small business in South Africa. He wanted something simpler: a job.

His biggest obstacle, however, has been the same one that confronts most newcomers: minimal Canadian experience was holding him back.

Finally, through his ever-growing network, he connected to a Greater Vancouver company, which offered him a chance to work for a short term as an intern. He leapt at the opportunity to participate in a company that manufactures medical electronics. He knew it would give him the learning behind the Canadian experience that employers value.

ISS funded the costs so that Hendy could participate in the MAPLE 2.0 and have the internship.



*Tim Hendy at a recent MAPLE 2.0 Client Appreciation Event in Vancouver.*

Unfortunately, he faced one more hurdle. While the company was willing to train and include him on their supply chain team, they needed to pay workers' compensation insurance for him. They needed some help.

“Once I was in touch with ISS, it was a matter of days before everything was green-lighted. Had I known about them before, it might have saved me a lot of problems,” he says.

Unlike many participants, the volunteer program did not lead to a full-time job for Hendy. However, he knew and accepted beforehand that would probably not happen. But it has resolved his Canadian experience problem. Now in interviews, he can say yes to the question and he benefits from the learning he gained, which he says, surprisingly, involved a lot of soft skills.

Despite speaking English fluently, Hendy experienced a big difference in culture. He also found that no one understood his culture gap because he could speak English. “Every culture is different even if you share the same language,” he reflects. Experiencing Canadian soft skills in the workplace showed him the different expectations for social etiquette here.

“I came away unemployed again, but I came away with a very positive outlook. If I can do this, then I can do something else and it won't necessarily last only three months. So there's a big confidence boost there.” He also re-experienced comfort in the routine of work and a sense of being valued by the others on his team.

In the mix of positive outcomes, hope dominated. He has since moved to a new volunteering position that relates to his archeology/art background. He may pursue college courses for environmental technician work. Or, he might take business courses. He remains open to possibility, but has a new confidence in his future. Since he doesn't have the problem of survival needs, he can take time to find the best way to use his skills and contribute.

He plans to keep building his skills and his network. “I'm going to engage in my community and then when the right thing comes along, then I'll make sure I'm there to grab it with both hands.”

Hendy also gained a clear vision of his value in the economy, thanks to his participation in the internship. He has a new sense of the importance of newcomers understanding and claiming their own worth.

One of the most valuable components of any job search for new immigrants lives in one's attitude. Of course, a positive attitude is critical, but Hendy goes further.

“You've come here because Canada needs you and wants you....You're an asset to the country.”

“You need to act like one. “