

Self-Awareness and Resilience Leads Engineer to Alternative Career

Mahtab Nazari's alternative career has shown her something she really likes about herself: she is happiest with people, working in a team.

That, and an abundance of resilience, have helped her to shape her career in Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

Welcome to British Columbia!

Back in 2008, the engineering graduate arrived in Canada via Quebec. She came to join a Ph.D. program at an eastern Canadian university. With a B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Biomedical Engineering already completed in her home country, she was academically prepared to continue her studies.

Five years later, she came to Vancouver for a friend's wedding. She encountered geography similar to her childhood home in western Iran. The mountains delighted her. She felt at home. Staying east no longer had the same appeal.



Mahtab Nazari on her first trip to the Lower Mainland, here discovering the view from up high.

Getting Certification

But I have moved you too far ahead in the story.

After arriving, things didn't quite go as planned. The Ph.D. experience turned out to be different from what she had expected. "After a year, I realized research might not be for everyone, and I was thinking that it wasn't for me," she shares. Researching was solitary work and being new to Canada and away from family contributed to her decision to leave the program.

Still, the determined newcomer didn't give up on academia altogether: she moved to an 18-month General Management Certificate program to nurture her desire for working in a team. She worked part-time at the university in various departments to support herself and received tuition help from her family. The certificate, specifically designed as a graduate diploma, is half the price of an M.B.A. with all

Funding for this project from:

the important business components like entrepreneurialism, project management, accounting, finance, marketing and statistics.



Nazari celebrating her 2012 graduation from a General Management program.

“That was amazing,” she said, “I was discovering a new field that I really enjoyed. I really liked the project management and marketing but it was interesting to see the shift in my perspective as I moved away from the sole engineering focus that I previously had.”

Getting Job Search Help

When the program finished, Nazari found a position that used her new business skills, her teamwork and her analysis capability. Her potential was recognized early and she integrated well. Eventually she was promoted to a leadership role in the sales field.

By August of 2013, she was ready for another change. Her brother had joined her in Canada. On a trip to visit him in Edmonton, she took the long way home to attend a wedding in Vancouver. As mentioned earlier, she discovered the mountains and made the decision to build a life at the base of them. Another achievement was finding a sales job for a large ICT company where she has worked since January 2014.

ISSofBC’s Skills Connect has also helped to connect Nazari with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGBC) which is evaluating her engineering credentials. In reviewing her two degrees from Iran, she has learned that in Canadian terms, her degree is more related to electrical rather than biomedical engineering. She has also had to provide a translation of the course descriptions of classes in her educational history. The cost of a translation service is around \$1,000, so she is opting to do it herself. It will take her a little more time, but she will save the money.

The Future

Connecting with APEGBC has also led to volunteering with the organization and joining other engineers from her country at the Iranian Engineers of British Columbia Association (IEBCA).

The career path ahead is clear: it’s a blend of business and engineering in the field of ICT. Furthermore, she intends to balance her work life with a vibrant personal life. Her wedding is planned for the summer and in her free time she’s taking scuba diving lessons.

Several items on her bucket list are checked. She is working right now on the next big item. She wants to continue building her alternative career, one that will leverage her experience as a researcher, as a sales person and in leadership. Thanks to the opportunities she has found up to now, she is on a path made possible by her accomplishments plus personal qualities of resilience and self-awareness.

Funding for this project from: