

Venezuelan Environmental Scientist Uses Every Channel, Every Tool



Manuel Gorrin has already seen places in Canada that most of us will never visit.

On a recent work trip to the Yukon, he even saw a lynx, a shy wildcat that doesn't show itself around humans much. People said he was lucky.

If he has been lucky with his career, it's because he added incredible amounts of hard work and flexible thinking. He is happy to work as an environmental scientist for a Vancouver consulting company.

Manuel (left) stands in front of the Kluane National Park sign in the Yukon on a recent work trip.

Welcome to British Columbia!

April 4, 2015, the day of the Venezuelan chemical engineer's arrival was "the best day of my life," he said. He'd resigned from his job as an Environmental Project Engineer with a food manufacturer six months earlier to prepare for the varied immigration requirements. He also started working on a Canadian-style resume and networking on Linked In. He contacted people in companies where he imagined he could work, but he didn't ask them for jobs. He asked them for advice. He introduced himself and shared his arrival date. In this way, he started to learn about the Metro Vancouver labour market.

"People are more cautious in their workplaces and in their relations," he observed, finding that people are friendly but should be approached in a way that doesn't leave them feeling used or exploited.

When he first arrived, he stayed with relatives and listened closely to their suggestions. The energetic environmental professional says that helped him to prepare himself psychologically for the job search.

"As soon as you arrive, you need to be ready and able to start in a different position," he says.

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Getting Job Search Help

In his first week, Gorrin applied to join the Skills Connect for Immigrants (SCI) program in Training Innovations, a career development organization.

Through SCI, he learned about the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Association Path2Work program, which matches internationally-trained engineers, technologists and technicians with employers (<http://bc.cme-mec.ca/british-columbia/programs/path2work.html>).

Gorrin says Path2Work helped improve interviewing and networking skills. In one month, he visited 10 companies and met executives and managers. “That experience helps you to understand the process,” he says.

He had numerous interviews, received positive feedback, but was told often that he was #2.

The winning candidate, #1, had Canadian experience.

Getting Certification

Gorrin knew he had to keep trying.

His first stop was the Association for Professional Engineers and Geoscientists (APEGBC). He began his registration and assessment process but learned he has to take additional steps, including confirmatory exams and/or interviews. So his engineering designation is somewhere near in the future.

In the meantime, he connected with ECO Canada, a credentialing and training organization that serves environmental employers and professionals across the country. He took some of their courses and earned the EPT certification (Environmental Professional in Training). He also studied and gained his Project Management Professional (PMP) credential from the Project Management Institute. He added these accomplishments on his resume.

The Process



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And, naturally, he worked on job search. Between April and October, he applied for 100 jobs related to his background and expertise, getting his first round of interviews in August with his top employers.

He realized he needed more support. This time, he reached out to MAPLE 2.0, a federal government program available through ISSofBC. MAPLE 2.0 staff match professional newcomers to Lower Mainland partner companies which provide mentorships so that newcomers can gain Canadian experience, references and more. Gorrin also connected with ECO Canada for a training subsidy to make his mentorship even more attractive to potential employers. He believed in reaching out to multiple organizations for differing types of help.

But the consulting company that hired this job seeker actually declined the subsidy; they simply were impressed enough and decided to hire him. Just like that. No conditions.

On December 14, 2015, he began working. He travels to various environmentally-compromised sites to make assessments.

Looking back, Gorrin reflects on his process. There are many sources of help for newcomers: he found them. "I used every single channel," he says, "I used every single tool."

The Future

After getting his job, Gorrin also moved to his own apartment. He's not there much, since he's traveling a lot. But he wasn't a stay-at-home guy even before he had his own place. He was out exploring services at community centres, national parks, hiking trails, libraries, local fairs and events. He was immersing himself in Metro Vancouver culture. He will likely continue that process.

"Your country will be in your heart always but you have to be aware you are in a different place," he says.

And he is still on Linked In, still networking, still connecting and still building his career.

He is definitely not like the lynx (see photo right) that so shyly appeared on that Yukon landscape.



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