

Career Coaching International

190 Bronson Ave., Suite 200, Ottawa, ON, K1R 6H4 Fax (613) 233-1805 (613) 233-0010 www.cciinternational.ca

“I’M NOT BILINGUAL”

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People in a job search frequently lament of the oft-heard shortcoming that they are not wanted for a job because they are not bilingual – or have no Canadian degree or not enough experience or lack Canadian experience or are too old or happened to be too young. So, what do you do when the odds seem stacked against you? You neutralize those odds. Here’s how.

In the Wrong Arena

If you are playing in a hockey match and score a goal but you discover that you have been playing hockey in the wrong arena – in the girls’ arena instead of the boys’ arena for example, the goal isn’t worth a grain of sand. It counts for nothing. Not only that, the girls will throw you out because they don’t want you. Using that example, if you are applying for a job that requires bilingualism and you are not bilingual, you are playing in the wrong arena. You will get ousted as unwanted.

“But all the jobs around here are bilingual!” Even if all the jobs around here demand French-English bilingualism, you are still playing in the wrong arena. Your goal will be valueless. So stop wasting your time tilting at windmills. At least get into the right arena. Do not apply for something for which you obviously do not qualify. *(By the way, the reality is that most jobs in Ottawa, the city where this newsletter is being authored from, are unilingual English. Yes, unilingual English. However it may not seem to you because of the nature of the type of employment you are seeking and the doors on which you have been knocking, but well over 80% of all jobs in Ottawa are unilingual English. Do your own survey among 5 employed friends. Ask two questions: (1) What is the operating language at your office? (2) Out of all the jobs there, how many are designated as mandatory bilingual? Then you do the mathematics. We predict you’ll arrive somewhere near the 80% English job mark.)*

They don’t want you

As a secondary point, all of the shortcomings listed above are often convenient excuses to say ‘no’. The reason they don’t want you for the job is because they don’t like you enough. They like someone else better. It has to be that way. But they certainly aren’t going to tell you that! However, it is the reality. So they say, “not enough experience, not bilingual,” etc. because they don’t want you, they don’t want to hurt your

feelings and they don’t want to be accused of being prejudiced.

Why don’t they want you?

The reason they don’t want you is because your personality doesn’t fit their environment as well as somebody else’s does. In case you are in doubt about this realize that all of the candidates who are being interviewed have clearly got the technical qualifications for the job. They would not make it to the interview stage unless they did. It is at the interview stage the hiring people try to assess how well you would fit with their idea of the type of person they want. Remember, you have already shown you are qualified by your resume because that is the ONLY reason you would be interviewed. They can select just one candidate and you can be sure that it will be the one who best meets their ideals of a personality fit. It is not money; it is not training; and it is not even bilingualism.

As disturbing as that may sound, it is just plain common sense. *(Note: In the CCI process we spend up to 15 hours assessing personality so that we can be sure of a match to the job opportunity from the personality angle before the applicant walks in the door.)* In fact this form of judgment is going on all the time and has been ever since the day you began working. People get fired not because they lack skills, but because of personality misfits. They were hired because they had the skills and the hiring people thought they had the right personality. People do not suddenly lose their skills. When it is discovered that the personality doesn’t fit, either one or the other – employer or employee – seeks a way to exit.

Don’t Speculate on Training

So if you decide to engage in bilingual training or to get a Canadian degree¹, once again you are playing in the wrong arena. You are in fact speculating that the money and time you spend in this education upgrade will get you closer to a job. Take off your rose-coloured glasses! Stop finding a convenient excuse to avoid that arduous and painful job search. Put your money and your time towards getting a job –

¹ The exception, of course, is the education to re-qualify as an engineer, doctor, etc – your homeland profession.

the right way, we might add. When you get the job, then find what additional training your employer wants or needs and direct yourself to an education that is of value to you and your employer – no speculation there.

Breaking out of the Cycle

The way to get a job is to first define very well what you can do and therefore the job that you can fill. It must be one job – one specific and desirable job. Having created your own job specification – which does NOT include bilingualism for our protagonist above – begin the job search against that specification. It's the only sensible way to fly. (You may create a second job specification but you should rank those jobs in terms of importance to you and you should NEVER include both in the same resume.)

What you are doing is neutralizing the odds. You have simply removed from the equation the irrelevant factors for you. If you are not bilingual you have removed the bilingual requirement; if you have zero years of experience you remove the experience from your specification and instead concentrate on youthful vigor, willingness to learn, flexibility, lower salary, etc. within your job specification. The right employer will find these highly desirable traits.

Using a specialist career coaching company neutralizes things further because it helps you to pursue jobs in the hidden job market so that when you arrive at the job, not only does the job fit your specification, but also you usually are the only candidate. No one is more experienced or more Canadian than you are because you're the only one applying at this time and the time window is extremely short.

Conclusions

1. Quit wasting time lamenting about what you don't have and instead concentrate on what you do have.
2. Don't speculate time and money on more training until your new employer tells you what training is needed. Sub conclusions:
 - Searching for a job is much more important than questionable training
 - Don't use education as a convenient excuse not to job search.
3. Job searching is not fun. Get professional job-hunting help; it is a wise investment. Someone with experience can get you off mis-directions brought

about by emotional reactions to inappropriate, although very real situations.

We wish you excellent job hunting.

Bill Caswell, Principal
Career Coaching International
www.ccinternational.ca

Note: Bill Caswell, the author, is fluent in Spanish and English, works somewhat in French and German, has translated material from Swedish, Japanese and Russian and has written occasional material in Polish and Czech. But he is not bilingual.