



Practical Business Communication for Knowledge Workers: From Job Application to Promotion

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*DIANNE NUBLA; ROBERT BAJKO; CATHERINE JENKINS; AND MICHAEL
LAPOINTE*



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How to use this OER

Welcome to Practical Business Communication for New Knowledge Workers!

The Press Book is divided up into four main modules that offer an overview of new employees' experiences, tracking the challenges and pitfalls that they many encounter. The embedded audio recordings consist of a fictional case study (based on real life) whereby an employee encounters various milestones and hurdles as someone who has recently joined the workforce. Listen to the audio recordings at the beginning of each section to help you better connect with professional communication practices.

Immediately following each recorded scenario, students will find a wealth of easy-to-digest information and resources relevant to each point in our story. The four main modules include:

- **Module 1:** Applying for a Position
- **Module 2:** Corporate Etiquette
- **Module 3:** Diversity in the Workplace
- **Module 4:** Networking for Career Advancement

Audio recordings

Narrated recordings throughout this OER will create a personal connection to allow the teaching to resonate with the learner. These audio recordings will be available at the beginning of each module. These recordings help review the previous modules and introduce the next module to contextualize the learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes

The OER provides an introduction to professional communication and organizational survival skills that are not normally taught. Through the OER, students will encounter realistic work situations in a classroom environment to analyze their approach to complex interpersonal challenges.

The OER will have four core learning objectives:

Learning Objective 1

Identify and develop job readiness skills, knowledge, and abilities required for improving employability and enhancing career development.

Learning Objective 2

Develop the language, writing, and interpersonal skills to meet the professional standards of the diverse workplace.

Learning Objective 3

Recognize Canada's growing diverse workforce and understand the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace.

Learning Objective 4

Learn different genre requirements and persuasive strategies to customize deliverables to meet audience needs ethically and with high efficacy.

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The views expressed in this publication are the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Ontario.



MODULE 1: APPLYING FOR A POSITION

1.1 Targeted Job Searches

Our story begins here

To begin our story, click on the audio bar below.

Note: The audio (49 seconds) transcript is available in the footnotes.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=5#audio-5-1>

Know your skills

Landing that first career job can be challenging. Even if you've worked, it may not have been in the career of your choice; there's a difference between a job and a career. Maybe you dismiss the skills you developed as a barista or in retail and don't consider them relevant beyond that kind of job – but you'd be wrong.

Many skills are transferable to a wide range of working environments. Communication – reading, writing, and active listening – is certainly a transferable skill that will serve you well in any work or professional environment. Other skills you may have developed at previous jobs might include teamwork and leadership skills.

Maybe you run your own start-up business. Through this side hustle, you may have developed computer skills, organizational and management skills, problem solving skills, promotional skills, accounting skills and your creativity. School projects or volunteering may also have developed teamwork, leadership, computer, and project management skills.

Reflect on some of your successes and what skills were required or developed. It may be helpful to ask family or friends what they consider your strengths. Once you have some ideas, start developing these into accomplishment statements. Thinking about a specific example, write down the:

- **Situation** or context,
- **Task** you accomplished,
- **Action** taken to accomplish the task, and the
- **Result** achieved.

The **STAR** method is often used in interviews, but it's also a great place to start developing accomplishment statements for your resume and cover letter. Once you've noted this information, consider a relevant action verb to begin your statement. For instance:

- Increased **[action verb]** sales at Hamish's Bagpipe Outlet **[situation]** by 12% **[result]** by playing bagpipe music through speakers to draw attention to the store **[action]**.
- Improved **[action verb]** staff morale **[task and result]** at Jerk Groceries **[situation]** by initiating Sharing Saturdays where workers took turns bringing in shareable snacks **[action]**.

Writing accomplishment statements helps you identify your transferable skills, and also boosts confidence. You probably have a lot more relevant and valuable experience than you may have realized. Having a series of accomplishment statements will help you as you start seeking relevant job postings and drafting your resume.

For a list of relevant action verbs and additional examples, check out: [How To Write Accomplishment Statements \(With 78 Examples\) | Indeed.com](#)

Know your audience

It can be tempting to spend a lot of time drafting a single resume and a single cover letter and feel that you're finished; however, targeting each cover letter and to some degree the resume, will improve your chances of success in landing an interview and starting your career.

When you find a potential career posting, research the company. When were they established? How well are they doing? How rapid or slow is their employee turnover? What is their mission statement? What products or services do they offer? What current or pending projects are they working on? How could your skills connect with their needs?

Having a clear sense of the organization will help you tailor your application to that specific company, greatly improving your odds of success. By matching your identified skills with their requirements, you can make a compelling argument about why you're the best candidate for the job.

Where and how to search

The internet has made job searches much more efficient than they used to be, but you still need to know where to find the best postings for the career you're after. The internet has also made it possible to search for careers that are remote, local, national, or international, depending on how adventurous you feel. While there may be some overlap in postings between job sites, it's worthwhile bookmarking the ones that offer the types of career opportunities you're looking for.

Here are some options:

- [Canada Jobs and Careers](#) provides postings from over 350 job boards across North America
- [Careerjet](#) offers searchable job listings, and also provides users the opportunity to upload their resumes
- [Charity Village](#) posts paid and volunteer positions across Canada in the not-for-profit and arts sectors
- [Eluta](#) lists jobs directly from the websites of Canada's top 100 employers
- [Glassdoor](#) provides searchable job listings, as well as candid reviews by current and past employees
- [Indeed](#) provides searchable national and international job listings, and also provides users the opportunity to upload their resumes
- [International Jobs](#) offers worldwide career listings searchable by career or country
- [Job Bank](#) is a Government of Canada national job service with listings in all sectors across all provinces
- [Jobs.ca](#) offers curated career postings in major Canadian cities
- [LinkedIn](#) offers job postings for anyone with a profile
- [Monster](#) provides searchable national and international job listings, and also provides users the opportunity to upload their resumes
- [SimplyHired](#) provides searchable listings by city, province, or career across Canada
- [Talent Egg](#) is a Canadian site targeted to students and recent graduates seeking their first career
- [Workopolis](#) allows users to search for positions with listings in all sectors across all provinces

Many of these job sites have been in operation for over twenty years, so they're well established. Many also feature additional resources for resume building and interview success. Some provide current information on salary ranges by career, which can be useful information when negotiating a contract or raise.

Temping, internships, and volunteering

Temping

If you need funds immediately, temping can be a good option. Temp agencies help fill organizational openings on a temporary basis, whether due to short-term illness, or longer leaves of absence, such as maternity leave. These short-term jobs can provide ready cash, additional skills and experience to add to your resume, and can also help build your network. Sometimes, they can even lead to full-time work.

While a quick search will provide information on multiple temp agencies, it's advisable to do some homework and look at user reviews. How responsive is the agency? What kinds of jobs do they provide? How many opportunities do they provide? Temp agencies don't work as a public service; they profit by taking a percentage of your pay from the employer.

Internships

During school, you may have had an internship; however, some internships are also available once school is over. Maybe you can get an internship with the same organization where you previously interned. A great advantage of internships is that they add relevant skills and experience to your career resume. Before agreeing to an internship, ensure your expectations are clear. While some internships pay, others do not, so be sure what you'll get out of it. Will it be worth your time? Some of the employment agencies listed above also list internships and other agencies can be found online.

Volunteering

Volunteering is another way to add to your resume and network. Many volunteering opportunities exist, and this is a very satisfying way to give back to the community. For instance, your local library may have volunteer opportunities to teach English as a second language, tutor children, or record books for patrons with low vision. Many hospitals require volunteers to provide company to patients or drive them to appointments. If you like animals, consider volunteering as a dog walker at the Humane Society, rehabilitating wild animals, or as a fundraiser.

Lots of opportunities exist, for instance through [Search Volunteer Opportunities – Volunteer Toronto](#). While these are unpaid positions, they provide ample opportunities for networking with a broad spectrum of people who may be aware of career opportunities and happy to help.

Audio transcript for Module 1.1 Targeted Job Searches

You've submitted your last assignment and written your last exam. You've finished school. Congratulations! You're looking forward to convocation, but you have mixed feelings. On the one hand, you're happy that school's finished, but there's also some anxiety. Up until now, the path in front of you was always clear—another year of school. But now what? What comes next?

Looking at your finances, you know you need to find work and start paying down your debt. And wouldn't it be great to have some money in the bank and move into your own place? You've had jobs before, in retail and restaurants. But this is different. Now that school's over, you hope to start your real career. But you've never had a job in your real career before, and don't know where to start.

1.2 Networking

Press the play arrow to continue the narrative (1 minute 39 seconds).

Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



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online here: [https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/](https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=41#audio-41-1)

[practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=41#audio-41-1](https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=41#audio-41-1)

Networking

Networking is about meeting people with more experience and connections than you have in a given field. It's also about actively listening to what they can offer in terms of advice, leads, and connections. Networking is about being friendly with people who know other people. It doesn't have to be weird; relax and don't try so hard.

Is there someone in your chosen industry whom you admire? See if you can find their contact information and ask if they have time to meet with you for a coffee chat. Most people are happy to share their knowledge, experience, and advice with newcomers to their field. Plan how you can introduce yourself, and have questions prepared. Reviewing current industry news can provide useful ideas for relevant conversation starters. Why do you want to meet this person? What do you hope to gain from the encounter?

Family and friends

Who do you know? You have friends; however, most of your friends are probably around your age, and may be facing similar challenges beginning their career path. While you and your friends can provide each other with moral support during the transition from school, you may not be able to provide much support in terms of networking towards your career.

You also have family, and some older family members may form the foundation of your network. Perhaps a parent or other family member is looking for assistance with their own business. While this might be a great place to earn some money and add to your skills and experience, it might not be the career you had in mind, but they probably know other people with businesses that may be more in line with your career hopes. Do any of them have an opening, even part-time? Your initial network may rely on your family network. Who do they know or work with?

Post-secondary career office

Most post-secondary schools have career offices for current students and recent graduates. Depending on your school,

this service might be available to you for several years after graduation. TMU has various [Career Development Resources](#) As well as providing workshops and other events, the Career Centre also offers useful advice and publications, as well as one-on-one advising on career opportunities.

Career sites

Some of the websites in the previous section also provide opportunities for those seeking employment to post their resumes. This is a way to let the job come to you, instead of you having to chase the job! While this passive approach may sound appealing, weigh the pros and cons before posting.

The main **advantage** is posting your resume on a recruiter website greatly increases your visibility and exposure to potential employers. Posting can also streamline your application process, allowing you to apply for more jobs from a centralized portal.

The primary **disadvantage** of posting your resume on a recruiter website is the privacy risk. Review the privacy settings if you post. Consider how much information you're willing to share. The reputable sites suggested in the previous section actively prioritize security; however, even the most secure server can be hacked. Another possible problem is being overwhelmed by results. How will you manage your inbox effectively if you receive multiple competing queries or offers? Finally, these platforms tend to be depersonalized. With no personal interaction, it's hard to stand out from the crowd.

If, after considering both the pros and cons you still decide to post your resume, review this link to [The Best Resume Posting Sites to Use for Your Job Search | TopResume](#) for further advice and links to specific sites.

Career fairs

Walking up to strangers and introducing yourself can be intimidating. Being prepared can help ease some of the uncertainty. What are you hoping to come away with? What are your expectations? Attending with a friend or two can ease the anxiety. Rather than starting by walking up to the celebrity in the room, why not start with someone who's standing awkwardly and seems similarly unsure of themselves? Maybe you can form an alliance and help each other past the initial awkwardness. Here are some Tips to consider before and during a Career Fair.

TIP 1

- **Before attending, check to see if a guest list is available through the online registration portal.**
This might provide information about who will attend and/or their areas of expertise. Are there people on the list you'd like to meet? Can you set up a meeting with them during the fair? What would you hope to gain from such a meeting?

TIP 2

- **Before walking up to a VIP, have a clear idea of what you'd like to ask.**
- What is it about this person that you admire most? While flattery can be a great conversation starter (e.g., I really appreciate the way you overcame the competition), it's not enough to keep the conversation going. Have a follow-up question that relates to your own situation (e.g., I'm currently looking for work in my sector and there's a lot of competition. Do you have any advice about how I could break into the field?). Then take a deep breath and approach them with confidence. Avoid butting into a conversation, but wait for a gap or to be noticed before starting to speak.

TIP 3

- **People appreciate others who show interest in their work, success, or plans.**
Be curious about this person you respect and listen actively to what they want to share with you. Ask follow-up questions when they suggest information. At some point, they may start asking you questions; that's your opportunity to share your story and let them know you're looking for the first step on a similar career path. While this conversation might not lead anywhere, it might also lead to an exchange of contact information and the beginning of an advantageous networking prospect. How can you distinguish yourself, and make yourself memorable, in a positive way? What makes you unique?

TIP 4

- **Quality is more important than quantity.**
While fairs provide the opportunity to meet numerous contacts, try to spend quality time with those of greatest value. Recognize though that there will be others eager to speak with this person, so don't monopolize their time. At some point, excuse yourself by thanking them, saying you'd like to follow up on something they've told you about, or even saying there's another contact you'd like to talk to.

TIP 5

- **Take notes.**
A career fair offers many opportunities to meet; however, it can become overwhelming and contacts may become confused in your mind. A great remedy for this is to take notes after each meaningful conversation. You could use a discreet notepad or your phone. What was their name? What organization did they work for? What useful information did they provide? Remember these are just notes for yourself; they don't need to be formal. This information will also allow you to follow up later with a thank you note to remind the contact of the conversation.

While the atmosphere of a job fair may be conducive to meeting new contacts, the true advantage is in the follow up. This is when you might be asked for another meeting to continue the discussion. This is what might lead to a career prospect.

Audio transcript for Module 1.2 Networking

Now that you've thought about it for a while, you have more skills than you'd realized. Some of these might have come from jobs, but others have come from school, volunteering, and personal projects.

You've also realized that you'll need to research the organizations where you'd like to start your career. So far, you only have a general idea of what they do. You need to spend time on their websites becoming more familiar with everything: various aspects of their business, their mission statement, who works there, what they're looking for in their employees, and what a career with this organization might look like.

You might also check out the experiences of current or former employees. Just because this is your dream career, and

you've investigated the organization, doesn't necessarily mean it's perfect. Be realistic and open to learning about other people's experiences at the organization.

There are lots of online choices to continue your research, other than the company's own website. You could start looking for careers using online tools like the Government of Canada's Job Bank, or other job search websites. You can find reviews and employees' thoughts on organizations on Glassdoor.

Meanwhile, you need to start building more professional experience—and earning. Looking for opportunities to volunteer, intern, or work through a temp agency seem like good options.

But how can you use your skills, what you've learned about your audience and the organization to help you launch your career? That first step still feels a long piece away. Maybe there are other ways of landing that elusive first job towards your career.

1.3 Tailored Resumes and Cover Letters

Press the play arrow to continue the narrative (1 minute 29 seconds).

Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



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Targeted

Resumes and cover letters should be targeted to your specific goals and each specific job application. Before applying to any job site or heading to a career fair, it would be a good idea to update your resume. Your current resume may only list part-time and summer jobs in reverse chronological order, so it's not an accurate reflection of your career goals. Moving into your career job search is an important time to review your resume and consider how to make it relevant for your career goals and targeted for each application. Note that in Canada, it's not appropriate to include a photo or information about age or gender on your resume.

The first step to drafting a targeted application is to closely read the job ad. While this may sound obvious, the key is to identify and highlight the specific skills the potential employer is seeking, and then list the skills you already have that meet those requirements, as well as supporting evidence that you have those skills.

Chronological Resume

Although chronological resumes are the most commonly used, and most likely what you currently have, they may not serve recent graduates to best advantage.

Chronological resumes are great later in your career, once you can showcase relevant career experience. These resumes usually have the following sections:

- Contact information
- Objective statement including the type of work you're seeking; this can be tailored to specific

applications

- Education
- Work experience in reverse chronological order with most recent listed first; note that work experience might appear before education
- Skills, which might include experience with specific software or proficiency with languages

Often, chronological resumes focus more on education, rather than the job experience employers are looking for. Offering work experience before education helps; however, your previous jobs may not relate to your career choice or the job you're applying for. Although you may still feel proud of your high school accomplishments, at some point these should fall off your resume as you gain more adult experience.

What's missing from the chronological resume is an accurate reflection of the various skills and experiences you have that may not be reflected in either formal education or previous work experience. These skills and experiences are often very relevant to the job for which you're applying, but they're invisible on this type of resume.

Functional Resume

Functional resumes focus on your skills and experience, rather than previous work experience that may be in short supply if you're just graduating. In this way, they highlight transferable skills that may be more appropriate to your new career.

To build a functional resume, start with the accomplishment statements you drafted in section 1.1 using the **STAR** method to consider the:

- **Situation** or context,
- **Task** you accomplished,
- **Action** taken to accomplish the task, and the
- **Result** achieved.

Accomplishment statements showcase your specific transferable skills, making a convincing case that you're a strong candidate for the job. For instance, if the posting says they're looking for someone with strong communication skills, but you've only worked in retail, you might draft an accomplishment statement building on your transferable communication skills:

Listened **[action verb]** to customers actively during shifts **[task]** at Divine's Clothing **[situation]** to improve repeat business and increase sales **[result]**.

Note that while having a quantitative result is convincing, don't make it up if you don't know; qualitative statements are also valuable. The beauty of a functional resume is that you can expand your accomplishments into school work, volunteering, or your own start-up. For example, if a job requires teamwork skills, and you successfully completed a group project in school, your accomplishment statement might read:

Developed **[action verb]** strong teamwork and organizational skills for a year-end project **[task]**

with a student group at TMU **[situation]** resulting in an A+ grade and mention in the school's newsletter **[result]**.

This shows that you have the skill and can practice it with good success. Even if it wasn't in a work context, showing that you have this transferable skill indicates that you could have similar success at work.

Click here for additional [Examples of accomplishment statements for your career search \(umassglobal.edu\)](https://umassglobal.edu)

After providing your contact information, the functional resume starts with a brief objective statement that can be tailored to each job application, using key words you've identified from the job posting. Why are you applying for this position? What type of job are you looking for? What do you bring to the position?

Following this, most of the resume should showcase your skills, using your accomplishment statements. Consider grouping these into subsections. For example, Communication Skills could combine digital, written, and verbal skills. This can be followed by Work Experience, and finally, Education, although these sections might be reversed. The key is to focus on your transferable skills, rather than previous work experience if it's not relevant, or education, the details of which may be less important for your new career.

Additional details on Functional Resumes, including a template, can be found at [The Ultimate Guide To Functional Resumes | Indeed.com Canada](#)

Hybrid or Alternative Resumes

Sometimes people create hybrid or combined resumes, with elements of both chronological and functional resumes. You don't need to stick firmly to a given option. Choose what works best to showcase your skills for the career you're applying to, and recognize that the format you choose may evolve over time as you gain further work experience.

While it's also permissible to create alternative resume designs, recognize that potential employers may not respond well to something out of the ordinary. If you're moving into a design career, then maybe a resume showcasing your design skills would be beneficial; however, if you're applying for a business career, an alternative resume may not be appropriate.

Resume Design

When designing your resume, always think about the reader and how you can improve the accessibility of your resume. Also recognize that most corporations use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) and/or Artificial Intelligence to do the initial scan of incoming resumes. Successful resumes must be designed to ensure they can pass successfully through this

first level of sorting. Spending more time crafting your content to the needs of these systems will improve the likelihood of success much more than spending hours making your resume look pretty. Important tips to successful resume design include:

Tip 1

- **Use key words:** Through your careful review of the job posting, you've identified key words. Ensure that you include what they say they're seeking in your cover letter and resume. Use the exact words, rather than synonyms. Ensure the highest quality of written content before turning to design.

Tip 2

- **High contrast:** When designing your document, use a high-contrast font on a plain background. While black print on a white background may seem boring, it also optimizes readability for both machines and people.

Tip 3

- **Common font style:** Use a common font style. For example, Arial or Calibri are good sans serif choices, while Times Roman is fine for a classic look. Ensure fonts are no smaller than 11-12 points. Avoid fonts that might prove less readable, such as Comic Sans.

Tip 4

- **Formatting do's and don'ts:** In terms of layout, avoid having columns. While these may look sharp on the page, ATs are not always able to decipher columns and tend to read from left to right, even when there's a column break. To be on the safe side, lay out the content left to right over the full width of the page. While it's fine to use vertical bulleted lists, avoid using tables, as again, an ATS may not comprehend these as desired.

Tip 5

- **White space:** Avoid heavy blocks of text and ensure ample white space between sections of text. Again, ATs may have difficulty interpreting too much black on the page.

Tip 6

- **Length:** Ensure your resume is only one or two single-spaced pages in length. While you may have more to share, save it for the interview!

For more detailed information, including examples, check [How to Write an ATS-friendly Resume in 2024 \[+5 Templates\] \(resume-now.com\)](https://resume-now.com)

Cover Letters

People often struggle with the best way to start a cover letter. Avoid beginning your letter with statements like, "I'm applying for the position of..." or "My name is...and I'm a recent graduate." These are not compelling openings and are unlikely to engage the reader. While it's appropriate to say these things, maybe they can come later in the letter.

It helps to think in journalistic terms of having a “hook” to engage the reader. Are you applying for a social media communication position? Did you increase your student union’s social media presence by 17%? Great! Maybe you could open your cover letter by asking, “How would you like to increase your company’s social media presence by 17%?” Because this result is relevant to the job, the person to whom you’re applying is likely to keep reading. Also consider showing that you’ve researched the company by providing a few details about what they do or recent successes or challenges.

While there may be some overlap between the cover letter and the resume, the cover letter is your opportunity to showcase specific aspects of your skills and experience that best fit with the requirements of the job. Again, consider whether you can use some of your accomplishment statements. The cover letter underscores key highlights of the resume, but should not just copy the resume. The body of the letter should clearly showcase how your skills are relevant to the posted position. Although you’re talking about yourself, avoid having too many I-statements. Focus on the reader and how you can fill their needs.

Remember that the purpose of your application is to get an interview. The closing should offer follow-up and make it easy for the potential employer to contact you. Suggest your availability for an interview and provide your phone or email address in the closing paragraph.

Proofread everything before sending! Nothing undermines your chances as quickly as typos and grammatical errors. Good luck!

Audio transcript for Module 1.3 Tailored Resumes and Cover Letters

Post-secondary schools usually have a career office. You might not have known about it, or perhaps you forgot about it. After all, you focused on finishing school! Career offices usually remain available to recent graduates, so you might still be able to access their services. They can help optimize your resume and advise you on career opportunities. They might also provide guidance on places to post your resume for potential employers to see.

Although you were aware of a few career websites, the more you research, the more you find. Postings sometimes overlap, but different sites often have unique opportunities. You learn the value of checking career sites regularly before they close postings or remove them, and before the best opportunities are gone.

Career fairs are something you might not have considered before. These sound like a great opportunity to meet potential employers, but they also require a level of confidence and preparation that maybe you’re still working on. All the advice you’ve read or heard suggests that you should attend job fairs ready with questions, and that sometimes job interviews happen on the spot!

It also seems important to have resumes in hand, but the only resume you have is the one with your part-time or seasonal jobs. While that was fine when you were just looking for work, now you’re looking for a career. But all resumes are pretty much the same, aren’t they?

1.4 Interview Strategies

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online here: [https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/](https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=45#audio-45-1)

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Congratulations! Your cover letter and resume caught the attention of a potential employer in line with your career goals! The last hurdle to your new career is having a successful interview. This can be nerve-wracking, as it feels like a lot is on the line, but being well prepared is the best way to reduce your anxiety and provide a boost to your confidence. It can also help to reframe the interview process to consider that you're also interviewing *them* to decide whether they'd be a good fit for you. Effectively, a job interview is a two-way street.

Preparation

Although you've already researched the organization, it's advisable to review what you know about the company and the role to which you're applying. The organization's website is a great place to start. Also consider searching company reviews on a site like [Glassdoor](#) to learn more about past and current employees' thoughts about the organization. Additionally, you might search for information on similar roles at other organizations.

As well as reviewing what you know about the potential employer, **review your own resume**. While this may seem strange—after all, it's your resume! You wrote it and already know it well!—you want to ensure that you can respond to questions without having to refer to it, or read from it.

Think about **how you want to present yourself**. What clothes do you plan on wearing? Do they look professional? Do they need cleaning? It's a great idea to lay out your clothes and anything you plan to take with you the night before, so you won't have to think about it in the morning when you may be a bit flustered.

Be clear on **how and when the interview will be conducted**. If it's **in person**, ensure you arrive a few minutes early. It's better to be early and to sit quietly or have a coffee before the interview, rather than arriving late, sweaty, and flustered! Account for possible transit delays by setting out well in advance of your usual time.

If the interview is to be conducted **online**, ensure that you have a stable internet connection and updated software well before the start of the interview. Are your camera and microphone working? Be conscious of your background and lighting, and make any adjustments required before the meeting to ensure a professional presentation. Try to avoid unexpected interruptions; tell your kid brother that it's important to give you some privacy and quiet for the next little while. If necessary, relocate to a professional office or library space to ensure a professional context.

Whether in person or online, practise your responses to ensure they flow easily. Doing a few mock interviews with friends or family can further boost your confidence.

The Interview

As the interview is about to start, ensure that you've turned off any unnecessary devices. The last thing you want is to receive a telemarketing call during your interview! Give yourself a moment and a deep breath or two before the start of the interview. This will help calm any remaining nerves and allow you to focus on the interview. Consider your body language. Are you sitting up straight? Making good eye contact? Feeling confident? You've got this!

Ensure that you **focus on the interview** throughout the interview and listen actively to the questions.

- Avoid interrupting the interviewer, even when you know what the rest of the question will be.
- Respond professionally and confidently, avoiding colloquialisms or slang.
- Use this as an opportunity to expand on ideas presented in your cover letter and resume.
- Stay on topic and don't ramble; avoid introducing controversial or overly personal subjects.
- Again, consider using the **STAR** method to ensure you're answering questions fully.
- Be truthful; avoid exaggerating your experience. This could come back to haunt you if you land the job when your new boss discovers you don't have skills you claimed. Instead, express willingness to learn new skills that might be required for the position.
- Stay focused on the position throughout the interview.

“Do you have any questions for me?”

Towards the end of the interview, you may be asked whether you have questions you'd like to ask. Have these prepared in advance. Avoid asking questions about pay, perks, or promotions; these conversations only happen after you've been offered the position. Asking whether you can work from home or how many vacation days to expect may be a red flag that you're less interested in working.

While you might want to follow up on information gleaned from the interview, some great questions to ask include:

- Is there anything I can clarify about my qualifications?
- What would your expectations be of me if I were in this role?
- What would my typical workday look like?
- What challenges might I face in this role?
- How does this position contribute to the success of the organization?
- Will I have opportunities to learn new skills?
- What sort of projects would I be taking on? Are there sample projects you could show me?

- Is most of the work independent or in teams? Who would I be working with?
- How does communication work within the organization? Are there regular meetings or a reliance on email or other digital channels?
- What is the company's culture like? What are the company's values and future goals?
- What's your favourite thing about working here?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process?

Following Up

After the interview, give yourself a few minutes to decompress. This might be a good time to make a few notes about what went well, or anything you think you could improve. Was there a question asked that you weren't ready for? How could you answer this question in a future interview?

Be patient, and remember that they're likely interviewing other candidates. Follow up by email or phone in one or two weeks. Remind them of who you are and maybe allude to something discussed in the interview. Thank them for their time and pleasantly inquire about whether they can provide an update on the hiring process. Avoid bluntly asking if they intend to hire you or why it's taking so long.

Additional information and sample scripts can be found on [Follow-Up Call After an Interview: Do's, Don'ts and Examples | Indeed.com](#)

Maybe you got the job, but maybe you didn't. It's rare that you'll land the first job for which you interview, and it's normal to experience some rejection before that first job offer. Don't take it personally! You don't know who else applied or what they bring to the table. It doesn't mean you're not qualified or capable; it just means someone else had more to offer. Keep trying. Persistence is key.

Audio transcript for Module 1.4 Interview Strategies

Maybe you've only ever had one chronological resume, one that you added to whenever you got a new job. You used the same tired resume for all your job applications. The idea of tailoring your resume and cover letter for each application never occurred to you. This kind of customization sounds like a lot of work. Your career search is beginning to seem like a career in itself!

Now that you understand there are other options, how will you construct your resume? You've already created a list of the skills you've developed at work, school, volunteering, and doing your own projects. Given the limited experience you currently have in your chosen career, focusing on your transferable skills might be a better place to start. Maybe you should consider drafting a functional resume.

Although you've thought about design, and have friends who've created beautiful resumes, you now understand that putting all that time into making your resume pretty might actually prevent you from getting your toe in the door. With applicant tracking systems, or ATS becoming more affordable, and increasing numbers of applicants and greater competition for available jobs, the chances of an employer using an ATS or Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is also greater. It's more important to put your energy into the content, including keywords from the posting, and use a simple, high-contrast design to improve your chances. When considering design, also remember to have some white space; avoid big blocks of text that might be more difficult for scanners to interpret.

Remember that the purpose of your cover letter and resume is to get an interview, either online, by phone, or via video call or in person. That's the next step on this journey. But how should you prepare for an interview?

MODULE 2: CORPORATE ETIQUETTE

2.1 New Employees

Press the play arrow to continue the narrative (2 minutes 15 seconds).

Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=47#audio-47-1>

First Impressions and introducing yourself

First impressions count, especially when you are a new employee or joining a new team. It is critical to establish a demeanour that is a serious, mature, and professional from the outset—a person whom other people can count on and want to work with in the future.

When making first impressions, consider appearance, warm greetings, and non-verbal communication.

- **Appearance**

Although culturally specific, your appearance should align with the organization's dress codes found on their website. There are a range of dress codes in the work world, so you want to match your employer's expectations. In any case, everyone must be clean, neat, and well-groomed (Meier, 2020, pp. 26-29).

- **Warm Greetings**

Introducing yourself in person with a warm and genuine greeting like a simple "hello" accompanied by a smile sets the tone for a positive interaction. Offer a firm handshake (if culturally appropriate) to further create a bond and demonstrate professionalism.

- **Handshakes**

- In Western business culture, generally, everyone shakes hands (Harr, 2015, pp.10-14). When offering your hand, clearly state your full name while making eye contact. Do not "crush" the other person's hand as this will be interpreted as aggressive and rude.

- **Sharing personal background**

- Once a new employee has made initial contact, one should consider mentioning the role that you serve in the company and any other very brief, relevant information about your professional background without oversharing or being self-centred. Remember that you are trying to establish a genuine human connection here.

- **Non-verbal communication**

Non-verbal communication is even more important in terms of how you introduce yourself. Smile even if you do not feel like it. Stand (or sit upright) and do not slouch. Basically, all that "annoying advice" that your caregivers bothered you with about how to comport yourself remains valid, so you will have to adopt these practices if you wish to be taken seriously.

- **Meeting considerations**

- When meeting face-to-face, allow other people enough personal space so that they feel comfortable around you. Personal space varies with culture and even individuals, so note other people's reactions and closely monitor their facial expressions. Are they taking a step back from you or having to take a step forward towards you?

- **Eye contact**

- Look everyone in the eye without staring (if culturally appropriate), and avoid placing your arms behind your back or conversely crossing them in front of your body, both indicating negativity rather than relaxation, openness, and approachability (Meyer, 2020, pp. 53-59). Before your first day on the job, you will want to write out your initial introduction and practice until it becomes second nature.

Please watch the video on how to introduce yourself:

[How to Introduce Yourself at a New Job](#)

The matrix organization and key contacts

Matrix organization

An matrix organization displays the pecking order among various positions and team roles within the firm. The larger the company, the more complicated the chart. However, it is wise to ascertain the overall map of where you work—how is the corporate structure set up, who reports to whom, where are resources, for example, the Informational Technology department and the Payroll Office, located? A matrix organization can serve as a map through the maze of connections and allow you to build work relationships (Binod and Macdonald, 2017, pp. xvi-xviii).

To learn more about a matrix organization, review: [The Matrix Organization](#)

Key contacts

You will want to begin gathering up key contacts from your first day at work, including supervisors, team leaders, and other colleagues. Who holds the decision-making power in a department, on a team, or for a project? What are your responsibilities to these individuals and what obligations do they have to you? Your key contacts may become mentors at some point offering advice, support, materials, feedback, and guidance as you navigate your new job and comply with company policies.

People can be difficult to work with or work for, so creating your own personal network of allies is crucial to corporate survival. After your initial learning curve on the job begins to plateau, you should consider extending your internal networks to other departments perhaps, when collaborating on cross-functional team projects, not to mention meeting other employees through seminars, social gatherings and other corporate events (Binod and Macdonald, 2017, pp. xvi-xviii).

Manners and work habits

In the workplace, punctuality, politeness and respect, and office hygiene is important to success. See the table below for more details.

<p>Punctuality</p>	<p>Acclimating to the workforce takes time, perseverance, resilience, and grit, which is a very different world than many new employees have experienced prior to landing their first jobs. The top expectation that employers have of you is to be on time and to have solid time management skills. Making excuses for being late is considered very poor form (Zinn, 2021, pp.32-32). A corollary of punctuality is the ability to meet deadlines at work, and, unlike at university, an extension is very unlikely.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Time management is a challenge for the most seasoned professionals, so here is some help with time management strategies: Time Management 10 Strategies for Better Time Management</p> </div>
<p>Politeness and Respect</p>	<p>Being friendly, courteous, and polite to everyone whom you interact with at work is another essential habit that you must develop. Though the level of formality of your office environment may vary from job to job, being disrespectful—especially to superiors and older employees—is the beginning of the end of your time there. You need to show respect by active listening, practicing empathy, using inclusive language, expressing gratitude, offering assistance to others, minimizing distractions—especially those from your mobile devices, holding doors open for others, moderating the volume of your voice in shared spaces, and communicating clearly and concisely in oral and written mediums.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Remember the 5 C's of communication: clarity, concision, coherence, completeness, and critical thinking. Check out this link on how to listen empathetically: Empathic Listening For further information on personal qualities and behaviours admired by the work world, review this article: Twelve Great Qualities Every Employer Looks for in Employees</p> </div>

<p>Maintaining your office environment/ cubicle (in person and online)</p>	<p>A final aspect of developing good employee behaviour is maintaining the office space or cubicle that you may or may not share with another colleague. Good maintenance means keeping everything clean, everything in its proper place, and keeping personalization to a minimum. Your space is owned by your employer, so it is not yours in a legal sense as you are only temporarily using it (Zinn, 2021, p.46). Organize yourself in the physical space through the use of organizers, shelves, and supply and filing cabinets, if necessary.</p> <p>The space should be clutter free at the end of the day before going home, whether or not the space is shared. Supervisors will casually take note of messy employees. Be cognizant if you have to book desk time with your other colleagues. If you decide to decorate your cubicle with a handful of personal items, keep them tasteful, positive, and not divisive, especially if hot desking. Keep your politics to yourself (Post et al., 2014, pp.88-93; Harr, 2015, pp. 41-47).</p> <p>In terms of the digital space, you need to use folders, labels, and cloud storage to manage all your files and keep your computer desktop clutter free as well, enhancing productivity and reducing the stress of looking for a needle (file) in a haystack (random drive). Make external back-up copies of all your work on a daily basis. Keep up-to-date your internet connections, laptops, and software as well as your antivirus programs. Consistently perform system maintenance to thwart breakdowns and to maintain a secure online office environment.</p> <div data-bbox="370 583 1461 821" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>For more detailed information about digital maintenance, please see: 10 Essential Computer Maintenance Tips</p> </div> <p>Employees often have to eat and drink at their stations during the lunch hours or at other times during the day; therefore, it is vital that you clean up after yourself (your parents do not work—or even more frightening—live here). You need to wipe down surfaces, keyboards, monitors, pads, and mice, etc. Ask where the cleaning supplies are kept and if any special precautions need to be taken around office electronics. This cleaning regime also applies to conference or lunch rooms.</p>
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Audio transcript for Module 2.1 New Employees

Your interview with Randolph Marketing, Inc. went swimmingly well! You loved your potential new boss, Samantha as you raced through the interview, talking non-stop about yourself. Three days later, your phone rings and you're offered the position of Junior Marketing Assistant. You're so excited! This is your dream job, life is falling into place, and the view from the 30 - floor office tower is totally awesome!

However, one week into the job, you're feeling stressed out and insecure. The atmosphere at Randolph Marketing seems to have suddenly morphed since the interview. You're starting to have doubts about staying, especially now that you've met other employees who don't seem very pleasant. On Tuesday, the department manager, Haroshi, dropped in to see your supervisor, Samantha, who introduced you. Haroshi seems really charismatic. Naturally, you wanted to make an impactful first impression, so you launched into your personal branding spiel, which focuses on self-reflection, resilience, and story-telling schemas. Haroshi shook hands, yet he cut you off in mid-sentence, noting that you were 37 minutes late for work this morning. Really? How did he know? You tried to explain that it was not your fault—you weren't late—the streetcar was! Samantha smirked at you.

On top of everything else, you're providing data entry support for other marketing assistants' projects and made to fetch lunch and snacks for your co-workers. Your frustration is growing since, after all, you hold a business degree in marketing; moreover, you've begun to observe that the firm has many more, older employees—Boomers and Gen Xers—than you imagined. You ponder why the staff, who seemed so cordial at first, now seem so uptight. No lie.

On Thursday, Jayne, was angry with you for leaving a tiny amount of cookie-crumbs near the laptop on the desk that

you share, not to mention complaining about the discarded remains of your lunch in the garbage can, which began to smell. Where else were you supposed to throw out your garbage when finished eating?

Why didn't someone inform you what the world of work and office politics is really like, and what are some of the ways to make a solid, professional first impression?

2.2 Mistakes to Avoid

Press the play arrow to continue the narrative (1 minute 55 seconds).

Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



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[practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=49#audio-49-1](https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=49#audio-49-1)

Office Politics

“...I do hear a kind of disappointment in some of the comments from Gen Z age folks where they feel like the veil is lifted now on kind of what it looks like to work in America. And it just seems like they know more and they’re more skeptical as a result.”

...Audie Cornish, “Gen Z Is Challenging How We Think About Work”,
The Assignment with Audie Cornish (podcast), CNN Audio January 4, 2024. (00:29:20).

Office/workplace politics

Office or workplace politics involve the minefield of self-serving behaviours of individuals within an organization entailing power, status, rivalry, and, in the most serious cases, unethical and illegal actions. New members of a team often find themselves stuck in a quagmire of poor interactions with others (Virtual Labs Inc., 2023, Office Politics; Fox 223-30). A wise strategy is to avoid office politics through some of these best practices:

- Study the ‘psychological’ terrain of the office
- Remain neutral in the conflicts of others
- Set personal and professional boundaries with colleagues

- Steer clear of showing attitude
- Do not throw people under the bus and avoid gossip
- Develop emotional intelligence and build authentic connections (Meyer, 2020, 16-20; Zinn, 2021, 3-13).

Please see link for more information:

[How to Avoid Office Drama and Engaging in Office Politics](#)

Check out this TedTalk on how to improve your emotional IQ:

[6 Steps to Improve Your Emotional Intelligence](#)

From the case study above, you have experienced entanglement with Barbara, a Senior Marketing Associate, who exhibits narcissistic or toxic behaviour, trying to manipulate you into her malevolent “version” of reality, playing upon your lack of knowledge about the personalities at Randolph Marketing. Although only a registered clinical psychologist or psychiatrist can diagnose an individual with one of an array of personality disorders, you should be aware of certain toxic patterns of behaviour that may be detrimental to your work performance and even your career.

In a nutshell, toxic people: lack empathy; act in an arrogant, self-centred, and entitled manner; often are petty, jealous, and controlling; may fly into a rage without reason; lack civility and courtesy (manners matter!); enjoy gaslighting targeted individuals; and engage in lying, bullying and intimidation (Fox, 2008, 225-29). Basically, ‘it’s all about them’: most likely, you have run into similar friends or acquaintances from school. Trust your gut instinct that ‘something is off’ about this person. Remember Liang taking credit for your work? It is not uncommon for antagonistic bosses or others to steal the ideas of new employees (Ploeger-Lyons and Bisel, 2023, pp. 1123-26). Experts suggest that when confronted by this traumatic environment to document carefully what is happening by saving noxious emails, to keep back-up hard copies of your labour offsite, and to take screenshots. Save anything that may serve as evidence of abuse if you decide to approach Human Resources or your union.

Beyond this, try not to be alone with colleagues like Barbara: with no one around—this is often when she will pull the rug out from under you and may inflict the most emotional or mental damage. Erect firm personal boundaries with her and do not react to her provocations. Lastly, seek out advice from others whom you trust (Durvasula, 2021, pp.231-32, 247-248). Overall, you want to keep your integrity and your reputation intact while advancing on the strengths of your work performance despite being drawn into someone else’s drama.

Review this discussion of narcissism at work: [Narcissism at Work](#)

Unrealistic Expectations

Aside from the draining experience of dealing with problematic co-workers, new employees frequently harbour unrealistic expectations of what work life is really like. Work is work—even when you are ‘doing what you love’. The bitter truth of this can lead to frustration, disappointment, disengagement, and depressive moods as younger people tend to be impatient on several fronts.

For more information about common Gen Z workplace challenges, check out: [Why Gen Z Struggles in the Workforce](#)

When moving from university or college to employment, anxious new recruits often expect that the projects that they are working on, internal organizational processes as well as their careers will move much more rapidly than they actually will. Part of this enticing illusion lies with entertainment and social media messaging, where young people often seem to have happy, successful lives and rise to the top in a short period of time. The reality is that this fantasy scenario is a relatively rare occurrence and that work is more stressful, painstaking, complicated, and demanding than any of us would like it to be.

Not only do you have to deal with difficult people frequently, but also you may face problems with team functioning, ever-increasing demands in productivity, the adoption of latest technologies, and the constraints of government regulations. Unlike at school, you may not receive praise each time that you complete a task (as rewarding as that would be). Everyone has to learn how to accept constructive criticism and turn it into improved performance (De Visé, 2023, Gen Zers).

Part of developing your emotional intelligence is to accept the reality that you are expected to offer your best efforts even if no one is watching. The dream of being able to easily juggle the demands of the workplace with those of friends, family, and personal interests is more of an uphill battle than you realize as work often follows you unhappily home (Tilo, 2024, Employers Avoid Hiring). Many new employees also have unrealistic salary expectations as college graduates in many fields—one survey suggests by an average of \$50K. According to the survey, the average starting salary for college graduates is \$55,260 (Olya, 2022, Gen Z is Overestimating).

Please see Employers avoid hiring 'entitled' Gen Zs: [Employers avoid hiring 'entitled' Gen Zs: report](#)
For the flip side of the expectation coin, please read this article about unrealistic expectations held by employers:
[Stressed Out! Unrealistic Expectations Put the Pressure on Employees](#)

Audio transcript for Module 2.2 Mistakes to Avoid

Six weeks into the new job, you're depressed and stressed out. It's been tough. Senior Marketing Associate, Barbara kindly takes you under her wing in the third week of employment. She gives off maternal vibes, and she even encourages you to start calling her "Auntie Babs." Barbara gives you the scoop on how the department works: the personality types, who's in, who's out, who's liked, who's feared, and who's despised. However, you notice that Barbara constantly gossips about your unit, sparing absolutely no one. She warns you to stay away from your other senior colleague, Warren.

Your gut feeling is telling you two things: 1) Warren appears to be a good, reasonable guy, whom everyone else seems to respect and 2) Barbara makes you nervous as she doesn't seem to like anyone at all, catching on that she appears jealous of some of her colleagues. You also notice that she changes her mind a lot on issues dealing with work. So much so, that you find it hard to learn or even to implement ideas without her criticizing you, even though you don't report

to her. And you start to wonder...what is Barbara saying about you behind your back? You experience major Emperor Palpatine vibes from the Star Wars movies, feeling confused, and fearing Barbara now—despite her initial charm.

Another problem comes up at your departmental progress meeting: You notice that Liang lies about fulfilling her work duties. She claims to have completed the Kanakos project, when, in fact, it was Warren and yourself who finished the work. Liang was not even there! When you speak up to correct the fabrication, Samantha scolds you for being rude and for not being a team player. Oh! The injustice! Is Randolph Marketing the right fit for you? You'd like to ghost these people and not have to deal with them anymore.

2.3 Interacting with Others

Press the play arrow to continue the narrative (2 minutes).

Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them

online here: [https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/](https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=51#audio-51-1)

[practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=51#audio-51-1](https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/practicalbusinesscommunication/?p=51#audio-51-1)

Respecting four generations in the workplace

In many established organizations like Randolph Marketing, you will find employees who can be categorized as Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation Xers (1965-1979), Millennials (1980-1994), and Gen Zers (1995-2012). Historical events as well as social, cultural, economic, and technological change have made these collective cohorts different in outlook, character, expectations, and behaviour (Harr, 2015, pp. 67-71). The key point here is that everyone deserves understanding, empathy, and respect, but new employees need to actively esteem their supervisors and the corporate hierarchy as these individuals tend to possess more wisdom, experience, and education, with newcomers offering fresh, up-to-date perspectives and a diversity of thought (Post et al., 2014, pp.125-29).

The best practice to overcome misunderstandings and conflict is to learn what the specific corporate culture of the particular organization that you are working for entails in terms of professional habits, while simultaneously, respectfully voicing your own work preferences, hopefully together figuring out a compromise or flexible arrangement, for example, working from home.

Researchers have discovered that Gen Zers—the most recent generation to begin their careers (with Gen Alpha not too far behind)—suffer from pessimism, insecurity and doubt (Twenge, 2023, p. 467). The boundary between one's personal life and one's work life has been steadily eroded by technological change, resulting both in a lack of understanding of what comprises a 'professional role' and the subsequent need for more structure and direction. Employers must spell out expectations and foster independent decision-making in their new employees.

The principle of the value of hard work has taken several blows in the last two decades with the economic crisis of 2008 wiping out the financial security and employment of Gen Z's parents and grandparents, not to mention the wrenching catastrophe of the pandemic of 2020. In 2022, the concept of quiet quitting—doing the absolute minimum—surfaced on TikTok and was discussed as resistance to employee exploitation in many fields. This was not entirely a new phenomenon as Gen Xers were labelled 'slackers' in the 1980-90s (Twenge, 2023, pp. 468-469). Gen Z has highlighted many of the deficiencies of the corporate world in terms of mental health, equitable treatment of minorities, and the right to disconnect from work. Many employers are beginning to reform their firms to address these issues so that new workers will re-engage with a healthy work ethic.

Respecting LGBTQIP2SSA in the workplace

The LGBTQIP2SSA acronym stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, and asexual, and its length is an attempt to be inclusive as possible. Certainly, in many sizable companies and organizations you will likely meet (perhaps for the first time), a transgender man or a lesbian co-worker. Throughout various national histories and cultures, there has been sexual and gender identity diversity within the human population yet often marked by hostility and misunderstanding. Today, it is both an ethical as well as a legal obligation to respect members from these communities.

One can do this by acknowledging coworkers' pronoun choices, by using inclusive language that eschews sexist, heterosexist, homophobic, and transphobic words as well as respecting everyone's right to a private life while remembering people are people (Post et al., 2014, pp.119-121). You may have more in common than you think.

For more insight into etiquette when dealing with members from these diverse communities, please see: [LGBTQIAP + Etiquette Guide and Glossary of Terms](#)

Intercultural communication

If you recall the incident with Viraj, the new Marketing Assistant, where you asked him what his native tongue was, and, thereby making an embarrassing faux-pas—here is an example of what experts refer to as “well-meaning clashes”, where unintentional misunderstandings arise when people are trying to connect through their own cultural politeness norms. For example, direct eye contact is a normative standard of respect in Western culture but is considered rude in Thailand (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019, p. 29). In order for multiracial and multiethnic organizations to function, they must develop competence in intercultural communication and relations.

New employees along with their organizations should develop an understanding of personal identity issues, knowledge of world cultures and values, understanding basic politeness codes, and empathy towards those experiencing culture shock and acculturation as well as an awareness of the dynamics of power among groups (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019, 145). In order to be able to connect across cultural boundaries you have to develop a flexible open mind and open heart, but first you must overcome your own ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism refers to judging the values, standards, and practices of your own ethnic community as superior to another community's. You must be willing to embrace culturally diverse environments to develop competence, just like practicing a new language: put judgement aside and treat all people equally and fairly with empathy and compassion rather than relying on stereotypes and prejudice. Be curious; engage in some research about people who are different than you (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019, 146-7). You should attend any cultural-sensitivity workshops, social team-building activities or mentorship programs that Randolph Marketing offers.

Please see the link to strategies of cultural sensitivity in the workplace:
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/12-positive-strategies-successfully-managing-cultural-1f/>

Email Etiquette

The table below provides practical tips when dealing with electronic correspondences.

<p>TIP 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always use your company or organization's email account for work-related messages, keeping your personal email separate from your professional one
<p>TIP 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An email message is usually brief about one screen in length and follows a standard memo format. You should only send a message when necessary to reduce overload.
<p>TIP 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always use proper grammar, spelling, and capitalization. Proofread aloud multiple times, and for longer messages, print them out and work with hard copies. No jokes, slang, or short forms—rather save that for communication with your friends.
<p>TIP 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a professional tone and diction while avoiding cute emoticons/pictures of cats, scripts in other languages, and most forms of humour.
<p>TIP 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose offline, just in case you accidentally hit the 'send' button. Do not necessarily expect a reply for at least 24 hours or longer depending upon the recipient. Reply as soon as you reasonably can, and remember to acknowledge important emails, especially from your superiors. Be careful when using "Reply All", and do not be overzealous with the "Cc" (carbon copy) or "Bcc" (blind carbon copy) functions. You may wish to "Bcc" yourself important items of communication.
<p>TIP 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never write a message in anger as this could backfire, causing you to lose your job. If you are upset, cool off for 24 hours before responding. No company email is truly private as they are all stored.
<p>TIP 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double-check the typing of the electronic address for a new or external contact.
<p>TIP 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use specific descriptive subject lines, like a heading from a news article, reflecting the content of the message.
<p>TIP 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep paragraphs and sentences relatively concise. You are not writing an essay nor a report in this genre. Each time you switch topic, start a new paragraph—even if only one sentence in length.
<p>TIP 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use appropriate greetings and titles eg "Mr. Chen or Dr. Mendez".
<p>TIP 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEVER SHOUT (in caps) or pepper your messages with !!!! (exclamation points). Use explicit structure in your messages such as bulleted or numbered lists, parallelism, and transition words and phrases, if appropriate.

TIP 12

- Frontload your email by directly getting to the point immediately in routine messages. When delivering bad news, you may want to offer a buffer and an explanation first before the negative message, then close with rapport building and a goodwill statement.

TIP 13

- End with complimentary closings such as “Thank you”, “Best wishes”, or “Sincerely” and a professional email signature with your position and contact information.

TIP 14

- Be judicious when sending clearly-labelled attachments as you do not want to overload other’s inboxes.

TIP 15

- Schedule time for dealing with email; do not let it interrupt your workday constantly (Meyer, 2020, pp 189-194; Meier, 2020, pp. 61-62).

Active Listening

In a world suffering from an exponential increase in distractions as well as an exponential decrease in adult attention spans, it is vital that people actively build up their abilities to focus, concentrate, and pay attention to detail. One key component of this is active listening. When practicing active listening, your full attention is on the speaker while holding eye contact—not looking at your iPhone in your lap. Every time your mind begins to wander off, bring it back to the person speaking. You will have to engage in this mindfulness practice repeatedly until it becomes second nature. We are easily distracted by various things including: intruding thoughts, negative emotions, illness, exhaustion, anxiety, excitement (internal distractions), technology, others in the room, noise from construction/repair work, and notable weather outside the window (external distractions).

As you keep bringing your mind to “centre” on the person speaking, you should every now and then nod your head, take notes, and affirm with a soft “Right”, but do not interrupt. When the speaker pauses or has stopped, then is the time to ask questions about what was said. Remember to be neutral and openminded as possible about what is being said; therefore, do not jump to conclusions before all the ideas have been shared (Meyer, 2020, pp. 498-499).

When meeting with your boss or other senior staff—whether in-person or virtually—you will want to prepare for the meeting. What do you want to get out of this meeting—advice, feedback, solutions to problems with colleagues? Have whatever you need in terms of evidence, information, or data ready so that you do not waste time. Respectful active listening is crucial here...note not only what is said but how it is said: note facial expressions, body language and tone of voice, for example, arching eyebrows may mean surprise or dismay. At the end of the meeting, clarify any questions you may have and any next steps to be taken. Thank the person for their time and schedule a follow-up meeting if required (Post et al., 2014, pp.235-36).

Online Meeting Etiquette

With the rise of remote work from home in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, many organizations have moved to using online collaboration tools. Active listening also plays an important part when meeting in an online forum, using videotelephony software such as Zoom or Teams.

When using online meeting tools, keep in mind:

- Review that all your equipment is working: internet connection, camera, microphone, and room lighting.
- Dress professionally as if you were going into the office and do not be late.
- Reduce visual/audio distractions in the background.
- The camera should be set at your eye level; when speaking look directly into camera.
- Maintain eye contact and avoid doing other activities when your camera is on.
- Do not interrupt others while speaking, rather make use of the raised hand icon or the chat box.
- Generally, keep your microphone on mute when not addressing the audience (Miller, 2022, <https://thedigitalworkplace.com/articles/online-meeting-etiquette-for-attendees/>)

Audio transcript for Module 2.3 Interacting with Others

You talk to your parents a lot over the next couple of months about work that wasn't what you expected – it's hard and exhausting, but you decide to stick with the job in the hopes of moving up the organizational ladder and becoming a marketing account executive. Despite all the office drama, you're starting to learn more about how the actual industry works and have made a few friends.

The department has hired another Junior Marketing Assistant, Viraj. You warmly introduce yourself to him (this time without pushing your personal branding) and you sit down together at lunch. During the conversation, you innocently state how you love the Indian accent, that it's exotic, and you ask what Viraj's first language is. He replies, "English," then excuses himself to the washroom. You've put your foot in your mouth even though you didn't mean to offend him. Waves of regret and shame pass through your gut. Being young, you don't know much about the world at large and haven't had the opportunity to travel outside Ontario.

You receive a reminder that your upcoming, six-month performance review is scheduled for two days from now. You email a short "yep" with cool emojis—hearts, dolphins, and your trademark smiley faces. However, before the performance review begins, Samantha remarks about your "flippant" attitude and unprofessional tone, both in your emails and in conversation. She says that you're not speaking with casual friends and family but rather with workplace colleagues who expect professional decorum when communicating.

During the performance review, Samantha continues to complain about your lack of attention to detail in the marketing projects. Since you'd messed up some of the details in the Nublas account, she insists that you enroll in communication workshops on active listening and note-taking. To you, it seems that the criticism and walking on eggshells never ends. You feel that you're trying so hard! Why didn't anyone teach us about all this in school?

MODULE 3: DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

3.1 A Growing Diverse Workforce

Press the play arrow to continue the narrative (1 minute 27 seconds).

Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



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Ontario's growing diverse population

Statistics Canada offers a real-time population clock which tracks the population of Canada (and its respective provinces). In a 2021 census, Ontario's population was 14,223,942. Let's compare that to the February 16, 2024 population calculation of 15,940,611 (Statistics Canada, 2024). That's an increase of 1,716,669 over a period of 3 years.

The Government of Ontario (2024b) projects that the province's population will further increase to approximately 21.7 million by July 1, 2046, and they anticipate that the majority of this increase will be due to net migration. Individuals from different parts of the world will continue to come to Canada, and as a result, its work force will certainly evolve.

Check out this visual representation of Canada's (real-time) changing population size by provinces and territories: [Canada's Population Clock](#)

What's Ontario's current population size?

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

On April 1, 2020, the *Government of Canada's Directive on Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion* guidelines took into effect. The goal of this directive is to respond to Canada's growing diverse population and guide upper management (specifically managers and senior executives) in the delivery of their employment equity programs and processes.

Note that companies may or may not use the acronym "EDI". They may change the order of the words – such as "diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)". Also, some may only use two of the words ("diversity and inclusion"). The wording

preferences vary with each organization; however, the goal of providing access to employment opportunities or benefits to all (outside of the individual's ability or company's job requirements) remain the same.

To help you better understand EDI, below are formal definitions of the “equity”, “diversity”, and “inclusion” terms.

“**Equity** is fairness, making sure everyone has what they need to succeed and removing barriers that disadvantage some groups over others. This is different than treating people equally, which is behind the concept of ‘equality’” (Ontario Public Service [OPS], 2017).

“**Diversity** is the range of visible and invisible qualities, experiences and identities that shape who we are, how we think and how we engage with, and are perceived by the world. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical or mental abilities, religious/spiritual beliefs, or political ideologies. They can also include differences such as personality, style, capabilities, and thoughts/perspectives” (OPS, 2017).

“**Inclusion** is recognizing, welcoming and making space for diversity. An inclusive OPS capitalizes on the diversity of thought, experiences, skills and talents of all of our employees” (OPS, 2017).

Terminology and language

EDI terminology and language continues to evolve, and you'll likely hear these acronyms in your everyday personal and work life; therefore, it's worth investing time in learning them. Below is a partial list (which is meant to be non-exhaustive) of additional common acronyms used in EDI spaces (as of February 2024).

- Historically, persistently, or systemically marginalized (HPSM) groups
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC)
- Justice, equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigeneity (JEDII)
- Transgender and Non-Binary (TGNB)

To explore more equity and inclusion terms, click here: <https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/equity-inclusion-glossary-of-terms/>

Audio transcript for Module 3.1 A Growing Diverse Workforce

Today's the day you've waited for: your company's potluck gathering. You've been eyeing the clock all day, and it's finally noon! Randolph Marketing Inc. dedicates the last Friday of each month to a Potluck Party where employees bring in their favourite dishes to share.

Your neighbour, Ms. Anna, an eccentric Ukrainian lady in her 70s, generously shares her tasty cabbage roll recipe with you. You spent the week collecting the ingredients and all last night making it. You and your roommate, Jacky, had some for dinner, and it was delicious – you're excited to share your dish with the others.

You walk into the Randolph Marketing Inc.'s third floor kitchen, and the aroma of scrumptious food greets you. Party time. Your coworkers have not disappointed: they have filled the kitchen table with several of your favourite dishes including jerk chicken, potato pancakes, sushi, and rice noodles. As you fill your plate and start mingling with your coworkers, you feel a sense of community around you. This is nice. The overwhelming feelings of doubt and sense of imposter syndrome which weighed on your mind since you started your Junior Marketing Assistant role feel like it's finally starting to lift.

You know that it's not always going to be easy, but as you look around the room, there's a sense of reassurance. Despite their differences, your co-workers can come together and make it work.

3.2 Opportunities of Diversity in the Workplace

Press the play arrow to continue the narrative (1 minute 42 seconds).

Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



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“Diversified workplaces were shown to enjoy a two point three times higher cashflow per employee over a three-year period” (Deloitte as cited by AFOA, para.1, 2022).

Bridging the skills gap

Organizations face the ongoing challenge of hiring and retaining employees who are skilled to competently complete the requirements of their position. You’ve seen that technology is quickly evolving – especially with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) – and business leaders are saying that there’s currently a talent gap which can potentially limit their organization’s economic growth (World Economic Forum, 2020). Organizations are responding to this by developing innovative ways to find qualified candidates by searching for a diverse talent pool.

Case study: Dell’s Neurodiversity Hiring Program

In 2017, Dell launched a hiring program for adults with autism. In their Neurodiversity Hiring Program, Dell adjusted their traditional interview process (which could be an overwhelming experience for certain candidates on the autism spectrum) to include a two-week assessment then a 12-week internship with a potential job coaching opportunity (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Dell has seen strong successes with their Neurodiversity Hiring Program, and in 2020, they further innovated to create an enhanced delivery model which allows them to virtually interview, train, and employ qualified candidates remotely (Palumbo, 2020).

To explore testimonials from participants of Dell's Neurodiversity Hiring Program, click here: [A Look Inside Our Neurodiversity Hiring Program](#)

Promotion of a diverse business landscape

The Government of Canada has created a number of programs to provide initiatives, programs, and services (some of which are seen in the list below) to assist underrepresented groups succeed in business and grow Canada's clean technology economy. The support includes funding and/or advisory assistance from the government.

- The 50 – 30 Challenge: Your Diversity Advantage
- Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program
- Black Entrepreneurship Program
- Business Women in International Trade
- Equal by 30 Campaign
- Farm Credit Canada's Women Entrepreneur Program
- First Things First
- Futurpreneur Canada
- Indigenous business development programs
- Indigenous Climate Funding
- Indigenous Entrepreneur Loan
- National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association
- Thrive Venture Fund and Lab for Women
- Women Entrepreneurship Strategy
- Women in Technology Venture Fund
- Women in Trade

If you'd like to learn more about the initiatives, programs, and services listed above, click on [Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Working in a Diverse Workplace

When working in a Canadian organization, you'll likely interact with individuals from different ages, races, cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, religions, abilities, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, and professional experience. Below are six tips to consider when working in a diverse workplace.

Tip 1

- **Connect and listen.**
Chat with people – and listen. Hear their stories. Learn more about them as individuals. You can also provide “I’m listening” signals by nodding your head and using verbal confirmations (such as saying “mhmm”, “yeah”, “yes”, or “that’s interesting”).

Tip 2

- **Share your story.**
Join the conversations. Share your story with others. You don’t need to tell your co-workers every single detail about your life (and, of course, be careful with oversharing) – but share insights about you which will allow them to get to know you more as a person.

Tip 3

- **Adapt according to feedback.**
Ask others for their preferred communication style. Also, individuals may express non-verbal cues (such as their posture, facial expression, eye movements, and use of space through closeness) differently; therefore, continue to observe your audience and adjust your communication style in accordance to their needs.

Tip 4

- **Attend social events.**
Check out your company’s (or school’s) social calendar(s) to see if there are any events you haven’t attended before. Getting out of your comfort zone by visiting social events and interacting with individuals who would not normally be a part of your “inner circle” of friends is an excellent way to meet others who are different from you.

Tip 5

- **Continue to learn.**
Review your organization’s education and awareness programs. Also consider conducting your own research to familiarize yourself with the constantly evolving Canadian workplace landscape.

Tip 6

- **Proceed with an open mind.**
Reflect on potential biases you may hold. There are several ways you can do this (such as journaling and/or chatting with a trusted friend). We often hold unconscious biases which prevent us from fully experiencing situations for what they are. Realizing this and making an active effort to approach others with an open mind may change your interpersonal exchanges with them.

Audio transcript for Module 3.2 Opportunities of Diversity in the Workplace

Your work projects are getting more manageable. As a working professional you find that each project has its own needs. When you did your undergrad, you wanted to do well to secure a good mark. Now you’re finding that marks aren’t the only important thing. You want to do well to provide your clients with the best possible service as they’re relying on you. Your coworkers are also depending on you as you often work with several others on a project and the quality of your work will determine how well they can do their jobs.

Your boss, Samantha, has tasked you with an exciting new project. You’re to collect stock photos to add to this year’s annual report. She advises you to make sure to find photos of diverse employees. So, you make an active effort to gather pictures which feature individuals from different cultural backgrounds, ages, and abilities to show Canada’s inclusive working environment. Right now, your stock photo selection is a good representation of the employee group,

but you've noticed a lack of diversity in management. However, while at the potluck last week, Barbara did mention that the company is making an active effort to hire more diverse leadership in the upcoming years.

As you collect the stock photos, you occasionally ask your co-workers what they think of your collection. Getting their input and advice is helpful. The more time you spend in the company, the more you realize the power of institutional knowledge — many of your coworkers have been with the company for several years, and it's useful to get their input. Okay, there are times when their comments don't really help, but most of the time, it's definitely worth asking them.

3.3 Legal and Compliance Considerations

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As an employee, it's useful to learn about federal legislation, provincial legislation, and your workplace diversity policies which are in place to protect you.

Federal Legislation

In Canada, two federal legislations which provide the foundational framework for fostering diversity in the workplace and cultivating an inclusive work environment include the *Employment Equity Act* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

Employment Equity Act

The purpose of the *Employment Equity Act* is:

“to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfilment of that goal, to **correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities** by giving effect to the principle that employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences” (Government of Canada, 2024a).

The *Employment Equity Act* (the Act) is in place to ensure that all Canadians gain the same access to opportunities in the workplace. The Act “applies to federally regulated private-sector employers (e.g., cross provincial or international road, air, marine and rail transportation, banking, and postal and courier services), federal Crown corporations, other federal organizations with 100 or more employees, the federal public service, including separate agencies, and other federal public sector employers” (Government of Canada, para.8, 2024b).

Employment equity programs

The Government of Ontario requires that employers have full representation of the four designated groups. It's the employer's duty to create and put into effect employment equity programs (such as anti-harassment policies and conflict resolution procedures) to offer support in an effort to make full representation possible (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2022).

You may see a variety of employment equity programs in your own workplace – and if you do, make an effort to go through these materials as they can provide you with a better understanding of your organization's acceptable behaviours and procedures.

To learn more about the *Employment Equity Act*, click on this link:

[Employment Equity Act](#)

The Canadian Human Rights Act

“The *Canadian Human Rights Act* protects against the following discriminatory practices if they are based on one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination:

- Denying or treating someone unfavourably when offering goods, services, facilities, or accommodation (see s. 5 of the Act).
- Denying or treating someone unfavourably when offering occupancy or accommodation in commercial or residential premises (see s. 6 of the Act).
- Refusing to employ or continue to employ someone (see s. 7(a) of the Act).
- Treating someone unfavourably in the workplace (see s. 7(b) of the Act).
- Using a job application form that expresses or implies any limitation, specification or preference (see s. 8(a) of the Act).
- Publishing job advertisements or making inquiries in connection with employment that express or imply any limitation, specification or preference (see s. 8(b) of the Act).
- Excluding, expelling or suspending a member of an employee organization (for example, a trade union) or unfavourably affecting their status or employment opportunities (see s. 9 of the Act).
- Establishing policies or practices, or entering into an agreement, that deprives people of employment opportunities (see s. 10 of the Act).
- Paying men and women differently when they are doing work of the same value in the same establishment (see s. 11 of the Act).
- Publishing or displaying in public any notice, sign, symbol or emblem that expresses, implies or incites discrimination (see s. 12 of the Act).
- Harassing someone, including sexual harassment, in connection with employment or when offering goods, services, facilities or accommodation (see s. 14 of the Act).
- Retaliating against a person who has filed a complaint (see s. 14.1 of the Act)” (Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, para.8, 2024).

Canada's federal, provincial, and territorial laws all protect human rights, and the United Nation's (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides the foundation for the *Canadian Human Rights Act* framework. The UDHR was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948 to serve as "a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations" (United Nations [UN], 2024). Exploring the UN's UDHR will allow you to better recognize the rights you have as an individual.

To learn more about UN's milestone document, check out
[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

To learn more about The Canadian Human Rights Act, click on this link:
[Guide to Understanding The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal](#)

Provincial Legislation

Ontario Human Rights Code

"Everyone has human rights that entitle them to equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination" (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety [CCOHS], 2024).

Enacted in 1962, *Ontario's Human Rights Code* protects individuals within social areas. These social areas include (1) accommodations/housing, (2) contracts, (3) employment, (4) goods, services, and facilities, and (5) membership in unions, trade or professional associations (Ontario Human Rights Commission [OHRC], 2024). The *Ontario Human Rights Code* also provides protected grounds on fourteen key areas provided below.

-
- Age
 - Ancestry, colour, race
 - Citizenship
 - Ethnic origin
 - Place of origin
 - Creed
 - Disability
 - Family status
 - Marital (and single) status
 - Gender identity, gender expression
 - Receipt of public assistance (housing only)
 - Record of offences (employment only)
 - Sex (includes pregnancy and breastfeeding)
 - Sexual orientation
-

Each jurisdiction within Ontario may use different wording to describe the fourteen protected grounds. Also, jurisdictions may include additional protected grounds (such as lawful income sources and political beliefs) (CCOHS, 2024). Going through these protected grounds may help you better navigate through future work situations, especially if you find yourself in an unhealthy workplace environment.

Workplace Diversity Policies

“The [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2025](#) (AODA) is the law that sets out a process for developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards. Government, businesses, non-profits and public sector organizations must follow the standards.

[Accessibility laws and standards](#) help to reduce and remove barriers and make Ontario more inclusive for everyone” (Government of Ontario, 2023a).

In Ontario workplaces, employees will undergo mandatory AODA training (often delivered through online modules). In addition to AODA training, organizations may offer additional workplace diversity policies. Below are a few examples of possible diversity policies you may encounter.

- EDI or DEI policies
- Diversity and inclusion policies
- Recruitment and selection of employee policies
- Wellbeing policies
- Code of conduct policies

If you would like to complete a free AODA training tutorial (which is approximately 1 hour in length) and receive a certification upon completion, visit [Free AODA Online Training](#)

Audio transcript for Module 3.3 Legal and Compliance Considerations

You’ve recently celebrated the six-month mark of your Junior Marketing Assistant role. Things are more manageable: your performance review with Samantha goes better than expected. She compliments you on your ability to work well with others and your eager initiative to learn. For areas of improvement, Samantha comments on the need to better plan your emails because sometimes you need more than one message to clarify a situation with a client or co-worker. She also recommends familiarizing yourself with government legislation and your company policies to start planning for career advancement.

When they hired you, they required you to do an Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, or AODA e-learning tutorial. Thinking back, you skimmed and passively went through the modules thinking that it didn't really matter. Now, the more time you spend in the workplace, the more you realize that government regulations inform company policies.

You decide to go on the HR portal to find the AODA e-learning tutorial as you'd like to review the materials again in the upcoming weeks. As well, you create a plan to go through your company's materials on equity, diversity, and inclusivity to better understand how Randolph Marketing, Inc. is approaching EDI. While on the HR portal, you also see some interesting in-person and virtual communication workshops dedicated to helping you write better, and more organized, emails, which you add to your work calendar. The upcoming weeks will definitely be busy.

MODULE 4: NETWORKING FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT

4.1 Reviewing Your Network

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Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



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What networking used to be

Networking has undergone significant changes due to shifts in the business world, making traditional approaches obsolete. With shorter job tenures and more lateral career moves, relationships have become crucial for career advancement. Developing connections across industries is essential, as upward mobility often involves moving between companies. Furthermore, technological advancements have accelerated knowledge dissemination, necessitating connections outside one's immediate circle to access diverse expertise.

Reflection: Embracing a broader network enhances exposure to new ideas and opportunities. In this day and age, adapting to new networking strategies is vital for professional success. Embracing change and cultivating a diverse network can yield lasting benefits in today's dynamic business environment.

Why network?

As seen in the list below, networking can have several personal and professional benefits.

- **Creating professional relationships**

Building a network might seem unnecessary when you are content with your job and reluctant to engage in traditional networking activities. However, even minimal networking efforts can provide invaluable resources for navigating career transitions, family changes, and life phases. Networking creates opportunities for chance encounters that can lead to new relationships and unexpected opportunities.

- **Expanding your network**

Successful professionals understand the importance of continuous networking to stay open to potential new business growth. When networking, it should be organic. You should also be adaptable to meeting new people. It's essential to cultivate relationships before an issue arises, as relying on a network during upheavals is more effective when connections are already established.

- **Preparing for the future**

If you start building your relationships now, regardless of your current circumstances, it lays the foundation for future support and opportunities. While networking may initially feel daunting, taking the time to enjoy the process can make it more fulfilling and rewarding than expected. By embracing networking as a long-term investment in your professional and personal growth, you can create a supportive network that will be invaluable throughout your career and life journey.

Audio transcript for Module 4.1 Reviewing Your Network

Now that you've settled into your new job, you're starting to understand how the modern work environment operates. As you get to know your colleagues, you're beginning to understand how important a professional network is for your current and future career goals. Hiroshi, your department manager, suggests that if you want to progress in your career, you'll need to review your current network connections to see if they align with your career goals.

4.2 Networking in Person

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Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



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Strategizing which network events to attend

Below are five tips to help you strategize the right networking event to attend.

<p>Tip 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize When deciding which networking events to attend, it's crucial to prioritize based on factors such as attendee demographics, potential for meaningful connections, personal enjoyment, and timing. Identify the type of attendees expected, whether they align with your target audience or potential clients. Researching past attendees through organization websites, membership rosters, or asking acquaintances can provide insight.
<p>Tip 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimize Consider the event's format and environment for networking opportunities. Events optimized for networking facilitate quieter or structured interactions conducive to meaningful conversations. Avoid events lacking organization or environments that are too loud, as they may not be effective networking opportunities. Focus on events where you can engage comfortably and assess if connections are worth pursuing further.
<p>Tip 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Personal enjoyment is key to successful networking. Attending events that align with your interests and preferences increases engagement and fosters authentic connections. For introverts, smaller or more intimate gatherings may be preferable to large scale events.
<p>Tip 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing Consider the timing of events and how it fits with your energy levels and productivity. Attending networking events late at night or very early in the morning that don't well with your energy level can be a waste of time. Attend events at times when you're most alert and energetic to maximize networking effectiveness. Avoid forcing yourself into events that clash with your schedule and energetic levels, as it may negatively impact productivity and overall experience.
<p>Tip 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality It is important to prioritize quality over quantity when selecting networking events. By evaluating attendee demographics, networking opportunities, personal enjoyment, and timing, you can make informed decisions to optimize your networking efforts and allocate time effectively.

Budget your time wisely

Networking doesn't have to be time-consuming; it can be efficient and effective by connecting multiple people at once. For example, inviting colleagues who haven't met to a dinner can save time while fostering new connections. Being creative with networking methods, such as inviting someone to join you at an event you're already attending, can deepen relationships and expand networks.

Aim for quality as opposed to quantity

Try to limit networking to one meeting per week. Hosting your own networking event is another strategy, which can be less daunting than attending poorly planned events. Starting with a small gathering aligned with your interests and inviting a cohesive group of attendees fosters meaningful interactions.

Encourage individuals to introduce themselves

When hosting, ensure a welcoming environment by introducing guests to each other and providing opportunities for everyone to introduce themselves early on. Structuring the event to facilitate connections ensures a comfortable atmosphere for networking. While hosting events may seem intimidating, the benefits in terms of connections and appreciation are significant, making it a worthwhile endeavor for expanding professional networks. With these strategies, networking can be both manageable and rewarding, even for the busiest individuals.

Host your own networking event

Hosting your own networking event may seem daunting, but it can be simpler than attending poorly planned events. To begin, determine the type of event that suits your preferences and fosters a comfortable atmosphere. Start small to test the waters and reflect on past enjoyable networking experiences to identify key elements.

Create activities

Consider various event ideas, ranging from a dinner party at home to a group outing or activity, ensuring the venue aligns with your interests and allows for meaningful interactions. Next, select attendees, aiming for a group of three to ten individuals who share common interests or backgrounds, facilitating easier conversation flow.

Strategize your guest list

Teaming up with a trusted colleague to invite guests can be beneficial, ensuring alignment on attendee selection and event logistics. Structure the event based on its type, ensuring a critical focus on welcoming guests upon arrival and facilitating introductions to foster connections.

Although hosting may feel intimidating, the rewards in terms of networking connections and overall appreciation from attendees are significant. Hosting your own event provides a platform to curate meaningful interactions and foster genuine connections in a comfortable and enjoyable setting.

Audio transcript for Module 4.2 Networking in Person

As you go through your network connections, you realize building a career network is like adding extra cheese to life's pizza. It's not just a luxury; it's a necessity. You start connecting the dots, realizing your current professional circle resembles more of a sad, deflated balloon than a robust network. It dawns on you that networking is not just for extroverts with perfect hair; it's for everyone hustling their way through the corporate world trying to advance their career.

You have an epiphany. The hidden job market is your golden ticket to career success. This is one of the places where you can build your professional network. You've started to realize that not all opportunities are neatly packaged in job listings, so you embark on a strategic mission.

As you delve into the hidden job market, you refine your elevator pitch, turning it into a captivating narrative that leaves an impression. You learn that informational interviews are not just coffee chats; they're the secret passageways to understanding industry dynamics and uncovering unadvertised positions.

In the professional world, you realize that while job boards have their place, the hidden job market is where innovation, growth, and tailored career paths intersect. It's not just about finding a job; it's about crafting a narrative that aligns seamlessly with the unspoken needs of the professional landscape. A sense of excitement fills you as you realize that you've entered the world of strategic career navigation, where the hidden job market becomes your canvas for success. It's time to start networking.

4.3 Networking Online

Press the play arrow to continue the narrative (1 minute 32 seconds).

Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



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Social media networking

While face-to-face networking is exceptional, social media serves as a valuable complement, especially when direct in-person connections aren't feasible. When aiming to connect with influential individuals who lack mutual connections, engaging with their social media presence can be effective. By commenting insightfully on LinkedIn updates or retweeting their posts on X (formerly Twitter) occasionally, professionals are likely to notice, paving the way for a positive interaction.

Below are three considerations when networking on social media.

Consideration #1: Initiate a connection	Consideration #2: Keep the interaction going	Consideration #3: Tailor your message delivery
Utilizing social media for follow-up after an in-person meeting further solidifies connections. Alongside traditional email correspondence, sending LinkedIn invitations or following them on active platforms extends the engagement, ensuring multiple touch points and reinforcing relationship building.	Moving beyond immediate follow-up, maintaining long-term connections requires a strategic approach. Sharing news articles featuring the individual or congratulating them on achievements via social media keeps you on their radar. Similarly, engaging with their content, such as blogs or podcasts, demonstrates continued interest and reinforces your presence.	For individuals with a less prominent online presence, direct messaging on social platforms or sharing relevant links related to their interests or company achievements serves to maintain connection and familiarity.

While social media cannot replace face-to-face networking, it significantly supports the process by ensuring continuous visibility and engagement. By strategically leveraging social media interactions, professionals can establish and maintain meaningful connections, ensuring their contacts remember them and their capabilities over time.

Creating content to expand your network

The table below outlines possible ways to expand your network through creating content.

Content creation	Content creation, such as writing blogs or creating online videos, is a powerful yet under utilized networking strategy. While not immediately apparent, it can draw influential individuals to you. For example, writing an article about a notable figure can lead to unexpected direct connections.
Informational interviews	Request interviews with high-level professionals for podcasts or blogs, especially if they have a book or project to promote. While mutual contacts provide the best introduction, a direct email with sample interview links can also yield positive responses.
Tailored content creation	Consistent content creation focused on specific industries or themes enhances search engine visibility and attracts relevant audiences. By aligning content with the interests of potential clients or contacts, individuals can strategically attract and engage with their target audience.

While content creation is often seen as a branding activity, its networking potential is frequently underestimated. When executed effectively, content creation serves as a powerful tool to meet influential individuals and draw them to you, contributing significantly to networking efforts.

Maintain your network connection by following up

While meeting new people is often seen as the exciting aspect of networking, the more valuable part lies in nurturing and deepening existing relationships. Effective follow-up strategies are essential for this, especially when reaching out to individuals with whom you have limited familiarity.

When following up with your network connection:

- **Consider ways to add value**

To maintain connections, it's crucial to find ways to add value without appearing intrusive. Reflecting on key details from initial meetings you had, such as their hometown or interests, provides natural conversation starters for follow-ups. For example, congratulating them on personal or professional achievements or reaching out during significant events in their lives demonstrates genuine interest and care.

- **Plan the amount of appropriate communication**

Determining the appropriate frequency of communication is vital. While you don't want to overwhelm contacts with constant messages, you also don't want to let too much time pass without contact. Developing a schedule for check-ins, such as monthly calls or emails, helps maintain regular contact without being intrusive.

- **Vary the communication channels**

Utilizing various communication channels is also important. While email may be preferred by some, others may prefer social media interactions, phone calls, or even in-person meetings. Tailoring your follow-up approach to individual preferences enhances effectiveness and demonstrates attentiveness.

- **Use personal gestures**

Incorporating personal gestures like handwritten cards or regular meal invitations can strengthen relationships and set you apart from others who neglect follow-up efforts. Regardless of the method, consistency in following up is key to making a lasting impression and deepening professional relationships.

Audio transcript for Module 4.3 Networking Online

So, there you are, ready to start networking. You've got a grand plan to conquer the professional world, armed with a LinkedIn profile that's been collecting digital dust since your internship. Your idea of networking so far has been "liking" your cousin's cute animal videos on social media.

But then, in a moment of sheer adulting brilliance, you decide it's time to level up. Wearing clothing that you haven't

worn since convocation; you march into a networking event like you own the place. Spoiler alert: You don't. You spot a group of seasoned professionals huddled together, chatting about stocks and bonds like they're discussing the latest Netflix series.

Summoning all the courage you can muster; you waltz over ready for a firm handshake that you've practiced for weeks. It's a little too firm, and you can see the pain in their eyes, but hey, you're making an impression, right?

You try to drop some business jargon you Googled on the way there, but it comes out sounding like you're reciting Shakespeare in Klingon. They exchange confused glances, but you soldier on, determined to make connections even if it means embarrassing yourself in the process.

By the end of the night, you've handed out more business cards than a blackjack dealer at a casino. You might not have a clue what just happened, but dammit, you're a networking maestro now. Just remember, fake it till you make it. Cheers to adulting!

4.4 Leveraging Your Network

Press the play arrow to continue the narrative (1 minute 41 seconds).

Note: The audio transcript is available in the footnotes.



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Ask for an informational interview

Informational interviews are valuable opportunities to gain insights from professionals about their career paths and professions. It involves sitting down with a professional to ask questions and learn about their experiences. The process begins by identifying someone whose career or expertise you admire and reaching out to them.

Try this: If you attend a conference and you are inspired by the speaker and want to seek further guidance from them, you can approach them after the event and introduce yourself and request to stay in touch. Following up with an email and express your interest in learning more and asked for a brief 10 to 15-minute conversation to discuss their career path.

Professionals are often willing to share their stories

Professionals are often willing to share their experiences and provide guidance to those starting their journey. This highlights the importance of reaching out to professionals, whether through personal networks or platforms like LinkedIn, to arrange informational interviews.

These interviews offer a platform for professionals to share their knowledge and insights, knowing they are assisting someone embarking on a similar path. Therefore, it's essential to identify individuals with shared passions or professions, draft a polite email requesting an informational interview, and be mindful of their time and schedule. Overall, informational interviews are valuable tools for learning and networking in various fields.

Successful informational interview

Successfully navigating an informational interview involves thorough preparation and the ability to establish a personal connection with the professional being interviewed. Go through the table below to thoroughly prepare for a successful informational interview.

Before the interview	Conduct research Conducting research on the individual's background and career trajectory is essential. Utilizing platforms like Google and LinkedIn provides insight into their current role, past experiences, and educational background, enabling the drafting of targeted questions.
During the interview	Build a connection Initiating the conversation with a discussion about shared passions or interests helps establish rapport. This personal connection sets a comfortable tone for the interview and allows for a more engaging discussion. Transitioning into prepared questions about the professional's day-to-day responsibilities, challenges faced, and key successes in their career facilitates a meaningful exchange of information.
After the interview	Show gratitude Beyond professional topics, delving into more personal interests and extracurricular activities further strengthens the connection and adds depth to the conversation. Wrapping up the interview with a sincere expression of gratitude for their time and insights, along with an offer of assistance in the future, demonstrates professionalism and appreciation.
Seeing interviews as a learning opportunity	Reflect on the interview process Reflecting on the success of the interview, the ability to establish a personal connection and engage in a genuine conversation stands out as a key factor. By preparing thoughtful questions and fostering a comfortable atmosphere, individuals can maximize the value of informational interviews and leave a lasting impression on the professionals they engage with.

Request a job referral from your network

Referrals are powerful acts of putting in a good word or recommendation for someone. We encounter referrals in everyday situations, like suggesting a restaurant or a store to a friend. Professionals value giving referrals because they understand their potential to significantly enhance someone's chances of securing an opportunity, like an internship or a job. For instance, if you are seeking an internship, reaching out to the advisor with a clear expression of intent and a request for assistance can yield positive results.

Be proactive not reactive

The process involves informing the advisor of your summer plans and internship aspirations, followed by a request for any connections that could facilitate the desired opportunity. This proactive approach emphasizes the importance of reaching out to individuals who may have the necessary connections to help fulfill career goals. Crafting a concise and polite email requesting assistance in securing the desired opportunity demonstrates initiative and may lead to valuable connections and referrals.

Audio transcript for Module 4.4 Leveraging Your Network

You've been at your junior marketing assistant role for the past year, but now you decide it's finally time to up your online networking game. Armed with your laptop and a cup of coffee, that's more sugar than caffeine, you open LinkedIn like it's the gates to the career kingdom.

You stare at your profile picture for a solid five minutes, contemplating whether the world is ready for the sheer brilliance that is your professional selfie. It's not. But you upload it anyway. You've got a bio to write, and suddenly you face an existential crisis – how do you summarize your existence in 200 characters or less without sounding like an overachieving robot?

Now, the real fun begins. You embark on a connection spree, adding everyone from your high school friend's cousin's pet iguana to the CEO of a company you've never heard of, but sounds fancy. You're practically a LinkedIn influencer, spreading digital cheer and desperation.

As you scroll through your feed, you attempt to share an insightful article about blockchain technology. The only problem? You barely understand blockchain, and the article might as well have been written in ancient Greek. Your attempt at a profound comment ends up being more cryptic than the cryptocurrency itself.

But hey, you're building an empire, one awkward connection at a time. Who knew expanding your professional network could be so simultaneously empowering and cringe-worthy? Here's to the wild world of online networking – where your career dreams and questionable memes collide.

4.5 Building Your Brand

Press the play arrow to continue the narrative (1 minute 36 seconds).

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Securing your advantage with personal branding

Personal branding is about crafting a narrative that others remember, encompassing expertise, skills, personality, and presentation. It's the reputation one shapes through consistent actions and communication, aligning with authentic values and desired perception.

Similar to a restaurant ensuring every aspect aligns with its image, personal branding requires consistency across interactions. However, intentional efforts are essential to shape both present and future narratives, guiding career track. In essence, personal branding is the art of creating a cohesive and compelling narrative that resonates with others, influencing perceptions and opportunities.

Making your brand authentically you

Personal branding is about authentically embodying your story in today's conversation-rich world. While the term might sound corporate, it's rooted in conveying who you truly are. The more authentic you are, the more compelling your brand becomes, drawing others to your narrative.

Your reputation, or brand, is essentially the story you tell others, but it must first resonate with your own beliefs and values. Crafting a genuine personal brand requires alignment with three key elements:

1. **Your core character.** Conducting an authentic personal brand audit involves several steps. Firstly, self-perception is crucial. Identify your strengths and what sets you apart.
2. **Demonstrated strengths.** Gather feedback from trusted colleagues to gain insights into how others perceive you. Comparing self-perception with external perceptions can highlight alignment or areas for improvement.
3. **Unique value proposition.** For this, envision your future career aspirations and consider the brand needed to realize them. This iterative process ensures ongoing alignment between personal brand and career goals.

Regularly reassessing and refining your personal brand, perhaps annually, is vital for staying relevant and aligned with your professional trajectory.

Creating a likeable personal brand story

How you tell your career story not only reflects your feelings about your career and life but also shapes your identity. The concept of narrative identity shows that those who find their lives meaningful often tell stories characterized by growth, communion, and agency. To reclaim authorship of your career narrative, you must take ownership and write it in a coherent and compelling way. This involves interpreting experiences as positive or negative and intentionally finding meaning in your career journey.

Reflection:

Crafting your brand story requires a three-part framework:

1. the protagonist (you),
2. the path (your experiences and shifts in perspective), and
3. the pinnacle purpose (your future aspirations).

By considering what drives you, the experiences that shaped you, and where you aim to go, you can create a unique and authentic brand story that reflects your journey and personality.

Command your personal narrative

Taking control of your narrative prevents others from making incorrect assumptions about you and ensures that your story is communicated explicitly. This process involves reflecting on your passions, experiences, mistakes, recognitions, and future goals to highlight your credibility, skills, and desired qualities. Personal branding is a personal endeavor, so craft a narrative that truly reflects your journey and personality.

Creating an unforgettable brand

Having a concise 3 to 5 sentence brand statement ready can transform casual interactions into opportunities to showcase your skills and values effectively.

For example, instead of a generic introduction like “I’m Stacy, a senior project director at ABC Green Technology firm,” Stacy could highlight their passion and impact by saying, “I manage a team of project managers who design sustainable technologies that make a difference to the environment. I love the work I do each day.”

Your brand statement can be used in various contexts, such as introducing oneself to a new team, networking events, or casual conversations. By focusing on the value you create, who you create it for, and the expected outcome of your work, you can effectively convey your passion, dedication, and capabilities in a memorable way.

Audio transcript for Module 4.5 Building Your Brand

You're about to dive into the mysterious realm of informational interviews. Armed with a list of questions you turn on the charm.

You find a seasoned professional online, a person whose career you admire from afar, like a fan stalking their favorite celebrity – but in a totally professional way, of course. With shaky fingers, you craft an email that walks the fine line between professional and “please don't think I'm a weirdo.”

You start with the classic pleasantries, throw in a sprinkle of flattery about how their career journey is more fascinating than a streaming platform series. You even manage to sneak in a small joke.

Now comes the waiting game. You check your inbox like a teenager waiting for a text from a crush. Finally, a reply! They agree to the informational interview, and you do a victory dance that would put any TikTok star to shame.

But here's the plot twist – you're so pumped about the interview that you forget to Google what an informational interview actually is. Panic sets in as you frantically search the internet for “how not to embarrass yourself in an informational interview.”

In the end, with newfound knowledge and a slightly sweaty forehead, you nail it. You leave feeling like you've just aced a final exam, only to realize the real test is the follow-up email. And just like that, you've embarked on the rollercoaster of career advancement – one informational interview at a time.

DEBRIEF

Congratulations on Completing Practical Business Communication for Knowledge Workers

Press the play arrow to conclude the narrative (21 seconds).

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Audio transcript for Module 5.1 Congratulations on Completing Modules 1 through 4

Now that you have completed all four modules of “Practical Business Communication for Knowledge Workers: From Job Application to Promotion,” you’re ready to progress through the workforce with career advancement in mind. May the work force be with you – good luck!

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Contributors



Dianne Nubla

Dianne Nubla has taught courses for the Chang School and School of Professional Communication at Toronto Metropolitan University for over a decade. She also works with organizations to deliver business communication workshops and develop a variety of technical documents to streamline their workflow and educate internal/external audience of important company protocols and procedures.

Dianne has worked with banks, associations, financial organizations, agencies, and educational institutions to assist them with refining their employee's professional communication skills and creating practical guides which transparently showcase the company's internal processes.



Rob Bajko, PhD

Dr. Bajko has worked as an educator, researcher, communication professional, and lifelong learner. He's been a faculty member in the School of Professional Communication at Toronto Metropolitan University since 2009. He has worked as a consultant advising faculty members and administrators on global learning initiatives and incorporating internationalization education into post-secondary curriculum to better support international students. He has taught over 30 different courses ranging from critical thinking, EDI, public relations, technical writing, public speaking, management, and information systems to undergraduate and graduate students.

He received his Ph.D. from York University and Toronto Metropolitan University in communication and culture.



Catherine Jenkins, PhD

Since 2012, Catherine Jenkins has taught a wide variety of courses through the School of Professional Communication (ProCom) at both Toronto Metropolitan University and The Chang School. These have included numerous business courses coaching students on crafting career-search documents.

Catherine completed her PhD in Communication and Culture, a joint TMU-York program, with a dissertation in health communication. She holds an MA in Cultural Studies, as well as an Honours BA in Cultural Studies and Philosophy from Trent University in Peterborough. She also writes poetry and fiction.



Michael Lapointe, PhD

Dr. Michael Patrick Lapointe earned his Honours B.A. in English and History at the University of Western Ontario, winning the gold medal for his program, and then completed his M.A. in English at McMaster University. In 2007, he received his Ph.D. in English from the University of British Columbia and was awarded the William and Anne Messenger Scholarship for Outstanding PhD student.

Dr. Lapointe joined Toronto Metropolitan University's School of Professional Communication in 2013 and now teaches a variety of courses there as well as for the Chang School. He has lectured in Business Communication, Engineering Communication, Professional Health Communication, Technical Writing, Writing Composition, English Literature, Canadian History in addition to a class in Nationalism, Conflict, and Identity. He is TESL Canada- and TESL Ontario-certified and has several teaching awards and nominations to his credit including the Superior Teaching Award, University of Toronto (short listed in 2017), the Inspired Teaching Award, OCAD-U, in 2014, Dean's Teaching Award Contract Lecturers (TMU, nominated) in 2021.

Dr. Lapointe currently teaches in the Academic Bridging Program and the Woodsworth One Program at the University of Toronto. Additionally, he has taken part in the Writing and Rhetoric initiative at the Rotman School of Business. Dr. Lapointe has served as a writing instructor in six academic writing centres at the University of Toronto including Trinity College and for the various faculties of Health Sciences and Engineering.

Dr. Lapointe's research interests include innovative critical pedagogy, writing and rhetoric, travel writing, nationalism studies, Irish and British literature, popular culture, and Canadian history. Dr. Lapointe has managed his own technical writing business, To The Point Enterprise, since 2001. He is a passionate traveller having visited some 40-odd countries to date.

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