



**cdaa**  
career  
development  
association  
of alberta

# Career Momentum

September to October, 2009

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## Working the Web

By: Vicky Driver

**Career Activist** [www.careeractivist.com](http://www.careeractivist.com) **Mark Swartz** was a keynote speaker at BTT several years ago. It is a very different world technologically now where most people can use the Internet with relative ease. One of the points he made then was if someone is working in the Information and Communication Technology sector and is not using internet technology for work search, then they may as well not bother. Now I would extrapolate that comment to include: work seekers must use the Internet to conduct research on the company they want to work for; they need to see what skills are valued by that company and match as many as they can, including relevant examples. In addition, regarding the resume, ensure you understand the nature of the technology that you are using to forward your resume. You need to know the difference among traditional resumes and the keyword format that is scanned into an electronic resume system and/or the electronic version in ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange).

### TAKE A CHANCE!

Sometimes there are interesting jobs in unexpected places. While you are in transition, why not try something off the beaten path. You may find an option that you have not previously thought about or it may be your door into an entirely new work sector. This is not a Canadian Site but might trigger some new ideas <http://www.backdoorjobs.com/>.

- If you **Google jobs off the beaten path** you will find links for many job banks ditto using key words such as Cool Jobs

**“CHECK” YOUR PERCEPTIONS!** Most people know about the entry-level jobs in hospitality-tourism and the retail service sector. These sectors traditionally, and will continue, to offer the most opportunities. Too many people see working for these employers as something to do until their real career takes off. If you enjoy travel, meeting people and good food why not be an accountant for a large hotel chain. I use this example because hospitality and retail are still two work sectors where you can get your foot in the door without completing post-secondary education first. Many successful managers started out on the front lines and today are managing 150 people in a “store” with millions of dollars in turnover. One of these employers is Canada Safeway. Check out Safeway’s new web site aimed at Youth. <http://www.jobpod.ca/>

- **Tourism:** [http://discovertourism.ca/employees/links\\_tourism\\_resources.aspx](http://discovertourism.ca/employees/links_tourism_resources.aspx)

**VOLUNTEERING-to-Work.** Many people without jobs are rediscovering the value of volunteerism. It can be a break from work search as well as a way to give something back to the community and enhance personal feelings about self worth. **It is an opportunity to try a new type of work without risking anything but your time.** Volunteering can also be a “backdoor” into a new job similar to working through a *temp* agency. There are volunteer opportunities with the Health Region in Calgary.

- **Volunteering:** [http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/employment/volunteer\\_info.htm](http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/employment/volunteer_info.htm)

**ALIS is still the best resource over all.** Don’t forget to check out the new additions especially those for YOUTH. Titles include ***This is Your Life*** and ***Going Somewhere?*** The latter also includes an Educators’ guide. There is also a new reminder on their home page about ***TIPS for Dealing with Job Loss.***

# New Directions – a learner’s perspective

By: Ana Arun, MBA (UK) Independent Consultant

## Upcoming PD Events

### Ignite Your Passion 2009

**When:** Thursday, October 1  
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Where:** Holiday Inn-Calgary  
4206 Macleod Trail South  
(walking distance from 39<sup>th</sup>  
Avenue C-train station).  
Mention CDAA and Ignite 2009 to  
receive a special room discount.

#### Power Panel of Experts:

- **Dr. Norm Amundson**
- **Dr. Nancy Arthur**
- **Dr. Roberta Neault**

Hear their responses to questions about emerging career development theories and trends, new opportunities and career areas of the future, and the relationship between career development and human resources.

- **Metaphor Making: Your Career, Your Life, Your Way**  
– Dr. Norm Amundson
- **Culture Really Matters**  
– Dr. Nancy Arthur
- **The Changing Nature of Work: The 10 C’s of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Careers**  
– Dr. Roberta Neault

Register before Sept. 12 to get the early-bird discount.

The uncertainties of the current economic situation call for new ways of looking at things. This perhaps holds true especially for the profession of career development. The impact at grass root levels (career counseling services) related to diversity, multi-cultural perspectives, immigration, integration, unemployment, etc., are seen to have implications at broader (organizational) levels. Enhanced responsibilities at the organizational level (strategic human resource functions) are also envisaged. Having experienced the benefits (synergy) that integrated (systemic) approaches for performance improvement offer<sup>1</sup>, I am interested in exploring career counseling through social constructionist ideas.

Having been introduced as part of my training<sup>2</sup> to the theory, processes, tools and techniques of career counseling, I have developed a curiosity to learn more about its application in Calgary. Some of the questions that come to mind are: “What is the relevance of emerging (systemic)<sup>3</sup> theories to career counseling?”, “How are they applied (practiced)?”, “What are the barriers/challenges to its applications?”, “What role do organizations play from a strategic human resources perspective?” I thus find myself in the role of a researcher/career counselor exploring these ideas through volunteering at Career Connection, Calgary (social services), doing my practicum at Cenera HR & Business Consultants, Calgary (private sector), engaging in discussion and dialogue with career counselors, HR practitioners, and those involved in social constructionist ideas, as a way of seeking answers and clarifications, and generating new ideas and thoughts. This article is therefore, not a critique, so much as a process of inquiry of a social constructionist emphasis for career counseling.

The current economic situation is seen to have created a unique scenario in the area of Career Transition practices in Cenera. The extensive layoffs have demanded pooling of resources, additional staff, overtime work, unusual hours (sometimes 6.30 am), etc., as a way of coping. There is an air of pervasive uncertainty, at the same time, an effort to infuse a sense of hope. I have had the opportunity to experience onsite termination events.

The emotional aspect of the termination process for those engaged in employee termination, as well as, those being terminated is recognized and supported. The goal then, is to help clients develop skills and action plans to locate alternative employment congruent to their goals, values, abilities and interests<sup>4</sup>. Building resiliency is the key.

At Cenera, career counseling processes are initiated through one-on-one counseling (coaching) sessions, workshops, resume critiquing, etc. The resume is an important tool to facilitate discussion and dialogue with regard to client’s career direction. I have been exposed to its depth and potential in this regard. This has been a unique experience. Self assessments, exploration of career alternatives, job search strategies, decision making, planning, and implementation of the career action plan is intrinsic to the career counseling process. Client ownership is also critical. Various workshops (examples: Blueprints for Success, Work life Management, Interviewing & Negotiating), online Career Centre, databases, etc., support the process. Each client is supported within the framework offered (sponsored) as part of corporate termination benefits.

In the social services arena (Career Connection), a similar picture emerges. Career development services for Albertans are offered as part of a government funded mandate. Meeting established deliverables (measures of success) is therefore important. Existing resources are being managed (stretched) to meet the demands of a growing unemployed Albertan population. The services offered are at various levels, determined (assessed) based on client’s need. The services range from basic use of computer, fax, phone, etc, to a more in-depth, one-on-one career counseling (coaching) process offered as part of 6-8 sessions. [Narrative counseling techniques] and computer-based programs (inventories) are used to facilitate client’s self exploration (skills and interests), generate suitable occupations to support career decision making, developing resumes, etc. Effort to monitor (utilize) extensive (overwhelming) government related information, resources, directives, etc., as a way to be effective to the client, is apparent.

## New Directions – a learner’s perspective – Continued...

The practicum and volunteering experiences at Cenera, and Career Connection have provided me a window of opportunity to briefly view and reflect on career counseling (coaching) practices in the private and social sector in Calgary. The possibility of my viewpoint being limited, as experiences having been gained to date, is emphasized. My background and experiences in systems approach to management<sup>5</sup> have been useful.

Constructivist theories and approaches in the area of career counseling<sup>6</sup> have been for some time calling for a new lens to view issues related to a multi-cultural diverse world. Its narrative (communication and dialogue) orientation is highlighted. While personality tests, computer generated inventories, cultural models, etc, as part of trait and factor theories have their place, their tendency for “pigeon holing” is emphasized. An ongoing effort to understand the “other” (dominant group, minority group, immigrant, etc.) becomes evident. “Re-tooling” the individual to meet corporate/government needs (mandates) becomes the norm. Meeting individual’s unique career needs is perhaps overlooked. Troubling questions, such as, “whose agenda are we meeting”, thus comes to the fore.

Career counseling through social constructivist ideas, allows discussion and dialogue around taken-for-given knowledge (perceptions), acknowledging its historical and cultural specificity, as being sustained by social processes wherein language plays a critical role. In this context, issues related to power and dominance may be reviewed. The identity of the primary (main) benefactor emerges. The question whether individual’s unique career needs are being met is addressed. Thus, the relational (collaborative) approach intrinsic to social constructionism provides career practitioners and educators in Calgary, to engage in meaningful conversations as a possible way forward for career counseling.

A collaborative and adaptable approach was intrinsic to my role as HR Generalist (consultant) at Abu Dhabi Gas & Liquefaction Co. Ltd., Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. I was involved in developing and implementing a competency-based performance management system (pilot test) as part of the company’s performance management design team. Involvement of various key players (employees, UAE nationals, expatriates, top management, HR, government (directives), external consultants, etc) was necessary. Addressing stakeholder needs (previously shareholder) was the primary goal. Employee concerns regarding performance review (subjective, unfair, de-motivating, rating system, once a year, traditional, etc) were heard. There was shift from evaluating (judging) past performance and failures to developing a visionary (futuristic) focus through managing own performance. Innovative practices (example: our pilot test) was understood and supported as contributing to overall organizational goals. From a theoretical perspective the value of a systemic approach to performance improvement<sup>7</sup> was established.

The appreciation of diversity (multiple viewpoints, differences in values, innovation and creativity, etc), is thus a collaborative responsibility. In organizations it is reflected as being assessed as part of the performance review process. This includes establishing connections (both internally and externally) as a way of understanding each other, expressing ideas, identifying and achieving common goals. The role of career counseling (coaching) is evident. The value of exploring career counseling through social constructionist ideas is thus emphasized.

It is exciting to know of ongoing work in the area of social constructionism in Calgary<sup>8</sup>, and the support that might provide. I have sought to explore these ideas by drawing upon the experiences (expertise) of career and HR professionals, including my practicum and volunteering opportunities in the area of career counseling (coaching). A collaborative (participatory) research possibility has emerged. Being in the early stages of this journey, I have chosen to write this article from a learner’s perspective. I hope to generate interest on the topic of exploring career counseling through social constructionist ideas. Such exploration may be timely and relevant. I thank you for your interest in my article. I look forward to your feedback and suggestions.

<sup>1</sup>Abu Dhabi Gas & Liquefaction Co. Ltd., (ADGAS), Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (U.A.E)

<sup>2</sup>Career Development Program, Bow Valley College, Calgary

<sup>3</sup>Constructivist theory, Narrative & SocioDynamic approaches

<sup>4</sup>*Career Transition Workbook: A Canadian Guide to Successful Reemployment*. Presented and edited by Cenera/Career Partners International.

<sup>5</sup>Critical Systems Thinking/Total Systems Intervention & Multi-Methodology, MBA, University of Hull, UK

<sup>6</sup>Sharf, Richard S (2006). *Applying Career Development Theory to Counseling*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

<sup>7</sup>McNamee, S (2002). *Appreciative Inquiry: Social Construction in Practice*. Draft for C. Dalsgaard, T. Meisner, and K. Voetmann (Eds.), *A symphony of appreciation: Development and renewal in organizations through working with appreciative inquiry* (pp. 110-139). Copenhagen: Danish Psychology Press.

<sup>8</sup>Taos Institute faculty at University of Calgary (Department of Social Work and Applied Psychology)

# Resiliency: Bounce back, Step ahead

By: Joy Ulrich Career Practitioner & Consultant

I have been thinking about Change and Transition lately (see Spring 09 Momentum), which has then led me to contemplate what it takes for people to move on with their lives after experiencing major life change. Originally I had in mind my students as they graduate from high school and deal with the 'what next' stage of life; but in light of our recent economy, I am meeting many people who are experiencing the painful change of job loss. What causes some people to not just survive but actually thrive in the face of these changes and others to get bogged down and stuck? What does it take to bounce back or step ahead?

**Resiliency** is being named as one of the top employability skills these days, the ability to accept and adapt to change, to maintain an attitude of optimism even when life circumstances are not optimal. Granted there are some personality types that deal well with change, in fact they look for it seeing the challenge of adapting and being flexible as adding spice to life. Others of us experience change with some fear and trepidation, wondering how it is going to mess up our carefully laid plans. Regardless of our personality style, resiliency is a skill that must be learned in this crazy changing world if we want to survive & thrive.

The Resiliency Center ([www.resiliencycenter.com](http://www.resiliencycenter.com)) has a quiz created by Al Siebert which measures a person's resiliency. In completing this, I discovered that I am 'very resilient'. I have at times been called a 'Pollyanna' or 'living in denial', but now I know that I am actually Resilient! Resiliency does not deny that life can be difficult; but it is the process of successfully adapting to these difficult life experiences with a learning/coping response rather than the victim/blaming reaction.

So, what makes a person resilient? The following 9C's are adapted from Mr. Siebert's book 'The Resiliency Advantage' and highlight the qualities that resilient people share.

**Calm** – in a crisis or chaotic situation, able to focus on taking positive action

**Curious** – ask questions, wonder, experiment, have fun, think outside the box, be willing to be wrong

**Confidence** – know what you want and who you are, a healthy concept of your strengths & struggles

**Connections** – with family & friends, your support base for when you fall

**Candid** – express yourself honestly, name your feelings; the good, the bad, the ugly (not to be abusive)

**Creative** – ideas & intuition; see the opportunities, solve the problems

**Constantly Learn** – assimilate the unexpected, reflect and grow, learn good lessons from bad experiences

**Convert** – misfortune into positives, expect things to work out, what we believe and/or fear often happens

**Contribute** – give back, be generous, and look for ways to make a difference

I would love to say that I exhibit all these qualities, all the time but really, life does suck sometimes and even the most resilient, optimistic person falls victim to discouragement and defeat. That is normal!

Changes are inevitable but the ability to bounce back and step ahead is not a given. Many factors play a role in our ability to be resilient; personality, learned behavior, level of crisis and maturity to name a few. Whether you are just out of high school or a worker facing a lay off, resiliency is a skill that can be and must be learnt for life and career success.

# Applying for Graduate School or Professional Education

By: Dorothy Ritz, Graduate School Liaison (CCDP), Grant MacEwan College

Change is an integral part of the workplace. New technologies, new knowledge and methodologies are not a surprise. In fact, they are expected. To maintain a competitive edge and offer value as an employee, career development professionals are keenly aware that their clients may need to continue learning. Learning could include seminars, training offered by employers and formal education.

In the context of formal university education, as Graduate School Liaison in the Office of the Registrar at Grant MacEwan College (Edmonton, Alberta), part of my role is to provide information and support for students and alumni considering post degree study. MacEwan offers degrees in Arts, Science, Commerce, Child and Youth Care and Nursing ([www.macewan.ca](http://www.macewan.ca)).

Following is a list of tips for prospective applicants:

- Making the decision. Reflect on:
  - Your skills, abilities and interests
  - Life space and significant relationships (your age, partner, children, health)
  - Career goals
  - Learning goals
  - Geography (where you choose to live)
  - Finances
  - Labour market trends
- Where do I start? The first step is research:
  - This can be done online using websites that list numerous programs offered world wide
  - Universities outline detailed information on websites
  - Read the site to learn about the design and structure of a program
  - Review biographies and research interests of faculty members in the department
  - Consider whether this program matches your goals and interests
  - Look for a list of fees including: tuition, books, supplies, travel and living accommodations
  - Review scholarship and assistantship opportunities
- Give yourself time. Applying to a graduate program is not a quick process. If you are also applying for scholarships, extensive information may be required
- Applications may or may not require these components:
  - Application form
  - Transcripts from each post secondary institution you attended
  - Statement of intent or statement of research
  - Reference letters
  - Resume or curriculum vitae
  - Portfolio
  - Autobiography
  - Proof of proficiency in the language you will use in your studies
  - Qualifying standardized examinations
  - Interview (s)
  - Audition (ie. Performing Arts)
- References:
  - Decide who your referees will be
  - Check websites to clarify to your referees the type of content an appropriate reference should include
  - Meet with individuals to request a reference letter
  - Discuss the letter with the referee
  - The referee may be knowledgeable about the department you are applying to, as well as your skills, interests and abilities in the context of this course of study

## Applying for Graduate School or Professional Education – Cont...

- Do not delete or destroy undergraduate assignments, projects or papers! They may be helpful in the future. For example, a referee may request samples of course work (especially for classes where she/he was your instructor), transcripts, a list of school-related activities, and information on your volunteer and work experience
- Finances:
  - Educational institutions offer awards based on merit (GPA, research and publishing background) allotted for prospective and current graduate students
  - Admissions departments may review your statement of intent to ensure that your research interests match designated funding resources
  - There are opportunities for graduate students to apply for paid teaching assistantship positions.
  - Some departments offer co-op programs where a student can earn income within the learning experience
  - Some employers are interested in the career development of their employees and provide support (in terms of money or time) for ongoing learning
  - Student loans
- Statement of Intent:
  - Applications for graduate school or professional education require a written statement of intent
  - If you are applying for scholarships, teaching assistantships or bursaries, you may be required to submit similar statements
  - Think about your audience. The purpose of a statement is that it helps the faculty admissions office determine whether you would be an appropriate candidate for their program. They may consider the following:
    - How the program addresses your learning interests...specifically, what you want to study, and why
    - An explanation of how you would function in the department's environment and culture with faculty and other graduate students
- Standardized Examinations (if required):
  - Register to write the examination well before you submit your application
  - Practice with sample examinations before you write
  - You may request that results be sent to universities that require them for admission. Fees are charged each time results are sent

The investment of time and money can be significant. Solicit advice from friends or co-workers who have taken the route of further learning. Study something that you are passionate about. As you earn a graduate or professional degree, the learning has potential to motivate and inspire and new career doors may open.

Email: [gradschool@macewan.ca](mailto:gradschool@macewan.ca)

### CDAA Welcome

On behalf of the CDAA Board of Directors we would like to thank you for your commitment to the CDAA and to your profession. Your Board of Directors is 9 strong this year and very excited to get to work on your behalf. The Board attended an orientation session in Red Deer on July 18, 2009, and Frank Nieboer, a governance consultant and strategic planning expert, walked us through the roles and responsibilities of a board and helped to us to create plan to move forward with some of our goals for the year. **You will be receiving more on that plan as it unfolds and you will have opportunity to provide input.** It is very clear to us that we are moving from a Networking Association to a Professional Association, which required that we reflect on what that looks like and how we move towards that as the CDAA.

Six Chapters throughout Alberta are also gearing up to bring you local professional development and networking events that will engage and inspire you! Stay tuned for a new and improved CDAA website, and look for the CDAA Board members at CDAA events to answer your questions and hear your ideas.

### Current, Connected, and Committed!

Doreen Kooy, Chair and Paula Wischoff Yerama, Vice Chair

# U of C Launches Online Career Advising Programs

By: Margo Dilger, Program Director, University of Calgary Continuing Education

It's been a busy and rewarding spring at University of Calgary Continuing Education (UCCE) – especially in relation to career programs.

In June, I had the great pleasure of shaking hands with numerous Career Development graduates as they walked across the stage to accept their certificates at UCCE's annual graduation ceremony. Since U of C's decision to transform and update its campus-based program to a fully online program, many students have taken advantage of the two-year transition period to complete their program in a face-to-face format. I wish these practitioners well as they start or continue working in the Calgary area.

In addition, I was able to attend the BTT conference hosted by the CDAA in Edmonton. Not only were the speakers and sessions relevant and interesting; but also, I was able to connect with many CDAA executive members as well as former graduates of our program. I spoke with many people working in career development or advising, and they were excited to learn of our new Career and Academic Advising Certificate program that launches this fall.

This new certificate can be taken as a four-course, 120-hour, stand-alone program for those who already have experience working in the field and are looking for a way to expand their knowledge and, at the same time formalize their experience and expertise within a certificate framework.

For those new to career development or working with adults, the 300-hour Certificate in Adult Learning with a specialization in Career and Academic Advising is another option that can provide a solid foundation in adult learning principles, facilitation and career foundations. Both are intended for individuals working in career development with career, employment, or immigration agencies, as well as advisors in academic secondary or post-secondary institutions. Graduates will gain the foundations, communication and assessment skills to facilitate, motivate and work successfully with a diverse population.

For both programs, intake is year-round, and courses can be taken in any order, online, from anywhere as long as you have a computer and a reliable Internet connection.

If you have previously taken career development courses with U of C or another approved program, you may be able to receive transfer credit toward our new certificate programs. Please do not hesitate to call or email to discuss this possibility.

Those new to the online learning format can be confident in this style of delivery. I have worked with numerous students who have achieved great success in other online certificates including the Certificate in Adult Learning with specializations in Adult and Community Education, Workplace Learning, and e-Learning, and the Teaching Second Languages – TESL Certificate.

If you wish to enrol in an online program, you must take the prerequisite course, Learning Online, which teaches you how to become a successful online learner and provides exposure to Blackboard software. This course is running several times in August and September.

I am working with the CDAA to have both of these programs approved for the CCDP. Our new programs are based on our previously approved courses so I am confident we will gain approval as the curriculum is solidly based on designation requirements. More news will be forthcoming once the process has been completed.

Our first course, Career Development Foundations, begins in October. For full information regarding schedules and course descriptions please visit our website <http://conted.ucalgary.ca/cal/> or email me at [adedlife@ucalgary.ca](mailto:adedlife@ucalgary.ca).

Have a wonderful fall, and I look forward to talking with some of you who are interested in enrolling in our new programs. ~ Margo

## 2009 - 2010 CDAA Board of Directors and Committee Chairs

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