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# It only gets better

So, what does it take to succeed in the highly competitive search for jobs?

As the stories of the three workers you will meet on this page illustrate (and as does that of Tara Weber on pg 30), it can be summed up largely in the two "Ps" — persistence and positive thinking.

There's also a third crucial "P", and it's people.

Your job search is not a solitary effort.

The more you reach out to others for help and are willing to open yourself to new people and new situations, the easier your task will be. No matter what happens, as Tandon indicates, the experience of opening yourself up to the possibilities before you will be a richly rewarding experience.

Parag Tandon was successfully marketing Hollywood movies in New Delhi, India, thanks in part to his post-secondary education. Tandon built on his Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Delhi by earning a Master's degree in Marketing from the Jaipuria Institute of Management, whose slogan is "Grooming Professionals for a Global Career." With this in mind, he and his wife decided to move to Canada in 2001.

"Canada was an obvious choice for me. [I felt] I could continue my career with North Hollywood, and it had nicer people than in the United States," said Tandon, 31. "It seemed people in Canada were more supportive."

After arriving in May 2001, he found the structure of the industry here left little room for him to continue on the same career path, as he had originally hoped. Tandon still believed moving to Canada was the right choice, and that he would find a marketing career in a field other than film. He applied to various positions suited to his background using the resume he had used in India, with little results. He eventually learned that many features common to resumes in his native country were considered unprofessional here.

"Where I come from, you have to write your birthday on your resume, as well as your father's name. If you're high-tech, you'll put a picture of yourself," explained Tandon. "I was sending that out all over the place and

## Helping others avoid his mistakes is one of the greatest joys Tandon experiences

wasn't getting any response, because I had no knowledge of how it was done here. I learned the hard way."

After more than a year without work, Tandon acquired a position at the Indo-Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Although he was employed there for only three months, the connections he made were invaluable, and led to him becoming a volunteer with the charity United Way. A few months later, a paid position opened up within this organization, and Tandon applied. He believes his knowledge of United Way, gained through his volunteer activities, was equally important to his work experience in securing an interview.

From there, this marketing professional was able to sell himself as the best candidate. He worked for United Way Greater Toronto for over three years. As Resource Development Manager, Tandon managed a fundraising portfolio with 200 accounts; he facilitated the annual pledge campaign with the help of

approximately 500 volunteers. While Tandon enjoyed this aspect of his job, he became audibly more excited when describing his work as Manager - Outreach.

"Let's say we have English language classes for free, and there's someone from a more backward part of India or from China or Japan who is not very good with English, or perhaps they want to learn more with computers; we also have those programs," he said. "I let people know what kind of services our agencies provide so they can come and make use of those services in their area,"

Tandon believes it is essential for newcomers to make use of these services, including resume building workshops and settlement programs, to avoid or at least lessen some of the hardships that come with adjusting to a new home and joining the Canadian labour force. Helping others avoid his mistakes is one of the greatest joys Tandon experiences.

"It's a very satisfying experience; it helps me sleep better at night, knowing that I've made a difference in somebody's life," said Tandon. "If you can make one person breathe easier, you've lived, and that is what I try to do everyday."

Tandon, who has now moved on to become Manager, Corporate Development, of the Ontario Division of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, is impressed by the level of free services available in Canada, and encourages everyone to make use of them.

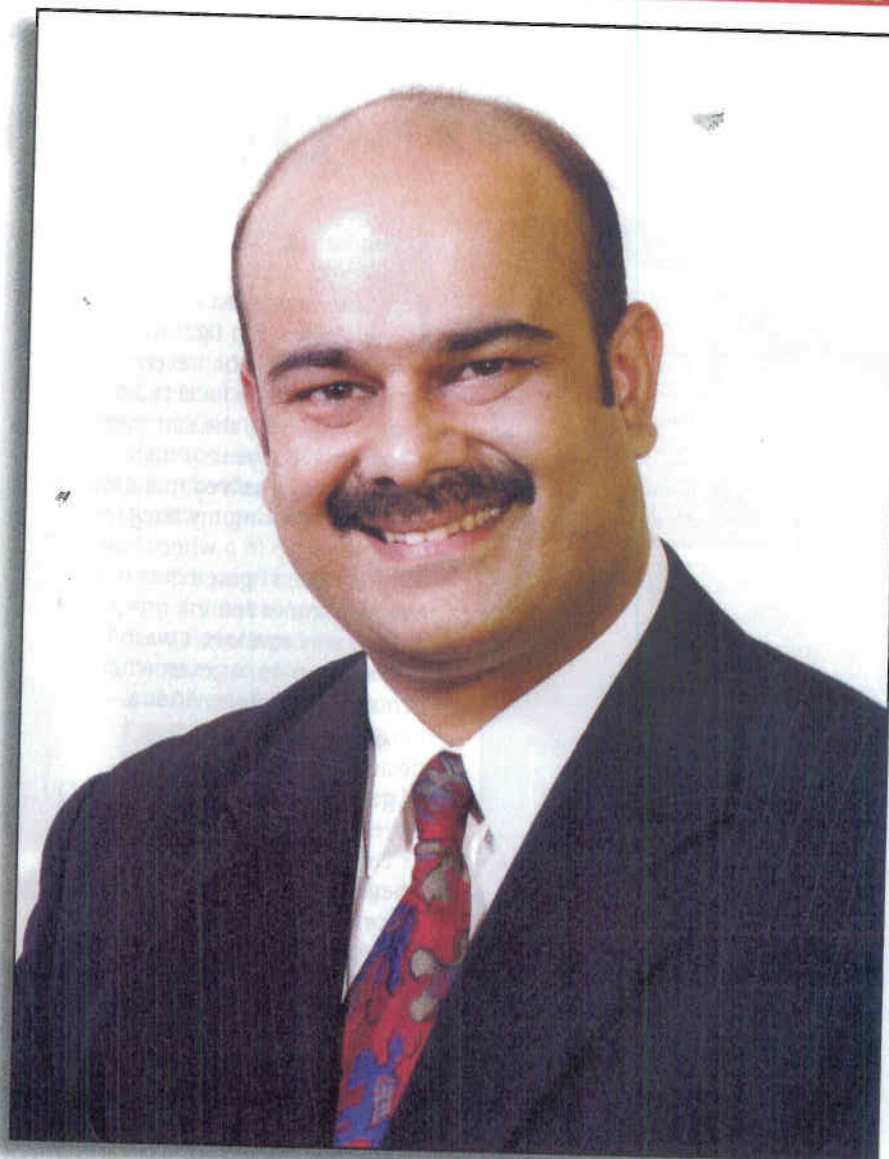
That is exactly what Julie Lafreniere did recently in Winnipeg, where she grew up. Knowing she wanted to work for an Aboriginal organization, she went to the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resources Development for aid in her employment search. The staff there helped her improve her resume and create quality cover letters, as well as provided her with job postings. One of these postings led to her current position as acting Audience Relations Coordinator at the Aboriginal People's Television Network.

"I respond to audience e-mail and telephone inquiries, and prepare monthly reports for the CEO and department heads," explained Lafreniere, a Métis woman with roots in Camperville, Manitoba. "I absolutely love it."

Lafreniere, 23, is the proud mother of a four-year-old son. She returned to school when he was four months old, largely to ensure she could provide a good life for her child. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies and Psychology from the University of Manitoba. Lafreniere is very pleased to be able to promote her culture in her working life, as well as in her family life.

Family life is important to Forrest Smith, too. Since the age of 20, Smith has worked for Canada Post in White Rock, British Columbia. Smith greatly enjoys the free time that comes with his work as a letter carrier. Originally, the freedom of working alone and finishing his route in the early afternoon allowed him to concentrate on projects related to his independent work as a videographer and filmmaker. Now, he relishes the extra time he can spend with his two small children and his wife of 12 years. When he first applied to the crown corporation, he was told to go through a service agency for the deaf.

"I explained that I preferred to apply directly because I was independent. The receptionist wrote back and forth with me to explain the process, and gave me the name of the staffing officer. She even knew some basic sign language, which was a big bonus," said



PARAG TANDON

Smith. "Most management staff and co-workers at Canada Post know how to interact with deaf employees, which is part of why I enjoy being an employee there."

Smith began working for Canada Post the year after he graduated high school, though he originally intended to get post-secondary training. For three of his 15 years of employment, he was the acting Special Project Employment Equity Coordinator. Though Smith enjoyed his time in human resources, learning about corporate culture and working with senior management, he is glad to be back on his route, getting fresh air and exercise as part of his job.

These three stories represent just

a small sample of people who have found meaningful employment in Canada, and many more are out there. Parag Tandon believes everyone can find the job that is perfect for them, as long as they don't give up hope.

"When I was out of work for over a year, I tried not to let it get to me. I'm sure all newcomers go through that, and some give up and some don't," said Tandon. "It's an attitudinal shift. You have to have a positive attitude, get rid of any negativity. If you stay and keep trying, you learn and it gets better."

*Tandon is happy to help jobseekers with advice. He may be reached by email at [Parag.Tandon@cnib.ca](mailto:Parag.Tandon@cnib.ca)*