
Upskill During COVID-19 – Get Ready for the New Normal

Rely on your Network and Online Resources for Help

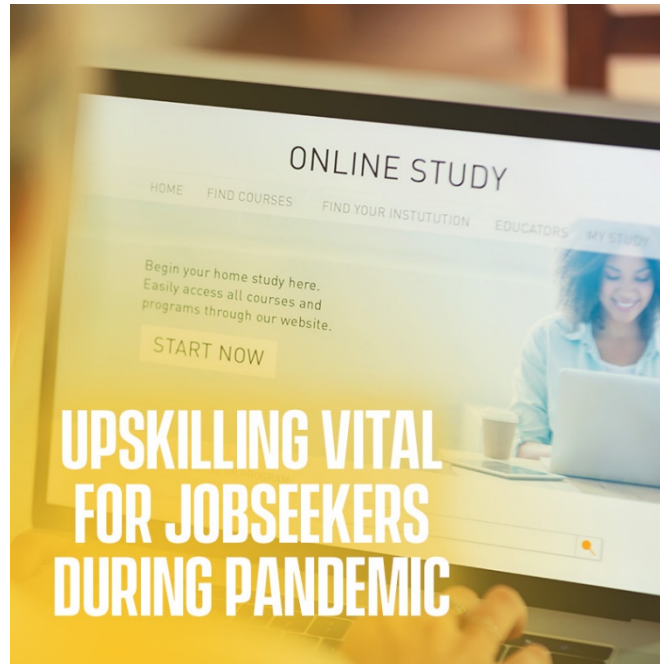
“Invest in your health and mental state.”

TORONTO, ON, April 8, 2020 – With thousands of workers sidelined by COVID-19, many Canadians are filling their time with home improvement projects, cooking, working out or binge-watching TV shows. But business owners say that job seekers should take advantage of this time and learn or improve skills in order to remain competitive in the job market once guidelines are lifted.

Express Employment Professionals franchise owner Bruce Hein in Sarnia, Ontario, notes employees who are lifelong learners, both personally and professionally, always offer the most value to organizations. He believes the most successful individuals are always thirsty for knowledge.

Niven Lee, Express franchise owner in Delta, British Columbia, says COVID-19 has demonstrated that lifelong learners bring immense value to companies.

“No one could predict the depth, breadth and speed of the crisis,” he said. “The environment has been fluid and all of us have had to learn and adapt quickly. It’s these lifelong learners who are best able to adapt.”



Shane DeCoste, Express franchise owner in Halifax, Nova Scotia, says that now is the time to stand out “as someone who can add immediate value by bringing the right attitude to the table. Taking online courses or adding new certifications will tell employers that you are resourceful and driven to learn and grow.” He advises those looking for work to think about how they can improve their in-demand soft skills. Among the top soft skills employers look for are: work ethic/integrity, attitude, communication, critical thinking and time management. DeCoste recommends looking for “online resources, listen to podcasts and read about in-demand soft skills. Investing in yourself in difficult times shows employers that you are engaged, and you want to grow and develop.”

Hein suggests people should focus their upskilling on where they want their career to go.

“If you want to obtain an office position, now would be an ideal time to strengthen your Microsoft Word and Excel skills,” he said. “If sales and marketing interest you, maybe it’s time to improve your written communication. Tools like Grammarly can help with this, and there are a wealth of resources, many of them free, available online to help with upskilling.”

He notes that since “most people do not get the chance to spend this much time at home, we should be taking advantage of that time.”

Lee echoes that thought.

“Do not waste this once in a lifetime opportunity to learn and develop a new skill,” he said. “If you are at home, rather than sleeping in and/or watching Netflix, develop the mindset to do what it takes to do better.”

Hein also recommends using some of Express' available resources like the Job Journey blog (JobJourney.com), which covers everything from resume writing to interviewing.

Express Employment Professionals also offers the free [Job Genius educational video series](#) to help students and job seekers navigate through a career change or career pathing, writing a resume, interview tips, money management advice, job forecasting and more.

Several institutions and universities are currently offering free online courses on everything from programming and graphic design to writing and communication. A simple Google search for “free online courses” reveals hundreds of options.

For those still on the job, reliability and flexibility are needed to help guide companies through these unprecedented times.

DeCoste advises that we should all be prepared for the “new” normal, because when it arrives, he expects “that the movement of goods will be back-logged, creating high demand in warehouse, logistics and construction.” In addition, “some service-based businesses that have closed or had drastically reduced work will require administrative support and customer service as things start come back online.”

The final piece of advice from DeCoste involves showing your prospective employer that you can help create a positive work environment.

“Help create a positive environment, and come with the right attitude,” he said. “Invest in your health by exercising, getting more sleep and learn to become more mindful. Being healthy will improve your mental state and your attitude.”

When Canada does emerge on the other side of the pandemic, Express experts predict hot industries will be sales, digital marketing, basic consumer goods manufacturing, accounting, warehouse, distribution, engineering, cleaning and online customer service.

“While it may be tempting to view the time home as an extended vacation, those job seekers who take advantage of the hundreds of resources available right now will prove invaluable to businesses,” said Bill Stoller, Express CEO. “Keep networking, stay positive and be prepared for when things bounce back.”

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Adria Minsky at (416) 620-7111 or email adria@mapleleafstrategies.com.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the international staffing company has more than 825 franchises in the U.S., Canada and South Africa, and beginning in 2020 will expand to Australia and New Zealand. Since its inception, Express has put more than 8 million people to work worldwide.

About Express Employment Professionals

At Express Employment Professionals, we're in the business of people. From job seekers to client companies, Express helps people thrive and businesses grow. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, OK, our international network of franchises offer localized staffing solutions to the communities they serve, employing 552,000 people across North America in 2019. For more information, visit www.ExpressPros.com.