

Chapter

8

Careers and a Changing Workplace

GETTING A JOB, AND KEEPING A JOB: KEY FACTORS

The challenge of getting a job and keeping it — even if you are working for yourself — seems to be getting more and more difficult as time goes by. Governments are continually changing, as are

businesses. The number of workers is continually changing. The skills that are needed are changing.

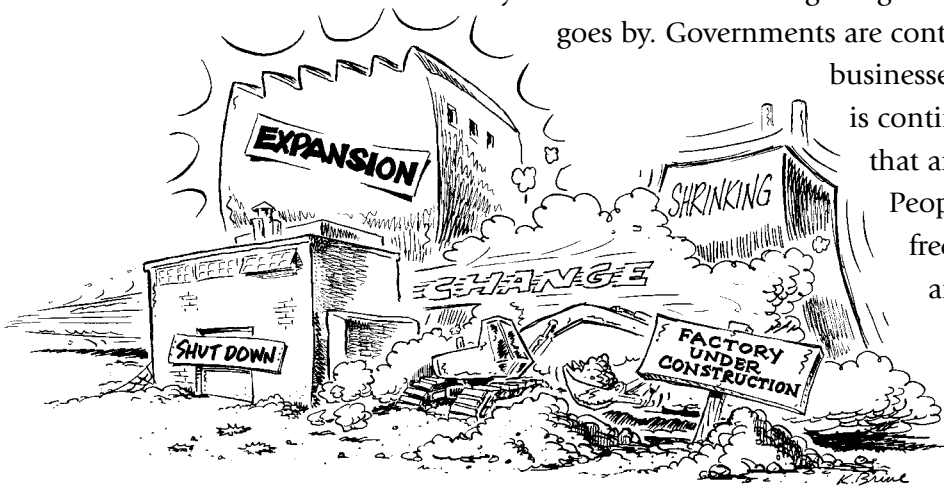
People are changing jobs more frequently. And more businesses are being started all the time — even while many other small businesses are closing down.

Change. Change. Change. That is the key word. In

this chapter, we want to look at some of the factors that are affecting the chances of Canadians getting, and keeping, a job — whether it is a job working for someone else or one you create for yourself.

INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The changes occurring in our economy and throughout the world aren't news to anyone. Yet, it is surprising the degree to which many Canadians still do not understand the impact of these changes.



As the world is changing, information is becoming increasingly important. Entire industries related to gathering and using data and information are growing. Technology is exploding, and there is an ever-increasing need to be able to adapt to and apply these changes in technology.

An important key to getting and keeping a job today, and in the future, is education — education and training. At no time in our history have education and training been more important. To succeed in today's world, and in the competitive marketplace of the future, education and training will be critical. Statistics show that the more education and training you have, the more likely you are to have a job — and the higher income you are likely to earn from that job.

Learning how to do something today in no way ensures that you will be able to do the same thing tomorrow — or maybe as well as someone else can — either here in Canada or in another country.

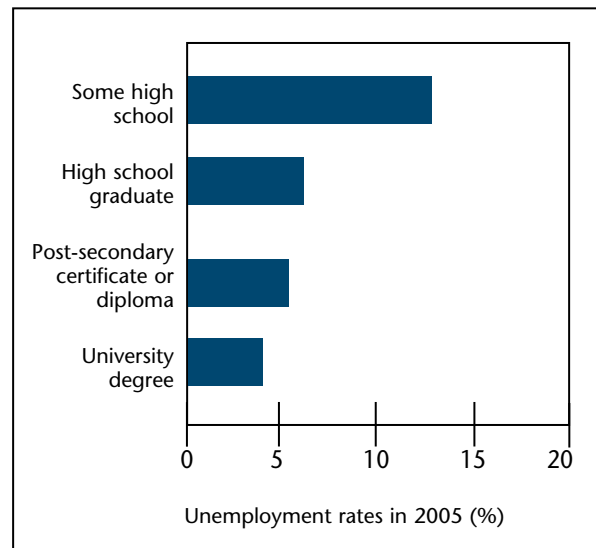
Learning is a lifelong experience. As the workplace and marketplace change, knowledge and skills will

have to change with them. The chart below illustrates an increasing relationship between unemployment and lack of schooling.

Jobs requiring unskilled labour are quickly disappearing. Many people today are becoming highly educated; others, without the necessary education, are being pushed back and aside.

Being relatively uneducated and working your way to the top is another option that is disappearing. Without an education and appropriate training, you will probably bump your head against a career ceiling (a point where you cannot rise any higher in terms of position) at an earlier and earlier point and at a lower and lower level within a company.

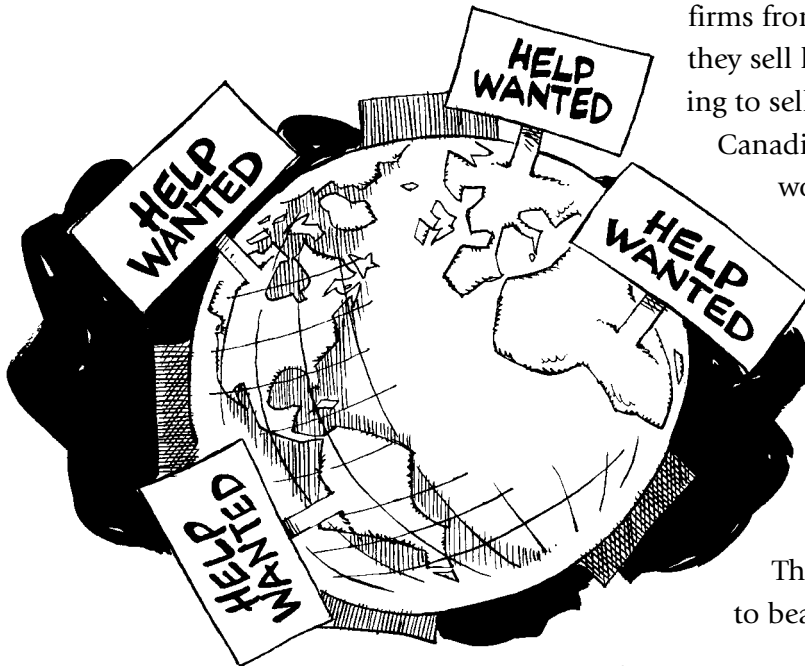
It will be important to identify the knowledge and skills required in the field in which you are interested. That isn't as easy as it sounds. Many people find it difficult to get the information they need. In fact, that ability to gather important information is a key



Source: Statistics Canada

skill in itself. A good place to start is at the federal government web site focusing on jobs, education, and training. Check it out at www.jobsetc.ca

A MORE GLOBAL LABOUR MARKET



More and more, Canadian firms have to compete with firms from other nations — both for what they sell here at home and what they are looking to sell in other countries. At the same time, Canadian workers have to compete with

workers in other countries. That means, for example, that a company may close its operation in Canada, with the loss of jobs, not because Canadians aren't working well or producing a good product. It may be because the company can produce the same quality product in another country at a lower price.

That is another pressure being brought to bear on Canadian workers.

At the same time, more and more Canadians are selling their products and services to other countries. The global economy has opened up extraordinary opportunities for Canadians and many Canadian businesses. In fact, a very significant proportion of jobs in Canada is related to products and services that we export (sell) to other countries.

In addition, at the same time as workers from other countries may come to Canada to seek employment, some Canadians are now able to look for work, not only in Canada, but in other countries as well.

In short, Canadian workers and companies face many influences that are coming from both inside and outside our borders. Canadians will be increasingly involved in a more global labour market, and a more global marketplace, and this presents both challenges and opportunities for all of us.

SHIFT FROM PRODUCT TO SERVICE PRODUCTION

Over time, there has been a dramatic shift, in Canada as well as in other countries, from producing products to producing services. It is important to note that more and more Canadians are finding work in the "service sector" as opposed to the "goods sector." There are many differences in the two sectors.

Producing products by manufacturing requires plants, factories, equipment, transportation, and so on. Production usually takes place within a place like a factory by a team of people that work closely together. The number of people employed will vary with production. If sales and production are slow, fewer workers may be required, leading to temporary layoffs and shutdowns. If sales and production are higher, more workers may be employed and more work may be made possible through overtime opportunities.

On the other hand, services are often provided through broad networks of workers operating out of smaller facilities. Think of services such as dry-cleaners, lawyers, accountants, dentists, and so on. They do not tend to work out of large centres of production. Many are involved in smaller, more independent businesses.

Manufacturing businesses, therefore, tend to be larger with more concentrated production activity. The amount of capital needed to start up and operate a manufacturing company tends to be greater than that required for many services. That is one reason why many of the new small businesses being established by entrepreneurs tend to be in the service sector.

On another note, because manufacturing activity tends to be more concentrated within a specific facility, there tends to be a greater chance that workers in that sector will be unionized and receive incomes and benefits that are negotiated collectively by union representatives on behalf of the members.

These are just some of the differences that tend to exist between the service sector and the goods sector. As was noted, there has been dramatic growth in the service sector over the last couple of decades.

Can the Shift Continue?

Although this trend has been under way for some time, and has accelerated in recent years, it is important to note that the trend cannot continue indefinitely. A strong service sector also requires a strong goods production sector. An economy cannot sustain itself, or grow, on the basis of service activity alone. Canada will require a strong core of goods production to sustain its service sector, and the stronger our goods sector the healthier our service sector will be.

This is one of the reasons why there is increasing concern over the lack of engineers and people who specialize in the fields of applied maths and sciences. Increasingly, Canadians are choosing career paths aiming at service provision — doctors, lawyers, accountants, dentists, and so on — as opposed to careers that lead toward applied skills and technology in the areas of manufacturing

and construction. Canadians will have to focus increasingly on education, training, and skills development that not only will secure the viability of our goods sector but that can expand and build it over time.

CHALLENGES TO PAST EXPECTATIONS

Canadians, and indeed people in many other countries such as the United States, have tended to expect that incomes, lifestyles, and standard of living can continue to improve. The fact is, nowhere is it written that wages, incomes, and standard of living shall always rise. If Canadians expect to continue to achieve a higher standard of living, our work will be cut out for us. It is also important to be aware that, even when incomes rise, “real incomes” can fall.

What is “real income”? Real income is what is earned after the effects of inflation have been taken into account. For example, if you receive a wage increase of 2%, but your living costs increase by 3%, your “real” income doesn’t rise. Your “nominal” income does, that is, the income you are paid as money. But, when you use your money income to purchase goods and services, you find that your purchasing power, the quantity of goods and services you can actually buy, has decreased.

For example, if the average real income of Canadians was found to be higher in 1996 than in 2006, we mean that, on average, based on our purchasing power, we were better off in 1996. Why? Among other things, our overall ability to produce goods and services wouldn’t have kept pace with our incomes. As a result, the purchasing power of our money that we receive as income would have fallen.

Our ability as a nation to produce goods and services with the resources we have and use is referred to as productivity. Specifically, productivity is defined as

“output per unit of input.”

For example, suppose you set up a hockey stick manufacturing company and, with a certain quantity and type of resources, you produce 10,000 hockey sticks. Then, suppose by combining your resources differently, you are able, with the same

resources, to produce 12,000 hockey sticks. That is increased productivity. The output per unit of input has increased.

Individuals, companies, and governments throughout Canada are working to increase our productivity performance. Those efforts have an effect on the workplace and the marketplace. Those who are able to understand the importance of productivity, and can help to increase it, will find this an advantage.

So what? Well, if 12,000 hockey sticks are produced and sold rather than 10,000, revenue will increase. That should enable those involved in production to earn more. Why? Because the resources used created more value and more wealth — value and wealth that should be shared among those achieving the higher productivity. That, as you can well imagine, is one of the issues that comes up for discussion — sometimes heated discussion — between employers and employees. Who was responsible for the higher productivity? How much was productivity increased? How should the benefits be shared? However, as much as the sharing of benefits can sometimes be an issue, the key thing to note is that increasing productivity brings benefits. By increasing productivity, Canadians can increase real incomes and improve our standard of living.

POTENTIAL FOR A WIDER SPREAD IN INCOMES

There is a potential for Canada to increasingly become a nation of “haves” and “have nots.” The shift from goods to service production has created a situation in which some “good jobs,” ones that are permanent, challenging, and fulfilling and that pay relatively well, are being replaced by jobs in the service sector that are not as good — of shorter duration, less secure, lower paying, less challenging, with fewer and lower benefits.

This is not to say there are not good service jobs — far from it. But there is a potential for wider and wider gaps in the quality of work available to people, which can lead to a wider spread in incomes.

Some people believe that, as time passes, the service sector will “mature” more. With the dramatic growth in the service sector, there is a possibility that many people who are new to it (including many new businesses) have to learn more about protecting incomes, providing benefits, and so on. Time will tell if that is the case.

Nevertheless, in a rapidly changing society, fuelled by changes in technology, globalization, and many other factors, there is a risk that some Canadians will be better able to respond to change, and take advantage of change, than others. This creates the possibility that some will do better than others at a time when governments may or may not be in a position, or willing, to help some who are in need. This is another reason why education and training is so important for Canadians today.

CHANGES IN JOB STRUCTURE

Over the years ahead, it is likely that the nature of the workplace in Canada will continue to change. These changes will include:

Full-time and part-time employment by sex and age group

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	thousands				
BOTH SEXES					
Total	14,946.2	15,310.4	15,672.3	15,947.0	16,169.7
15–24 years	2,324.6	2,399.1	2,449.4	2,461.0	2,472.5
25–44 years	7,570.8	7,575.6	7,571.5	7,594.0	7,597.5
45 years and over	5,050.8	5,335.7	5,651.4	5,892.0	6,099.7
Full-time	12,242.5	12,439.3	12,705.3	12,998.1	13,206.2
15–24 years	1,314.8	1,323.1	1,344.3	1,361.4	1,370.2
25–44 years	6,637.5	6,627.0	6,624.7	6,671.2	6,684.7
45 years and over	4,290.2	4,489.1	4,736.3	4,965.5	5,151.3
Part-time	2,703.7	2,871.1	2,967.0	2,948.9	2,963.5
15–24 years	1,009.8	1,076.0	1,105.1	1,099.6	1,102.3
25–44 years	933.3	948.5	946.81	922.8	912.8
45 years and over	760.6	846.6	915.0	926.5	948.4

Source: Statistics Canada

- **Increases in the amount of part-time work**, that is, work that amounts to less than 30 hours per week

If we look way back to 1953, about 4% of the Canadian workforce was employed part-time. By 2005, this figure had increased to about 17%.

In some cases, this increase in part-time work reflects an increase in flexibility in the workplace. Part-time work meets workers’ desires to work less than full-time. This is particularly true of some parents who want to maintain a working career but also wish to spend time at home with children. Part-time work can also help those who want to go to school or obtain training while working.

In these cases, part-time work options are a good thing. In other cases, though, the increase in part-time work is a sign that some workers can’t obtain full-time work. This is referred to as “involuntary part-time work,” working part-time when you would rather be full-time. Involuntary part-time work now accounts for about 25% of all part-time work. So there are many people working part-time today who would rather be working full-time — but part-time work is still the choice for many. The majority of part-time workers tend to be youth, female, or both. Part-time work also tends to occur more in smaller firms.

Three things should be noted. First, employers are increasingly hiring part-time workers. There are a number of reasons for this. In some cases,

it lowers the total labour cost for the employer if full-time work is not really required. On average, part-time workers also tend to earn less than full-time workers. Furthermore, part-time workers do not tend to receive the benefits that are available to full-time workers (health plans, dental plans, pension plans, and so forth), which usually reduces the total cost for the employer. Part-time workers are also much less likely to be unionized. Second, there tend to be more people who want to work part-time, in spite of some of the trade-offs just referred to. And third, there are more people frustrated in their efforts to find full-time work, and they are having to settle for part-time work.

- **Increases in the number of short-term jobs, that is, jobs that last for a period of less than six months**

There is an increase in short-term work, which indicates employers are making changes in response to changing economic conditions. Furthermore, employers are contracting people's services for shorter periods of time for certain tasks as opposed to hiring someone on a permanent, full-time basis.

These shorter-term jobs tend to be taken more by younger workers who may choose to move in and out of the labour market in their earlier years while they are obtaining education and training. Short-term jobs occur more often in smaller firms where workers are less likely to be unionized and less likely to be provided with benefits such as a pension plan.

- **Own-account self-employment, that is, a person working alone without any employees**

This is the term used to refer to people working as chip wagon operators, one-truck movers, newsstand operators, and so on. Although there has been significant growth in this kind of employment over the years, it is worth noting that such workers tend to have lower earnings.

- **Temporary help agency work**

Many people use placement centres to secure work with a variety of employers over time as their services are required to replace absent full-time workers or to help out on a temporary basis when work is required but not on a permanent long-term basis. This kind of employment has increased over time, and there are now tens of thousands of Canadians finding jobs through such services. It is important to note that, in many cases, these workers are using such agencies because they are unable to find permanent jobs.

Most such jobs are clerical in nature, and a high proportion of these workers are female, wages tend to be considerably below full-time wages, and the workers usually have access to minimal fringe benefits.

These four types of “non-standard” work now represent a significant portion of all employment. Overall, they tend to be lower paying, less stable, and provide fewer benefits. Significant growth in these areas cannot be considered to be a positive thing. It is true that they provide advantages of flexibility to some who want it. However, many people are having to settle for such forms of employment because they are unable to find the permanent work they would prefer.

There is reason to believe that the trend toward such types of work may change over the years. First of all, growth in the total labour force has been slowing. This means that it is likely that better, more permanent jobs should start to open up for qualified workers who may have been frustrated in their efforts to find such employment in the past. In addition, there is a decrease in the flow of young workers into the labour market, and such jobs tend to be taken more by younger workers. Therefore, although it is likely that the numbers of workers employed in such jobs will continue to increase, the rate of growth is likely to slow.

CHANGES IN SKILL TRENDS

The kinds of skills desired by employers has been changing. A recent survey of employers showed that the skills assessed to be most desirable in prospective employees were:

- basic academic competence
- creativity and initiative
- analytical and problem-solving abilities
- adaptability
- communication skills
- interpersonal skills

Over 50% of workers in Canada are now employed in occupations that are primarily concerned with the creation or use of data and knowledge. This is particularly true in the service sector, which accounts for about two-thirds of all jobs.

The Conference Board of Canada has produced a target set of skills (identified by employers) and entitled “Employability Skills.” This list of “employability skills” appears on the following page.

Employability Skills 2000+

The skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work—whether you work on your own or as a part of a team.

These skills can also be applied and used beyond the workplace in a range of daily activities.

Fundamental Skills

The skills needed as a base for further development

You will be better prepared to progress in the world of work when you can:

Communicate

- read and understand information presented in a variety of forms (e.g., words, graphs, charts, diagrams)
- write and speak so others pay attention and understand
- listen and ask questions to understand and appreciate the points of view of others
- share information using a range of information and communications technologies (e.g., voice, e-mail, computers)
- use relevant scientific, technological and mathematical knowledge and skills to explain or clarify ideas

Manage Information

- locate, gather and organize information using appropriate technology and information systems
- access, analyze and apply knowledge and skills from various disciplines (e.g., the arts, languages, science, technology, mathematics, social sciences, and the humanities)

Use Numbers

- decide what needs to be measured or calculated
- observe and record data using appropriate methods, tools and technology
- make estimates and verify calculations

Think & Solve Problems

- assess situations and identify problems
- seek different points of view and evaluate them based on facts
- recognize the human, interpersonal, technical, scientific and mathematical dimensions of a problem
- identify the root cause of a problem
- be creative and innovative in exploring possible solutions
- readily use science, technology and mathematics as ways to think, gain and share knowledge, solve problems and make decisions
- evaluate solutions to make recommendations or decisions
- implement solutions
- check to see if a solution works, and act on opportunities for improvement

Personal Management Skills

The personal skills, attitudes and behaviours that drive one's potential for growth

You will be able to offer yourself greater possibilities for achievement when you can:

Demonstrate Positive Attitudes & Behaviours

- feel good about yourself and be confident
- deal with people, problems and situations with honesty, integrity and personal ethics
- recognize your own and other people's good efforts
- take care of your personal health
- show interest, initiative and effort

Be Responsible

- set goals and priorities balancing work and personal life
- plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals
- assess, weigh and manage risk
- be accountable for your actions and the actions of your group
- be socially responsible and contribute to your community

Be Adaptable

- work independently or as a part of a team
- carry out multiple tasks or projects
- be innovative and resourceful: identify and suggest alternative ways to achieve goals and get the job done
- be open and respond constructively to change
- learn from your mistakes and accept feedback
- cope with uncertainty

Learn Continuously

- be willing to continuously learn and grow
- assess personal strengths and areas for development
- set your own learning goals
- identify and access learning sources and opportunities
- plan for and achieve your learning goals

Work Safely

- be aware of personal and group health and safety practices and procedures, and act in accordance with these

Teamwork Skills

The skills and attributes needed to contribute productively

You will be better prepared to add value to the outcomes of a task, project or team when you can:

Work with Others

- understand and work within the dynamics of a group
- ensure that a team's purpose and objectives are clear
- be flexible: respect, be open to and supportive of the thoughts, opinions and contributions of others in a group
- recognize and respect people's diversity, individual differences and perspectives
- accept and provide feedback in a constructive and considerate manner
- contribute to a team by sharing information and expertise
- lead or support when appropriate, motivating a group for high performance
- understand the role of conflict in a group to reach solutions
- manage and resolve conflict when appropriate

Participate in Projects & Tasks

- plan, design or carry out a project or task from start to finish with well-defined objectives and outcomes
- develop a plan, seek feedback, test, revise and implement
- work to agreed quality standards and specifications
- select and use appropriate tools and technology for a task or project
- adapt to changing requirements and information
- continuously monitor the success of a project or task and identify ways to improve



The Conference Board of Canada

255 Smyth Road, Ottawa
ON K1H 8M7 Canada
Tel. (613) 526-3280
Fax (613) 526-4857

Internet: www.conferenceboard.ca/education

MORE JOB CHANGE

There is much talk today about “multiple careers” and the fact that many people have five, six, seven, or more careers over the course of a lifetime. Part of it comes down to how you define “career.” Is a career related to one kind of work and one specific job? Or is a career your entire record of work experience covering all the things you have done. If it is the latter, then we will all have one career covering a range of jobs and experience. Either way, the key point is that with all the change that is occurring, and that will occur, most people will have, on average, five to seven different jobs over the course of their working life. Again, this will create opportunities and challenges for Canadians as they plan for, and realize, their work and career-related goals.

SUMMARY

To summarize, then, the following are some of the more recent trends that characterize the Canadian labour market:

- there continues to be an acceleration in the globalization of the world economy
- this increases the global nature of Canada’s labour market and marketplace and the exposure to global influences
- there has been a slowing in the growth rate of our overall labour force
- there is increased employment in the service sector
- there is more work requiring a high level of knowledge and skill
- there are increasing priorities assigned to the importance of education and training
- there is an increasing desire among employers for employee skills related to creativity, innovation, adaptability, and problem solving
- there has been a somewhat disturbing trend toward “good jobs” and “bad jobs” in Canada, the skewing of incomes, increased regional disparity in terms of employment and incomes, and challenges to our past successes in raising our overall standard of living
- there continues to be growth in non-standard forms of employment
- there continues to be increased flexibility in work alternatives in the labour force
- there are more variations in the degree of stability afforded to various workers

The clear indication is that Canadians are going to have to adjust to changing and evolving world conditions. Increasingly, Canadians have to take greater control over their career paths and options to ensure they have the skills needed for the jobs that exist and that are evolving. Therefore, as noted earlier, it is important that all Canadians, and particularly youth, develop a career plan — not just for the early years, but a lifelong plan.

In this section, we have focused on acquiring income — sources of incomes, working for others, preparing a résumé, seeking a job, job interviews, self-employment, and factors influencing the workplace. The next section will focus on how one uses income and manages personal and household financial affairs.