

INSIDER EDGE

INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED CAs DESCRIBE THE
CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

RISHI TIBRIWAL
Country of origin: India
Years in practice: 14
Employer: Ernst & Young LLP
Position: Partner

How do you find Canada's work culture differs from your country of origin?

In India, the relationship and interaction with your superiors is much more formal, whereas in Canada, even those at junior levels are encouraged to contribute ideas and suggestions – even if they contradict those of their managers. I really like this, and believe it helps encourage all of our team members to participate and achieve their potential. In Canada, I've also found management really encourages work-life balance and flexibility. Teamwork is another component of the business scene that I've experienced more here than in India.



ARVIND KAMATH
Country of origin: India
Years in practice: 13
Employer: Scotiabank, Toronto
Position: Director, Accounting Policy

Describe your most memorable Canadian moment so far.

Getting my Canadian CA. I did the process while married and raising a family, and while working as a senior manager at a large public accounting firm. It was a lot of hard work, but once I had my Canadian CA, the opportunities really opened up. I came to Canada because I wanted to do well in life, provide a better education for my son and own my own home. I have made up my mind to make Canada my home and never to migrate to another country.



YOLANDE NORTHRUP
Country of Origin: South Africa
Years in practice: 10
Employer: Watt International Inc.
Position: Controller

How was the process for getting your credentials recognized in Canada?

Canada has a reciprocity agreement with South Africa and recognizes the South African CA designation subject to passing the Chartered Accountants' Reciprocity Examination and certification of past professional experience. Because my professional experience in South Africa was gained outside of public practice, I faced a slightly longer application process that included an in-depth interview with the (Ontario Institute's) Applications Committee. The entire process was very thorough and professional and ensured that the high standards expected of CAs in Canada are maintained as new members from other countries are admitted.



CYRUS JAMSHED BALSARA
Country of origin: India
Years in practice: 16
Employer: KPMG LLP
Position: Senior Manager, Financial Services

What is your best advice for an internationally trained professional who wants to come to Canada and succeed?

Begin your research before you leave your home country. Prior to coming to Canada, I took the time to read up on the eligibility requirements of becoming a CA. Also, there are programs available in Canada, such as the Mentoring Partnership Program, that provide tools to help you find a job that matches your background. Finally, work for a company that truly values diverse people with diverse backgrounds and ideas. I started with KPMG in 2004 and thanks to the firm's support, I qualified as a CA in 2005.

SKILLED PROFESSIONALS
ARE KEY TO OUR FUTURE

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

TALENT SEARCH FOR CAs
GOES GLOBAL

In the competitive world of financial services, the globetrotting Chartered Accountant has become a hot commodity as major industry players vie to expand their international reach.

It is why Canadian accounting firms like KPMG LLP are devoting time and energy to attract talented CAs who have worked abroad.

"We hire a lot of people internationally and many of them will immigrate here," said Mario Paron, chief human resources officer at KPMG in Toronto.

He says that while those who come permanently tend to be from the United States, the United Kingdom, China and India, individuals hired from Australia and South Africa tend to stay temporarily.

Industry officials say internationally trained Chartered Accountants are highly valued because of their exposure to international best practices that can be employed in Canada. There are other advantages as well. "There is always a benefit to visiting a country, working next to professionals and developing those relationships, so that when they return to Canada they can just pick up the phone and talk to the person they just worked with for six months," said Mr. Paron. "That gives a better service to our clients overall."

International experience is considered especially important at a time when the Canadian accounting profession is moving to adopt international reporting standards.

To prepare itself for the transition, KPMG is moving some of its accountants abroad to gain the experience they will need in dealing with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs). "We have people on assignment in Australia and the United Kingdom who were sent abroad specifically to get the IFRSs experience and share that knowledge within the Canadian firm," said Mr. Paron.

KPMG has developed a "Global Opportunities Program" to facilitate the process of sending Canadian recruits abroad and bringing internationally trained accountants to Canada. "We have a global opportunities team that

will work with that individual to make sure that they want to go and are going to a place that makes sense," said Mr. Paron.

The program deals with travel logistics, moving expenses and matching the employee with someone in the country in which they are working. "It is a bit like a buddy system," said Mr. Paron. "We want to make sure they have someone there to help them get acclimatized to the culture and the office that they are moving to. We also make sure we keep in touch with the employee when they are abroad."

Mindful of the potential difficulties, KPMG has also established procedures to help internationally trained accountants working in Canada.

"When someone comes from another country and there are language issues, we try to make sure there are online facilities to help them to learn English in a business context," Mr. Paron said. "If we have hired 10 people from South Africa and they are all working in the Toronto office, we want to make sure that those 10 people are connecting and able to share experiences."

Mr. Paron says KPMG's international recruiting efforts are paying off in the form of double-digit revenue growth – during the last five years – in the firm's U.S. tax service practice. "In that practice, many of the employees are U.S.-trained CPAs," he said.

Nevertheless, human resources officials like Mr. Paron are well aware that the competition for accountants with international experience is likely to increase in the next few years.

"A lot of countries that had been a source of talent over the years are facing their own challenges and are actually trying to repatriate a lot of people who left," he said.

It means that Canadian accounting firms will likely have to redouble their efforts to acquire and keep the talent this country needs to compete internationally. □