

From LinkedIn to TikTok: How newcomers are using social media to succeed in Canada

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Data from a 2022 survey by CBC's Media Technology Monitor (MTM) indicates that nearly half (42%) of surveyed "newcomers who have consumed news within the last month cited social media as their go-to news source." According to the survey, over three-in-ten (31%) Canadian newcomers who use social media use "six or more platforms." Put simply, social media is a significant part of the lived experience for many Canadian newcomers. From finding job opportunities and building a support network to learning about Canadian culture and staying connected with loved ones back home, social media offers a wide range of benefits to new Canadian immigrants. There are many ways social media can help new immigrants succeed, both before and after they arrive in Canada.

Building a strong personal brand

In 2022, 256,000 permanent residents landed in Canada through economic immigration streams. As defined by the Canadian government, this immigration category focuses on choosing "skilled immigrants who are able to settle in Canada and contribute to [the] economy." This contribution occurs, largely, because these immigrants arrive and find employment in Canada, which allows them to contribute to the economy by then spending money on goods and services. It is vital that immigrants coming to Canada work hard to establish a strong personal brand, as doing so will help them during the job search and hiring process. Having an active social media presence means job seekers will be better able to market themselves and be accessible to recruiters or hiring professionals looking for an individual with their skills, qualifications, and expertise. In addition, as a job seeker looking for a good place to work, immigrants (and Canadians alike) can also get to know companies (values, culture, day-to-day activities) via their various social channels. Social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter can be imperative in this journey, as many employers perform online background checks to analyze an individual's online presence when considering candidates for a job position. In fact, nearly two-thirds (65%) of Canadian companies use social media as a means of screening applicants, and 64% of companies find this screening method effective. This is according to a survey by The Harris Poll published in January this year. More than 40% of surveyed employers who used social media for candidate screening "report finding content on a job candidate's social media that caused the hiring manager not to employ them."

Here are three tips for establishing a strong, positive online presence:

Be active and engaging: Part of creating a positive online persona is engagement. Find others in your field, experts in your industry, and regularly comment and engage with their content. **Share relevant and informative content:** Sharing informative and relevant content related to your industry can help demonstrate your expertise and passion for your work to potential employers. **Keep your content clean and professional:** Proofread your posts and captions, use a professional headshot as your profile picture, and avoid mixing personal content with professional content.

Social media as a tool for employment opportunities

Once newcomers establish a strong personal brand, social media can be used as a tool for finding employment opportunities. According to a study by Toronto Metropolitan University, "those that use social media are 3.5 times more likely to be employed than those that use traditional media." Using Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, newcomers to Canada can connect with potential employers, research companies, and learn about job opportunities. In fact, Twitter and LinkedIn can be used to follow companies and connect with individuals in industries/professions of interest. In particular, LinkedIn can also be leveraged by newcomers to ask questions of their connections, find helpful career resources and engage in conversation around professional topics of interest. Connections made through this platform may ultimately help newcomers to Canada build relationships and expose them to job prospects they may not otherwise get. That is a significant reason why LinkedIn has become an increasingly popular job searching platform. In fact, 2023 data from social media management platform Hootsuite indicates that 52 million people use the platform to search for jobs each week. Every second, 101 job applications are submitted on LinkedIn globally and eight people are hired through LinkedIn every minute.

Building a support network by connecting with other newcomers

Apart from arriving in Canada and establishing a professional life, immigrants can use social media to connect with others and form a support network, helping them become more comfortable with life outside of work. In other words, newcomers to Canada can use features available on traditional platforms like Facebook (groups) to find others in a similar situation as them. Examples of Facebook groups to join include "neighbourhood" groups, specific to an immigrant's local community. These groups are often where people share information about community events, a good way for newcomers to connect with other locals and build a support network, potentially leading to new friendships and opportunities. Other examples of platforms that are known for community-building are LinkedIn and Reddit, where users can connect and form bonds with others over shared experiences and challenges. Discussion forums like the CanadaVisa Forum also exist for newcomers to connect and discuss their questions, concerns and milestones throughout the immigration journey, both after they land and settle in Canada as well as before they arrive in this country.

Embracing Canadian culture and enhancing the Canadian experience

New immigrants to Canada can also use social media to discover cultural events and activities, stay informed about Canadian news and trends, learn about Canadian culture, and enhance their overall experience in Canada. Twitter, for instance, allows users to stay informed about what's happening across Canada. Following news outlets, journalists, and bloggers on Twitter also allows newcomers to participate in discussions on current events, just like over 7 million Canadians already do.

Here are other ways to use social media to become more connected with Canadian culture:

Use Instagram or TikTok to follow Canadian influencers who share insights and perspectives on Canadian culture

Subscribe to channels by Canadian travel vloggers or lifestyle influencers on YouTube for inspiration and ideas on how to get more involved with events and develop a social life in Canada. Influencers, whether they are newcomers themselves or they were born in Canada, will share ideas on activities to experience, places to visit, foods to try and more. Influencers who are newcomers themselves often also share things that helped them get settled or feel at home when they first came to Canada. Vloggers, meanwhile, often take their viewers on a journey through video, including to different parts of this country. This can help newcomers experience areas of Canada that they may not know about and learn about the general way of life in different Canadian communities.

Staying connected with friends and family back home

While it is crucial for immigrants to embrace their new environment, it is also important that newcomers to Canada do not completely lose touch with the friends and family they may be leaving in their home country. The power of social media makes staying in touch with friends and family back home easier and more accessible than ever before. In addition to traditional video conferencing tools such as Skype and Zoom, social media platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook Messenger and Instagram offer a range of inexpensive international communication options. From free messaging to voice and video calling, these platforms provide newcomers to Canada with an easier way to stay connected with those back home no matter where they are in the world. Additionally, many social media applications enable users to share updates and photos, giving family and friends another way to stay connected with the newcomer's life in Canada and vice versa.