

the  
**Orange  
Book**  
of Success



for Tourism & Hospitality Students  
*Freshly-squeezed career planning advice*





## Acknowledgements

This book was inspired by Greg Vandeborne, a 2007 Bachelor of Tourism Management graduate (Capilano University), who wrote a paper with career planning tips and shared it with LinkBC. The resulting Orange Book coupled Greg's work with the results from a survey of hundreds of graduates and employers. The final handbook was coordinated by LinkBC, and supported by go2.

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In 2011 the book was upgraded using additional employer input. This is the version you have in your hands. It's the sister volume to the *Orange Book for Tourism Employers*, a best practice guide helping to ensure students have meaningful, quality workplace experiences.

The development of this project was managed by Morgan Westcott at LinkBC, a hub for colleges and universities offering tourism and related programs throughout BC and the Yukon. Visit [www.linkbc.ca](http://www.linkbc.ca) for more information.

The Orange Book series is supported by go2, a non-profit society responsible for coordinating the BC tourism industry's Human Resource Action Plan.

“ I think we will always have employees who have come from these programs—they have a terrific reputation. ”

*Rick Antonson, President & CEO, Tourism Vancouver*



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# How to Use This Guidebook

This guide distils information from a province-wide survey of employers, graduates, and educators into career planning advice for students. This “freshly squeezed” information can help you make a smooth transition from the academic environment to the professional world. As you work through the book it’s unlikely you’ll find any one formula to ensure success. It’s up to you to test the ideas and decide how they can be customized to work for you. You’ll find recaps throughout the book in the form of:



**Freshly-Squeezed:** Juicy ideas and helpful tips from employers, graduates, and educators.



**Self-Check:** Exercises to help you explore your current strengths, and move your career planning process forward.

## Note:

While BC colleges and universities offer a diverse range of programs including tourism & hospitality management, outdoor recreation and adventure tourism, and culinary arts, this book uses “tourism programs” as the umbrella term for all disciplines.

The book is based on five key building blocks, developed based on feedback from our survey.

## The 5 Building Blocks for a Successful Tourism Career:

### 1. Education

*Taking full advantage of the ways your industry-related education can help foster career development and future success.*

### 2. Experience

*Participating in ‘real world’ learning to complement your studies.*

### 3. Career Planning

*Developing a vision, establishing goals, and creating a strategy for reaching them.*

### 4. Networking

*Understanding the value of networking and creating opportunities to connect with your peers and industry leaders.*

### 5. Positive Attitude & Commitment

*Demonstrating initiative and a passion for the industry. Staying upbeat and focused, no matter what challenges you face.*

The following sections describe each building block in more detail.



# 1. Education

Congratulations! You've chosen to study tourism at a BC college or university. This is a key step forward in your career. But now that you're here, you might be wondering...

## How much do employers value an industry-specific credential?

The answer is: quite a bit! In our province-wide study, we found that appreciation for tourism credentials is on the rise. One employer stated "it's an incredible strength...now more than ever. People who have been through college or university have the maturity, professionalism, and know-how to succeed." Several employers said they'd give preference to applicants with tourism credentials versus generic business or arts backgrounds.

Graduates themselves stated their credential was important in helping them succeed, especially as "roles get more challenging and more specific...a relevant education is seen to provide more of a benefit."

## What are the specific benefits of obtaining a tourism credential?

Most graduates and employers surveyed stated benefits including:

- *Personal and professional development*
- *Increased career options*
- *More confidence in a real work setting*

One graduate shared, "My eyes were opened to other career opportunities such as contract work with DMOs and consulting roles with government—now I can see the application of tourism is broader than it first appeared."



## Freshly Squeezed:

Make the most of your time at school (participate, join, engage, and be a good classmate), and you'll be well-positioned for a promising future!

Most grads felt their program led to industry success because they actively participated in their education. It was their *engagement*, while in school, that was critical. So you might be wondering ...

## How do I make the most of my program?

Graduates in our survey reported four major areas where you can take action, while still in school, to help ensure success. These are to:

**1. Actively participate in all of your classes.** You might struggle with accounting, economics, or communications (for example) and start to wonder "why are they making us take this stuff?" Many other grads have walked in your shoes, only to find out just how useful this knowledge proves to be in the workplace. They advise seeking extra help through tutors, study groups, and online support, so key concepts sink in.

**2. Join student associations and industry associations as appropriate.** Figure out a commitment level that works for you, and make connections both on and off campus. Even if you can only attend one or two events a year, this will help you move forward, faster.

**3. Whenever you can, have one-on-one time with your instructor.** Your instructors are valuable industry contacts, who can also help assess your career readiness. They can see your blind spots, and will let you know what personal or professional areas you can be working on to become more employment ready. That, and did we mention they're connected to the industry?

**4. Remember: your fellow students will soon be your industry network.** Your professional reputation starts today. Not only do peer groups help each other find meaningful work after graduation, they also tend to steer clear of 'slacker' or 'bossy' peers in the future. Get to know your classmates, sit up and listen in class, and be a productive team member. This alone could make the difference in the degree of your future success.

Your education is the foundation for a tourism career. But it's only the first step, and the next part is critical. That's because in tourism, *experience is king*.

## 2. Experience

While most employers are looking for post-secondary grads, they all agree experience is paramount. Graduates with little or no tourism experience will find that no matter what credential they have, they will have to start at the bottom. So it's important that while you advance academically you progress with real-world work at the same time.

### What difference does experience make?

In short: experience can make all the difference. Here's a real example of a management-level position where the employer would prefer a diploma or a degree grad, but it's the level of experience that will likely affect the outcome:



#### Guest Services Manager, Mountain Resort (Full Time)

*Reporting to the Sales & Marketing Director, this role will be responsible for ensuring a smooth, profitable operation while providing unparalleled employee and guest experiences.*

#### Sample Accountabilities:

- Greet and assist guests in a manner that models exemplary conduct to other employees
- Ensure all areas are opened and closed at appropriate times
- Monitor interactions of agents and guests to ensure quality control
- Demonstrate financial growth through development and execution of planning and budgeting
- Hire, train, motivate and effectively manage employees
- Create a service and sales focused culture to exceed guest and employee expectations
- Create, plan and develop guest programming plan including events
- Distribute in-resort marketing materials to all departments and partners

#### Qualifications:

- Minimum 3 years **experience** in a management capacity within a resort operation
- **Experience** in sales including growth strategies and distribution channel management
- Proven guest service skills
- Demonstrated ability to lead and direct a team of employees
- Solid negotiation, conflict resolution and people management skills
- Excellent time management and prioritizing skills
- Previous business planning, analysis and financial management **experience** required
- Proficient user of Windows and Microsoft operating and office platforms
- Degree or Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality or related discipline an asset

As you can see, management-level positions require 2 - 4 years of industry experience. Coincidentally, that's the average length of time most people take to complete their tourism programs! So while you're still in school, our survey participants recommended you take the following steps:

1. Determine which areas of the industry are of interest to you.
2. Find out what qualifications are needed.
3. Start getting experience today through a combination of:
  - *Program-related work experience (co-op, internship, practicum)*
  - *School projects with industry clients*
  - *Volunteering*
  - *Career Fairs*
  - *Front-line and/or part-time work in the tourism industry (or a 'mirror industry' that involves sales and front-counter experience)*
  - *Attending industry events and participating in industry-sponsored contests (Project Change, Case Competition, Student-Industry Rendezvous)*

It may be scary to realize that school is only part of the puzzle—most tourism programs are hard enough as it is! With some careful planning, however, you can help move your education and experience portfolios forward and be ready for a great job come graduation day. And that's where career planning comes in.



## Freshly Squeezed:

Education vs. experience – it's about the right blend. An A+ average may feel good, and look good (and help with scholarships!), but at the end of the day you have to prove to employers you've been on the front lines and understand the industry first-hand. Make sure you balance time at school with time at work, be it volunteer, paid, or project-related. It'll pay off come graduation day.

# 3. Career Planning

By now it should be clear that you probably won't stumble into your dream job the day you graduate. But if you set some goals, and stick to your plan, you can find the right opportunity. Because BC's tourism industry is growing, and experienced industry leaders are starting to retire, you'll be amazed at how quickly you're able to move up once you get your foot in the door. That said, at this point you might be wondering:

### Where do I start?

Never fear—many students have been here! Based on our survey, we developed the following career planning process, which consists of:

1. Determining your sub-sector
2. Scanning job postings
3. Setting your goals
4. Creating your toolkit
5. Continuous improvement

### 1. Determine your subsector.

The following chart helps carve up tourism into its various components (accommodations, food and beverage, recreation & entertainment, transportation, and travel services). Have a look and see what areas appeal the most to you:

Industry	Types of Business	Career Opportunities
Accommodations	Hotels, Bed & Breakfasts, Campgrounds, Motels, Lodges, Resorts, Time-share Facilities	Chief Concierge, Director of Finance, Front Desk Manager, Housekeeping Supervisor, Human Resources Manager, Reservations Manager, Director of Sales & Marketing
Food & Beverage Services	Catering Operations, Cafes, Dining Rooms, Fast Food Outlets, Pubs, Lounges, Night Clubs, Restaurants	Banquets Manager, Bar or Night Club Manager, Catering Manager, Chef, Restaurant Supervisor or Manager, Director of Purchasing, Public Relations Manager
Recreation & Entertainment	Aboriginal Tourism Attractions, Casinos, Ecotourism Operations, Fishing Areas, Galleries, Golf Courses, Heritage and Historical Sites, Hunting Facilities, Parks, Museums, Ski Resorts, Theatres	Amusement Park Supervisor, General Manager (Attractions), Guest Services Supervisor, Interpretive Specialist, Marina Manager, Park Interpreter, Park Warden, Retail Shift Supervisor, Sports Instructor, Ski Operations Manager, River Rafting Company Owner/Operator
Transportation	Airlines, Bus Tour Companies, Cruise Ships, Ferries, Rail & Rental Car Companies	Airport Manager, Cruise Retail Operations Manager, Customer Service Supervisor, In-flight Service Manager, Reservations Manager, Regional Manager
Travel Services	Associations, Consultants, Destination Marketing Organizations, Government, Tour Companies, Travel Agencies, Visitor Information Centres	Fundraising Consultant, Information Technology Specialist, Meeting Planner, Package Tour Coordinator, Sales Manager, Educator or Trainer, Travel Writer, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Visitor Information Centre Manager



## Self-Check:

The areas of tourism I'm most interested in working in are: \_\_\_\_\_  
*ex: Recreation & Entertainment*

The types of businesses I'd like to work in are: \_\_\_\_\_  
*ex: Heritage Attractions, Festivals & Events*

### 2. Scan job postings.

As we've covered, the *level* of position you're qualified for when you graduate depends mostly on the work you've done (either on your own or through a work experience course). The *type* of job depends on availability within that sub-sector. For instance, food and beverage jobs account for half of tourism employment, followed by accommodation. If you want to work in the other sectors, there will be more competition for positions. Nothing wrong with competition! It just makes sense to know what you're up against.

Visit the following websites to learn more about current tourism job postings:

**go2 job board:** [www.go2hr.ca/jobboard.aspx](http://www.go2hr.ca/jobboard.aspx)

**HCareers:** [www.hcareers.com](http://www.hcareers.com)

**Raisin Jobs (Food & Beverage):** [www.raisinjobs.com](http://www.raisinjobs.com)

**Discover Tourism:** [www.discovertourism.ca](http://www.discovertourism.ca)

You can also ask your instructors and other on-campus support staff for past and current postings they have on file.



## Self-Check:

Surf the sites listed above and get a sense of what roles you're interested in, and what is required to compete for those positions:

**Role:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*ex: Guest Service Manager*

*Experience Required:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Role:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Experience Required:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

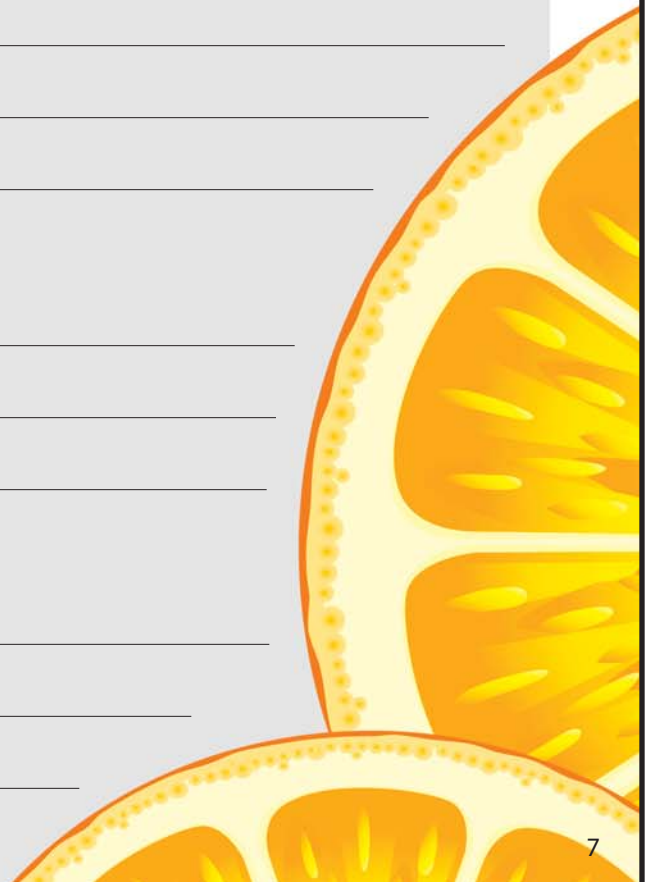
\_\_\_\_\_

**Role:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Experience Required:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



### 3. Set your goals and create an action plan.

A. Picking your favourite of the positions you listed previously, create a statement of where you'd like to be at graduation. Include position title, company type, location, wage, and any other information you can think of. If you still aren't sure what you'd like to do, pick something to work with for now. You can always come back and change this later.

*Example: When I graduate, I'd like to be working full-time as a Catering Coordinator in the banquet department of a major hotel in Kelowna. I'd like to earn a minimum of \$15 per hour.*

B. Identify the skills you will need for that position, and write down the gaps you find:

*I will need:* \_\_\_\_\_  
*ex: I will need to have solid accounting and project management skills, and front-line experience working at a hotel*

*I am missing:* \_\_\_\_\_  
*ex: events experience, front-line hotel experience*

C. Identify the concrete steps you'll take to close the gap between your current experience level, and what is required. This is your action plan:

*Action:* \_\_\_\_\_  
*ex: keep paying attention in accounting class and earn over a B on the final*

*Action:* \_\_\_\_\_  
*ex: volunteer at 2 special events by the end of the year*

*Action:* \_\_\_\_\_  
*ex: get a part-time front-line job at a hotel before the end of semester*

Check your goals and action plan against the smart test: are these Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound? If so, great! If not, go back and jot down any missing pieces that are important to you.



## Freshly Squeezed:

Try an Informational Interview! An informational interview is a fancy way of asking someone to chat. This is a great way to find out everything you want to know about a prospective employer or career. Invite someone out for coffee, or ask for a short meeting in their office. Find out what their typical day is like, what the salary range is, what they like and dislike about the position. Keep it light (don't go fishing for a job), dress professionally, be on time, and don't forget a thank-you note!



### 4. Create your toolkit.

Your toolkit is a set of resources that includes a cover letter, resume, contact information, interview style, and online presence. Keeping your toolkit up-to-date will ensure you're employable and ready to seize any opportunity that comes your way.

#### Tool #1 - Your Resume

In our survey we learned that most students (even top ones!) need resume help. Here's what employers want to see:

- **A customized resume for each position.** Always include an objective statement. Are you looking for a summer job to gain experience? A front-line position that will transition to supervisory experience? Make sure you state this up front!
- **A balance of industry experience and education.** Don't forget volunteer, co-op, and industry project work counts as experience.
- **Skills!** Scan this list to see which of these skills apply to you (taken from real job postings), circle them, and share these in

your resume: Adaptability, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Critical Thinking, Financial Acumen, Leadership, Motivating Others, Problem Solving, Service Orientation, and Teambuilding. Be honest, and try and come up with one or two of your own!

- **Format the resume as a PDF** (readable on all computers) unless otherwise stated (in which case, follow the instructions to the letter).
- **Check, check, check** your spelling and give it to someone else to read and check.

#### Tool #2 - Your Cover Letter

A cover letter connects the dots on your resume, highlights experiences most relevant to the position, and expands on your objectives. Illustrate how you will contribute to the company, and how the position fits your career goals.

#### Tool #3 - Your Contact Info

Make sure the phone number listed on all your materials has a professional-sounding voicemail message (don't record it at the bar, or on the bus), and an appropriate email address (no-one wants to follow up with partyboy69@gmail.com!).

#### Tool #4 - Your Interview Swagger

Before you get called in for an interview, make sure you're ready for the following:

1. **Professional appearance.** Whether you're applying at a four-star hotel, or a family-owned kayak business, dressing up for

an interview is the number one way to show your commitment to the position. This includes: business attire (Google for suggestions), not wearing scents (some people are allergic), neat hair and nails, removing facial piercings or replacing with studs, and wearing freshly-polished shoes.

2. **Practice interview demeanour.** This includes: comfortable eye contact, curbing nervous habits (nail biting, hair tugging), speaking up. If you have any doubts about the way you present yourself, ask an instructor or peer to run through a mock interview and give you tips.

3. **Prepare answers to generic questions** (ones most interviewers would ask). Be able to articulate at least three personal strengths, three personal weaknesses (and how you are working to improve in these areas), and study your resume back to front. Give examples of situations in the past where you've faced challenges, and overcome them. Always stay positive about colleagues and past employment.

4. **Research the company and prepare questions for the interviewer.** Once you've landed a meeting, visit the company online and come up with a short list of questions about the position, and the organization. If you can find the answer online, don't ask it! If you ask "obvious" generic questions, your interviewers will wonder whether you've done your homework beforehand. Instead, look for gaps like background on the company's culture and opportunities for advancement. Try not to ask about salary or benefits until you've been offered a position.



## Tool #5 - Your Online Brand

When students first started hanging out online, our survey respondents offered the following advice: “Don’t make a bad impression—take down pictures of partying, don’t tweet inappropriately, and make your profiles private.”



While this advice still stands, today’s students have to take it one step further. A lot of career advancement starts online, so don’t just be “not bad” online. Be great!

Your online presence is an important branding tool. Prospective employers are going to Google your name. Who do you want to be? Here are examples of ways students are branding themselves online:

- A student hoping for work at Whistler Blackcomb changed her facebook profile picture to a shot of herself taking a jump on her snowboard. She cleaned up all her photo albums (read: no partying) and sprinkled in shots of herself enjoying wholesome downtime at the resort.
- A graduate interested in festivals started a Wordpress blog highlighting his events experiences—including a copy of his resume, and postings (with pictures) about each event he’d volunteered or worked at. He placed a link to the blog in a PDF of his resume so employers could access it in one click.
- A small group of students created detailed professional profiles on LinkedIn, and started a discussion called “Tourism Students Ready for Work”, inviting industry connections to the conversation.

Whatever ideas you come up with, remember that your online reputation is critical as you transition from student to professional.



## 5. “Move on Up” with continuous improvement

There’s a lot to do between now and graduation. But once you’re on your way, consider ways you can push yourself to the next career level, which may include:

- Job-specific training
- Professional development courses
- Attending conferences
- Mentoring and coaching opportunities
- Succession planning and cross-training
- Tuition reimbursement programs
- Leadership & personal development programs
- A new level of education (bachelors degree, masters degree)

If you are seeking personal and professional growth from a prospective employer, ask questions during your interview to find out what support is offered for additional development.

Now that you’ve set your career goals, you might see a catch-22 in that you need experience to move forward, and you can’t get that experience unless you have the right job. Our survey uncovered a proven way to overcome this catch-22: through networking.



## Freshly Squeezed:

Don’t worry if you don’t have it all figured out! If you’re unsure about your goals after graduation, use your time as a student to discover and experiment. Set up informational interviews with instructors, program alumni, and employers to explore your interests. Refine your career vision as you learn more about the industry, and yourself.

## 4. Networking

Tourism and hospitality careers are fundamentally about people. So it makes sense that one of the greatest resources for you as you begin your career is networking: connecting with people who can assist with your career goals.

### How can I build my tourism network?

In the survey we sent out in preparation for this guide, the majority of graduates networked with industry representatives, family, and friends, describing them as “extremely useful” in transitioning to the workplace.



### Freshly Squeezed:

Networking is a process of building quality, long-term relationships! It is not a contest to collect the most business cards, shake the most hands, or meet the most people. Quality is more important than quantity in the world of networking.

By now you’re probably connected with other professionals and your peers online. But most employers surveyed identified face-to-face interaction as the most effective and desired. In these encounters students “gain exposure, create awareness, demonstrate potential abilities to employers, and develop a good impression.”

One of the best networking connections current students can make is with alumni. Past graduates are a great source for networking and building employment awareness for current students. As one coordinator stated, “many of our grads working in the industry come back to hire more grads from the program because they know what talent it can produce.”



### Self-Check:

Can you think of ways to facilitate “face-to-face” interactions between you and potential employers?



### Self-Check:

How many program alumni or industry contacts do you know? Who should you get back in touch with today?

If you don’t know any alumni, how else might you connect with recent graduates of your program now working in industry? How might your program coordinator/instructors help with this?

### What groups can I join?

Interested in meeting alumni and potential employers? Check out these tourism industry networks:

- Meeting Professionals International BC Chapter: [www.mpibchapter.com](http://www.mpibchapter.com)
- Professional Conference Management Association Canada West Chapter: [www.pcma.org/Chapters/Canada-West.htm](http://www.pcma.org/Chapters/Canada-West.htm)
- SKAL International Vancouver Club: [www.vancouverskal.org](http://www.vancouverskal.org)
- Vancouver AM Tourism Association: [www.vancouveram.ca](http://www.vancouveram.ca)
- Women In Tourism International Alliance: [www.witia.org](http://www.witia.org)



### Freshly Squeezed:

Looking to hook up with like-minded people? Try an internet search for your hobby or industry passion, combined with the words “association” and “BC”. For instance “Mountain Bike” + “Association” + “BC” yields the Mountain Bike Tourism Association of BC. A little creative searching, and you could find the perfect group for volunteering, networking, and even potential jobs!

Now that you know where to meet tourism professionals, you might be wondering:

### What do I talk about?

The first step is to be able to talk about you. To be prepared, most tourism students like to have an elevator pitch. This is a 20–30 second talk (about the length of an elevator ride) to use when you meet someone new.



## Self-Check: Write an Elevator Pitch

What career-focused skills do you possess? With each skill, provide an example or accomplishment that clearly demonstrates you possess each skill mentioned.

1. Skill \_\_\_\_\_

Accomplishment \_\_\_\_\_

2. Skill \_\_\_\_\_

Accomplishment \_\_\_\_\_

Next, write down a few sentences to properly convey your skills, accomplishments, history and plans for the future. Reveal something about yourself to get people's attention, and say what you are hoping to do in the near future. If possible, end it with a question to get the conversation flowing.

**Here's an example:** *"I live to ski, so I'm taking an Outdoor Recreation Diploma, and working at Whistler every winter. I've been everything from a liftie to a guest services agent! My long-term goal is to help develop an up-and-coming resort. Have you heard about the new developments in Revelstoke and Fernie?"*

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Of course, a conversation isn't just about you! It pays to stay on top of current industry information and trends.

### How can I stay "In the Know"?

Consider signing up for the following free newsletters and groups to ensure you're ready for topical industry-related conversations:

#### HR and Career News:

go2 Move On Up Newsletter (for job seekers): subscribe at [www.go2hr.ca/Profile/tabid/66/Default.aspx](http://www.go2hr.ca/Profile/tabid/66/Default.aspx)

LinkBC Newsletter: visit [www.linkbc.ca](http://www.linkbc.ca) (top right)

#### Industry News:

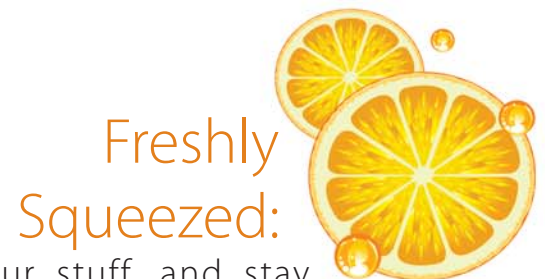
Canadian Tourism Commission News:  
<http://mediacentre.canada.travel/news>

Tourism British Columbia Newsletter: send an email to [TourismBrief@TourismBC.com](mailto:TourismBrief@TourismBC.com)

And don't forget to scan your local paper, listen to the radio, follow companies on twitter, watch the evening news ... however you get your information, keep an ear out for news related to your chosen field within tourism.

Once you've developed your elevator pitch, go back to your resume and cover letter to make sure you're delivering a consistent message to prospective employers. Keep updating your toolkit as you meet more industry leaders and further develop your career path. You'll be able to put your best foot forward whether on paper, in person, or online.

You're almost ready to jump start your career! Previous graduates have acknowledged that transitioning to the workforce can be a challenge, but this is a challenge you can face head on. This is where attitude makes a difference.



## Freshly Squeezed:

Know your stuff, and stay connected. Subscribe to online message services and social networking groups.

# 5. Attitude

By now it should be clear that *you* have to be the driving force in creating your dream career in the industry. It's no surprise that in our survey, the top characteristics sought by employers are:

- A positive attitude
- Commitment or passion for the work
- A willingness to learn

Other characteristics you'll need include: a strong work ethic, integrity, enthusiasm, detail-orientation, and professionalism.

Your hard work will only pay off if you demonstrate commitment to the industry and a positive attitude. The more you are willing to contribute and compromise in the beginning, the more quickly you'll be presented with career-advancing opportunities. Compromise could mean relocating to a resort town desperate

for young professionals, or having the patience to move up in a large company over a number of years (rather than quit and start with a new company every couple of years).

It can also mean rounding out your skill set in departments or fields you're not as passionate about, but that complement the main sector you're interested in. This could include working in housekeeping at a hotel even though you'd prefer to work in the front office, or working as a server as you plan to become a catering coordinator. Demonstrating your dedication to the industry early on will help build your confidence and ensure you're positioned for a long and prosperous career.

But there is a difference between *knowing* you have what it takes (based on experience and working your way up) and *thinking* you have what it takes based on what you've learned in school.

## arrogance vs confidence

What's the difference?

Sometimes we hear from employers who are impressed with a prospective employee, only to have them display over-confidence (i.e.: arrogance) when they start the job. "Nobody wants to be told the way they work is outdated or wrong" says one employer, "especially from someone with little experience." Employers repeatedly stated they prefer students bring their fresh ideas and enthusiasm, tempered with respect for the knowledge and experience of the team they are joining.

On the other hand, many employers find students new to the field are "intimidated, shy and nervous around other staff and customers." If you think this might be an issue for you, consider the following:

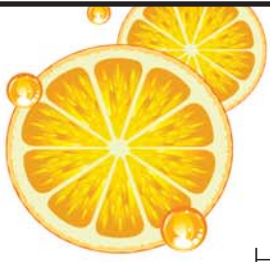
- Make sure you have front-line experience prior to graduation, and tell your boss you want to work on building your confidence with strangers and co-workers. They'll make it happen for you!

- Join a club or take a workshop like ToastMasters to learn how to speak confidently in front of a group.

- List five great things about you as an employee and teammate. Say these to yourself in the mirror every morning. It may feel silly at first, but it's a proven technique employed by successful businesspeople the world over.

By keeping your attitude in balance, you'll be able to make the most of your opportunity.





## Freshly Squeezed:

Hundreds of BC tourism graduates are now in management and leadership positions throughout our industry. Students should be inspired by this, but make sure they have realistic expectations about the first few years after they graduate. Great things do not get accomplished in a moment's time, but are the sum total of all decisions and actions taken over the long haul.



### **How will I stay motivated?**

Graduates consistently reported two key factors keep them working in tourism. The first is satisfaction from interactions with people, including fellow employees, employers, and customers. The second is their passion for our industry. One graduate stated “the longer I work in tourism, the more skills I develop and the jobs become more diverse and satisfying.” Many said that the “fun environment” and perks including professional recognition and travel opportunities were also important factors in job satisfaction. One recent graduate summarized their reason for staying is “the nature of the industry: fun, dynamic, global, and progressive.”

### **What can I expect in the transition years after graduation?**

Some students get their “dream job” right after graduation, but for most, there is a period of adjustment and initial career steps they go through before this goal is reached. For some, frustration may set in as they are left to “settle for” front-line positions, perceived to be obtainable with or without their credential. As a result, they may start to question the usefulness of their time and effort spent towards obtaining their diploma or degree.

Studies have shown high attrition of tourism and hospitality graduates after a few years in the tourism workforce. But our *Connecting Industry to Tourism & Hospitality Graduates Study* indicated there are many promising opportunities for tourism graduates, as long as they're willing to take control of their career destiny!

With your education, experience, some planning, quality relationships with people in industry, and the right attitude, you will Move On Up in your tourism career before you know it.

We hope this book has given you a realistic picture of the road ahead, and helped you take charge of your career destiny. Best of luck in your future endeavours!

# The Last Word: from Alumni to Current Students

This section presents feedback and advice from recent graduates who were in your shoes just a short while ago, now working in the industry. It's a positive picture!



## Dylan Soo

Director of Accommodations  
Northern Vision Developments

*Class of 2003, Hospitality Management  
Diploma, Vancouver Community College;*

*Class of 2009, Master of Arts in International Hotel Management,  
Royal Roads University*

I have been in the industry for 14 years now and have seen a dramatic shift in attitudes over this time. I had luck on my side as my first position was on the Front Desk of a small hotel. I ended up working for the company for five years, with three of these in Night Audit. I managed to get into school without an application, because the department head at the time saw my goals and where I wanted to be in this industry—he wrote a letter, and I was in!

When I graduated with my diploma, I really wanted to take the next step and move into management. I realized that it was

not going to happen quickly by staying in the city, so I moved to Tofino and the Wickaninnish Inn. In the 3 1/2 years I was there, I worked in 6 different positions learning as much as I could about the business.

This experience helped me get into a Masters program and I was named part of the pre-opening team of the Sidney Pier Hotel as the Front Office Manager. Could I have been a Front Office Manager sooner? Of course, but then I wouldn't have had the opportunities to learn other skill sets to make me more well-rounded. You don't have to take 10 years to become a senior manager at a hotel but you have to be patient. It may take half that time depending on the choices you make.

The moral of the story? I hear "I have a passion for the industry" all the time but to me they are just words. I pay attention to how much someone is willing to sacrifice in order to move forward. Are you willing to take a risk and move away from home in order to pursue positions of opportunity? Are you willing to take one step back to take two steps forward? Be proactive and seek out industry leaders (and not just hotels—think about DMOs, go2, and LinkBC). Learn from them, and remember that in order to become a leader, you must master all of the basics first.



## Joseph Cooke

Division Head: Food & Beverage Manager  
ShangriLa Hotel Vancouver

*Class of 2006, Bachelor of Tourism  
Management, Capilano University*

Face it, you have basically no experience, no credibility, no career equity and no way of making predictions—don't try to hide this. One of the best virtues I have learned to develop is to be humble. I would never advise the "fake it 'til you make it" tactic that many young people use today. Instead, I suggest being honest with the people that you have the opportunity to talk to. Let them know that you have a kick-ass attitude and a work ethic that should be bottled and sold. Always ask questions that help clarify your thoughts and never be afraid

to ask for assistance. Just because you are graduating from college or university doesn't mean you have left the classroom. You will find that the learning has only just begun. I found in college I learned *how* to learn and in the business world, I have learned *what* to learn.

It is a confusing transition to move from education to professionalism. Be committed to the process. Work to achieve success in every single thing that you do, no matter how small or insignificant you think it may be. Getting used to this will pay off. You will hit many challenges—take them with grace and commitment. And no matter what happens or how difficult it may get, never ever ever give up.

Keep your head up, be positive and remain committed.



### Amber Crofts

Tourism Development Officer  
BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and  
Innovation

*Class of 2005, Bachelor of Tourism  
Management, Vancouver Island University; Class of 2011, Master  
of Arts in Tourism Management, Royal Roads University*

**“Experience is Key”:** When I graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Tourism Management I thought the world would be my oyster. I expected to find work quickly and easily with my new found education. However, that wasn’t necessarily the case. Experience goes a long, long way in a job interview. Employers want to see a combination of education and experience, with the latter in my view having much more weight than education.

My advice: get as much tourism/hospitality related experience as you possibly can. Take a entry level position to gain the experience you need, volunteer, and do a bit of job hopping

(within reason). Perfecting your interview skills is a must, and always look for new opportunities; before you know it you’ll have reached your goal! Don’t be put off by having to start at the bottom of the ladder—we all have to start somewhere. But with that said, apply for jobs that you think you may not be eligible for and be confident in your abilities—who knows, you may be pleasantly surprised!

**“Build and Maintain Relationships with your Professors”:** The faculty at your institution are your best connections to the industry. Who else knows your personality and the quality of your work better than your professors? Being able to maintain the relationships I formed with my instructors has been one of the most strategic things I have done to assist in my career development. A good track record and a healthy relationship with one of your professors can go a long way toward a positive reference!

**“Breathe and enjoy your last year”:** You’ll be out of school and into the real world before you know it.



### Heather Boyd

Manager, Sector Development and  
Marketing Programs, Tourism BC /  
Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation

*Class of 2002, Diploma of Hotel and  
Restaurant Management, Camosun College; Class of 2011, Masters  
of Arts in Tourism Management, Royal Roads University*

From the time I was 17 years old I was certain I wanted to work in British Columbia’s Tourism industry. The excitement and endless opportunities were what first caught my attention; however, I knew that in order to excel professionally within the industry I needed to further my post-secondary education. I have been fortunate enough to be a part of excellent programs both at Camosun College and Royal Roads University which have helped me to secure a job that I love at Tourism British Columbia. I must admit, however, that the transition from school to the “real world” was challenging for me. I knew how

to be a student but was uncertain about my abilities professionally. Looking back now I wish that someone would have stressed to me the following:

**“The importance of networking”:** Attend all possible networking events and use those connections made to assist you in your career search—the tourism industry in BC is small!

**“The diploma/degree you get is yours to create”:** If at all possible when selecting a topic for an assignment choose to do it on a company that you might like to work for in the future. This could help you in an interview down the road.

**“Be willing to start in an entry-level position”:** When I graduated I felt as though I could do anything; however, I soon realized that to gain respect, experience, and to get my “foot in the door” I needed to take an entry-level position. I was proud to have this position and used it as a stepping stone to strategically move forward in the industry.





# Students!

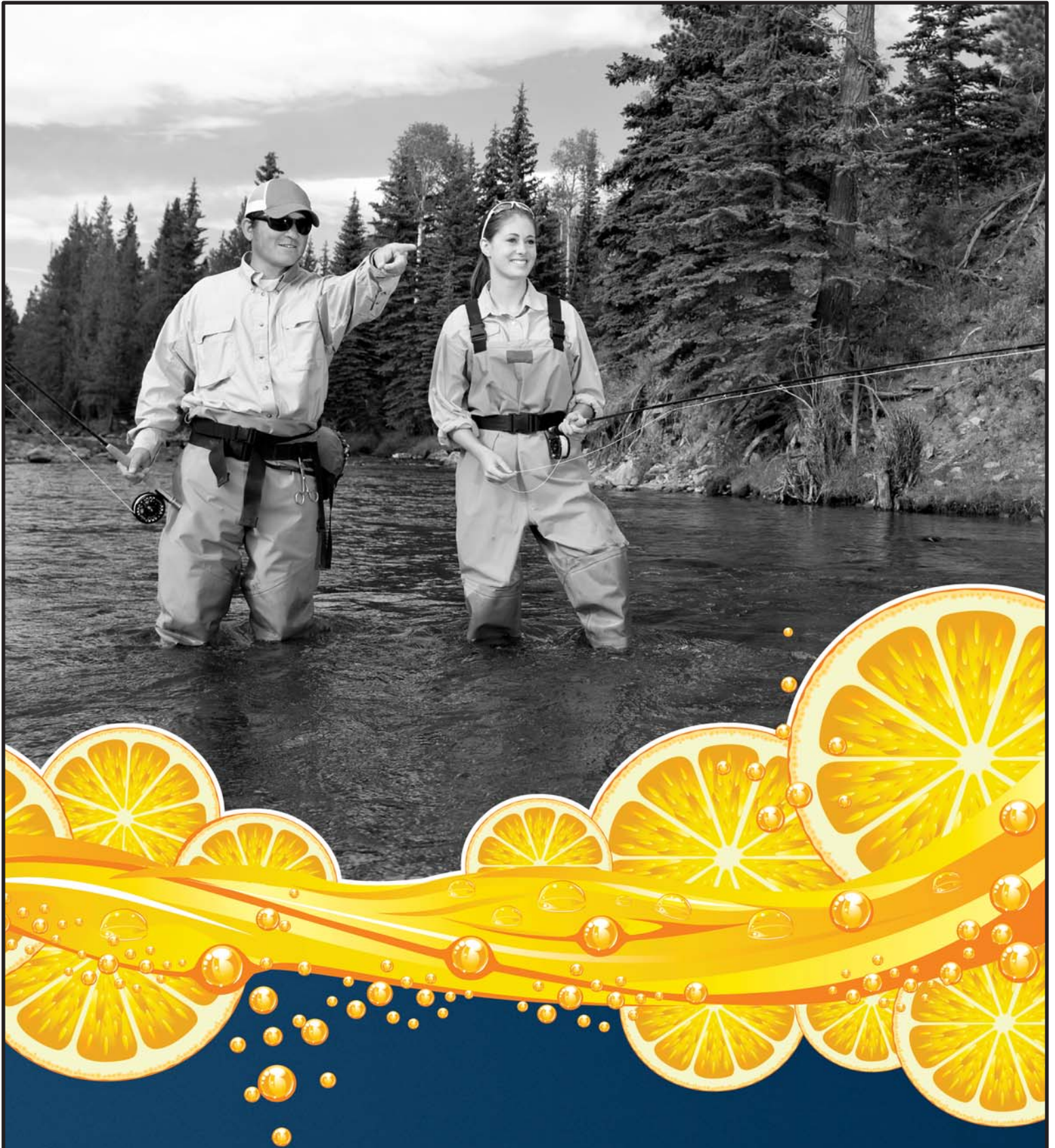
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