

Everyone Knows Someone, Leveraging Connections to Help Refugees



“I knew it made sense to start by leveraging my existing network, but after seeing the outcome of a single workshop, I realized we could do so much more.”

- Bassel Ramli

Imagine suddenly finding yourself relocated to a different country.

Different culture. Different language. And no network.

Bassel Ramli knows very well the feeling of arriving in a different country. In 2004, Bassel Ramli’s family immigrated to Canada in the hopes of finding a better and more stable future.

After immigrating, Bassel’s college-educated parents started working in a local supermarket to support their family. Without connections, their options were limited.

Eleven years later, as a new wave of Syrian refugees began arriving in Toronto, Bassel remembered the struggles his family faced settling in and knew he had to help.

For the next several weekends, Bassel and his longtime friends, Omar and Mustafa, began meeting with hundreds of refugees. Through countless conversations, a familiar thread stood out to them. Highly educated refugees had given up their careers in order to relocate to a place where their families could be safe.

Determined to help, Bassel, Omar, and Mustafa started creating skill profiles for as many of the refugees as possible, documenting their work experience, skills, education, and career aspirations. And through this process, the Refugee Career Jumpstart Project (RCJP) was born.

The Difference a Connection Makes □

The goal was simple. Help connect refugees with appropriate assistance programs, and give refugees with relevant job experience a chance to interact with professionals. Through these new connections, refugees could gather advice and coaching on Canadian hiring practices. And in the process, start building new, professional networks.

Having created his own network in the financial industry, Bassel thought it best to start by helping refugees that had previous banking experience.

Through networking, email exchanges, and a few meetings, Bassel and his co-founder Mustafa convinced The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) to co-host a workshop for 20 refugees. Their goal was to give the refugees a chance to start building out professional networks, participate in mock interviews with senior bank managers, and if all went well, land one of them an internship.

The employees from the bank were so impressed by the attendees that they awarded not one, but four paid internships. And in the end, each internship resulted in full-time employment.

Four jobs secured, four families with a chance to thrive — all because of one man's determination to use his network to make a difference.

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And from there it grew. RCJP has helped hundreds of newcomers make new connections, find mentors, and receive interview coaching.

It only takes one connection to make a difference. For more ideas on how you can help, visit [LinkedIn's Volunteer Marketplace](#).