

CIO upfront: Inside a different kind of IT bootcamp

I recently ran a couple of sessions to help skilled migrants find jobs in Wellington. The experience highlighted key challenges the ICT sector needs to tackle as it prepares the workforce for unceasing change



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I have been mentoring ICT professionals - new graduates, migrants - for years.

And, with apologies to the original [Kiwi Landing Pad](#) based in San Francisco which helps New Zealand companies gain a toehold in the US market, I raised the idea of transposing this concept for skilled migrants.

I called it the Wellington-based Kiwi Landing Pad for skilled migrants.

As I said in [this interview with Stuff](#), it will be like a bootcamp, set up to help participants gain an understanding of opportunities, the local job market, key players, how the system works, job search strategies, networking, CV prep, interview and so on.

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Recently, the Kiwi Landing Pad for skilled migrants became a reality of sorts. Weeks of each other, I ran two such sessions, the first one with support from the Indian High Commission, and the second one, held in conjunction with IT Professionals NZ.

There were many similar themes. An ICT professional. A recent graduate. An overseas student. A skilled migrant. A refugee. Their common question: Can you help me find a job?

In the first session, I approached the Indian High Commission. With minimum fuss and in no time, His Excellency Sanjiv Kohli agreed to host the session and his able Commercial Assistant Mamta Bhatt [packaged](#) it and promoted it through their social media channels.

We had eight to 10 registrations, and it forced me to create a run-sheet. Came the day, we ran the session, and it became quickly evident that the one-and-a-half hours we had budgeted for was not going to be enough.

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Fast forward, I made a chance comment on the lack of diversity and inclusion in an event hosted by the Wellington branch of IT Professionals NZ. I put it out there that should anyone be interested, I had material to run a session for new, skilled

migrants.

[Paul Heath](#) and [Kay Jones](#) clearly saw the need, jumped on it, and an [ITP workshop](#) (free for members) was locked and loaded.

Paul Heath worked it so that anyone who attended the full workshop would be entitled to join [ITP's popular mentoring programme](#).

The program nicely complemented the larger programme of work ITP is doing with schools, tertiary education, accreditation of degrees, recognition of overseas qualifications and [becoming an effective CIO](#).

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Within days of the announcement, it was fully subscribed, and a waitlist had to be created.

I had expected no more than a dozen attendees, we had 20.

I had expected skilled migrants, but we also had a number of ICT students. Unknown to us, an ICT professor on the mailing list had forwarded the ITP newsletter to students at [Whitireia-Weltec](#).

Victoria University of Wellington also invited us as part of a panel to speak with their [graduating ICT students](#).

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In addition to students, we had several seasoned, qualified and locally experienced ICT professionals - many more experienced and qualified than I was. It was scary and sobering.

Women comprised around 40 per cent of the attendees.

The attendees had studied or worked in varied countries including the UK, Finland, Middle-East, India, China, Japan and the Philippines; and of course, in New Zealand

Oh, and it resulted in some students joining ITP!

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The sessions were run as a three-way tag team. Kay Jones provided gems of inputs in terms of professional forums and opportunities to network in Wellington.

Paul Heath provided invaluable perspective on working with recruiters like himself, CV preparation, covering letter and interview techniques.

As for myself, I put out there what worked for me, what worked for some of the others I had worked with, and some of my mistakes. There was no need for slides and handouts.

But the real value was the discussion from participants on their own experience, and I estimate we had over 400 years of experience in that room to call on!

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The point of the sessions was to go beyond the mechanics of finding a job, and a lot to do with finding one's True North.

Of looking deep inside themselves and understanding what they were all about and what their unique value proposition was to potential employees.

Everything else that followed, then flowed logically and powerfully.

We spoke of clarity of purpose and speed of execution, we spoke of looking at oneself as a unicorn – as in a startup unicorn, we spoke of looking for a job as a full-time job in itself.

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Day one ran slightly over time to arrive at a logical conclusion. The turnout on Day two confirmed attendees were getting value.

The icing on the cake was one attendee doing their specific bit of “homework” and another one sharing their findings on a job search tool we discussed the day before. To the disappointment and chagrin of some, we were able to wrap it up in two days instead of needing a third day.

So, what were the learnings and where to from here?

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- Clearly, there is a need for such sessions
- It is not just skilled migrants who will benefit
- A session in Auckland perhaps; and always open to other centres on demand
- Possibly a workshop just for students; and another version for ICT professionals.

And so, in little steps, we had an idea, validated it in the market, and garnered lots of support. We had an MVP of some sort.

Now we need to sustain, scale and grow it to make a bigger difference... to the individual, to their families, to the community, to the ICT sector, and New Zealand Inc.!

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Sunit Prakash is a Wellington based IT consultant. When he is not consulting on IT service management and improving customer satisfaction, he is mentoring startups or riding his Royal Enfield Bullet motorcycle. Follow him on Twitter: @sunitprakash

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