

By Katie Walker

Ajay Mistry

Sept 30, 2006

Skilled migrant Ajay Mistry says employers need to remove their fear of employing immigrants. When he first arrived in New Zealand from Bombay 12 years ago, he expected to continue his career as an electronics engineer. Job advertisements in India and the New Zealand Immigration Department had painted a glowing picture of opportunities here, he says.

Once he started job hunting though, he found a completely different scenario. "Recruitment agencies were laughing at me when I came because they knew that I won't get a job," he says. Each time he applied for a job he was told he was overqualified. "Employers say you are overqualified but you can't downgrade your education," he says.

He started taking any kind of work he could get – cleaning and washing up jobs included. It took two and a half years before he got his first electronics job, but after only six months he was made redundant. After three years with Mitsubishi Motors he worked in supermarkets - in customer service and retail management. But he really wanted to work in IT - and this is where the Skilled Migrant course came to his assistance last year.

On the course he learned better communication skills to use with potential employers, how to find jobs and how to present himself at interviews. "Even being here 12 years I was using too much direct language that might have been seen as rude, but no one had told me," he says.

After the course Ajay nabbed a job in customer services with Bond and Bond, in a deliberate first step in his IT career path. But for the course he might not have looked at the job, he says, because it was not specifically in IT. "This experience is valuable for an IT job, especially for communication skills," he says. He is positive about his future career now. "I will get my IT job as a network architect," he says.