

A Day in the Life . . . of a person who may benefit from PLA



"Good morning. Mary Reynolds speaking; how can I help you?" she asked automatically. She gave the company's preferred response for the hundredth time that day, still managing to make it sound as though it were the first time. Projecting a consistently professional image was important to her.

After she'd dealt with the call, her thoughts went back to the letter. "Thank you for your interest, but we regret that the position has been filled." Not again! How can I ever get promoted when they won't even give me an interview, Mary wondered, her feelings of frustration surfacing. You'd think, with all my years of office experience, they'd at least consider me.



She recalled her conversation with the Personnel Director, who had spoken to her personally when she wasn't selected. "Sorry Mary, but our hiring criteria for this position require a minimum of a Certificate in Office Administration. You started working with us ten years ago, straight from high school, and you do your job well. However, although you have your Grade 12, I don't see evidence in your resume of any office-related training. It might be a good idea for you to contact the local college and find out what they offer, if you want to be considered for other positions." Looks like I am going to have to follow his advice, she thought. For a moment, Mary felt defeated, as she certainly did not want to give up her job to go back to college.

Then she brightened, as she recalled a recent conversation with her friend and ex-colleague Bill, a clerk who had been made redundant a few years back. Bill had told her that his job future was looking much brighter since he had obtained further qualifications to help him in his job search. But he had not had to attend college classes, he had told her. Instead, he had gained the course credits by proving that he already had the knowledge and skills to do what was required. Prior Learning Assessment - that's what he called it. She phoned Bill and he agreed to meet her for lunch in the Internet café in town. Yes, he would be pleased to tell her more about 'PLA'. So, I need qualifications, do I? Then that's what I'll do! Mary felt a new determination rising inside her.





Later, over a sandwich, Mary explained her frustrations to Bill: "I know I have the skills they're looking for in those jobs. I've learned a lot during my ten years in office work. It is as though they think that all that counts is what you learn at school or college. But I just don't have that magic piece of paper."

Bill nodded with empathy, and replied encouragingly. "You know, Mary, in your case, you should find the [PLA process](#) helps you to obtain a Certificate more quickly than if you registered to attend classes in the regular program. Sounds like a Certificate is what you need, and I think you should check it out."



"So, Bill, what qualification was it that you got?" "It's a [Certificate in Business Technology/Office Administration](#)," he replied. "Like you, I had been working in offices for years. I just had to make sure that I could provide [proof](#) that I had already acquired the learning I would have obtained from doing the college courses. You have to make sure that what you give them matches the [learning outcomes](#) they are looking for. Luckily, they have [advisors](#) who help you with that part of the process. Then, right at the end, you hand it all over to an [assessor](#) who decides whether or not to give you credit."

"So what happens if you don't have enough evidence to cover all the learning outcomes?" Mary asked. Bill was quick to reassure her, "The advisor shows you different ways of providing evidence; they have [criteria](#) you can refer to, to see what options there are of providing evidence for the various outcomes. Mary, from what I know about you, you could get the Certificate too. Then you might be in the running for one of those promotions you have your eye on!" Mary's enthusiasm was aroused. "Where do I start? Who do I contact? Is there somewhere I can find out about the [steps in the process](#)?"





"Well, now that we have finished our lunch, how about moving over to one of the computers and I will show you how to [contact your local college](#) on the Internet, and you can get started?" "You're on, Bill! Let's do that. Promotion, here I come!"

A Day in the Life...