

# Cultural workers on PEI: Many have a job to follow their heart - and a job to pay the bills

by Heidi Riley

Hybrid Careers

Working in the cultural field on PEI can be very fulfilling. But the reality of this work often means short-term or part-time jobs. Those who work in this sector often need to work in other occupations as well. Developing a hybrid career by working in different fields is a way to satisfy creative and practical needs.

“Hybrid careers are a necessity of life here on PEI,” says **Ghislaine O’Hanley**, who has combined working in the cultural sector with contract positions in retail, research, event planning, and teaching.



**Ghislaine O’Hanley has combined work in cultural sector jobs such as stage management and production with jobs in many other fields.**

## A love of the performing arts leads to a career path

Ghislaine has loved the world of theatre and live performance ever since she worked for the Confederation Centre while still in high school. “I can neither sing, nor dance, nor act, so I couldn’t be on stage,” she says. “I charmed my way backstage to see how a production worked. People were very kind to explain their roles.”

After watching the people backstage who make a production happen, Ghislaine decided she wanted to become a stage manager. Stage managers organize a production and keep everything running smoothly by communicating with the director, the backstage crew, and the actors.

While studying English at UPEI, she was assistant stage manager in small productions. She studied on her own and asked advice from other stage managers. Her first big production was stage managing the Easter Seals Telethon at the Confederation Centre Main Stage. “It was a challenge, but I had learned the ropes from so many people. I was confident, and the show was great.” She has gone on to stage manage the East Coast Music Awards, the Festival of Lights, Sketch-22, the PEI Music Awards, the Junos, and many more TV, theatre and live productions.

Her first full-time cultural job was associate producer with a TV production company in Charlottetown. “That was the first time I was able to combine all my skills into one job,” says Ghislaine.

## Finding the next job

“Job security is non-existent,” says Ghislaine. “You always need to think about what you will do next. You need to do a lot of networking to find out what the next thing is and how you can get involved. Luckily PEI has a vibrant arts community, and there is always something going on. It may not pay top dollar, but it is still a chance to be involved in a project you believe in.”

## Doing two jobs at once

Ghislaine currently works for **Trapeze Animation Studios**, where she is the production manager for a children’s series called *Razzberry Jazzberry Jam*. In her off hours, she is busy with other projects as well. Last summer, while working full-time at Trapeze, she also stage managed Sketch-22. This November, she will be managing an event for the Olympic Torch Relay.

“It can be a real challenge to juggle two jobs. But there are also times when you have no work. It’s either feast or famine. When I worked for *Anne and Gilbert*, it was often 18-hour days. But if you love your job, you don’t mind not getting any sleep that week. The process of seeing an event or show come together is just such a high, that I am happy to put up with the long hours.

“I love the work. Every new contract or opportunity builds my skills. It makes me more employable and ready to move up to the next level. I love to work on PEI and I love to work in the arts. There are certain sacrifices, but there are so many rewards that it completely evens out. I will continue to work in the arts and continue to pick up contracts on the side. I’m not alone in this. Many other PEI performers, actors, and musicians don’t work full-time at their craft, and have to find other work to supplement their income.”

## Advice for finding jobs in the cultural field

- **Be willing to start at the bottom.** “Most of my jobs at the beginning of my career came because I was willing to volunteer or work for low pay so I could get the experience,” says Ghislaine. “That was my strategy, and it worked. I gradually became more skilled by doing and by watching and talking to others.”
- **Stay informed.** Keep an ear to the ground for other possibilities. Do a lot of social networking. Word of mouth will help you find out about upcoming opportunities.

## Work in the cultural sector is improving

“I have noticed that as our industry grows and it becomes more supported, people are able to stay in one job for longer periods of time,” says Ghislaine. “We actually feel like we can put down roots here and not worry about having to go away to where the work is, which is one of the big challenges of working in this field on PEI.”

For more information about working in the cultural sector, contact the PEI Cultural Human Resources Sector Council at 367-4460 or visit [www.peiculture.ca](http://www.peiculture.ca)

# Make the resumé fit the job - and other job search tips

by Heidi Riley

Resumé Advice

When it comes to resumé, Ghislaine O’Hanley has a unique perspective. She has been a job seeker and an employer. By looking at the issue from both points of view, she has developed a winning strategy for writing a successful resumé.

## Focus on the position advertised

Ghislaine says that job seekers should make things as easy as possible for an employer. “It really wastes my time when a resumé comes across my desk that is not relevant to the position or if I have to search to find out if they have the skills I am looking for,” says Ghislaine. “If I can’t find the information quickly, it might mean that someone who has the right qualifications goes to the bottom of the pile.”

She says the first page of your resumé has to sell you to the employer. “If the first page doesn’t catch my eye, it will go in the circular file.”

## Ghislaine shares some of her resumé strategies

- **Look carefully at the job you are applying for** Research the job that is advertised. Google the job title and find out what the position is all about. Or ask people in that line of work for more information.
- **You don’t have to list your jobs chronologically** At the top of your resumé, list the jobs you held that used the same skills as the job position that is advertised. Use the job ad as a guide to list your work experience using the same key words and mentioning the same skills. You may not have had the same type of job, but if you have used the same skill set, be sure to mention it up front.

## Resumé strategy

- **Use different resumé for different types of jobs** Ghislaine uses different resumé to apply for different types of jobs. Each resumé lists up front the skills and experience she has that are important to the type of job she is interested in.

“It is a mistake to use the same resumé for every position. I know that if I apply for a research position or a management position, completely different skill sets are needed. If I apply to work at a flower shop, it is not important that they know up front that I worked for the Juno award ceremonies. They want to know that I can work with people. The resumé has to reflect the skills needed for the position.

“I get lots of resumé from people who want to be animators, and I look for the skills that fit the position. I want to know if they can draw and if they can use the computer programs we use because I want to know how much time would be involved in training them.”

## Success

“I am confident that my system works, because I have been successful in getting most of the positions I have applied for, and I receive good job reviews,” says Ghislaine.

## Another job search tip

Ghislaine says that using the Internet as a hiring tool is a very effective way to find the right people. “As someone who hires, I have looked on **Facebook** for potential employees. There are many groups where I can find people who have the basic skill sets I am looking for. I can put out one message and get 50 responses. I find it’s much more effective than putting an ad in the newspaper.”

To explore job search websites, visit [www.employmentjourney.com](http://www.employmentjourney.com) and click **Hot Job Search Sites**.