



When Labels Become Identity: A Warning We Should Not Ignore

By Dale Jodoi
Columnist

Have you noticed how quickly people are labeling each other now? It shows up in conversation, online, and in how people describe who they are. It may seem harmless at first, even helpful, but it carries a risk that should not be ignored. Because once labels take hold, judgment follows. There are no official cards being handed out in Canada.

No one is lining up to receive papers that define them. But in a different way, something similar is starting to appear. Labels are being worn openly, almost like identity cards.

Not in your wallet, but in how you present yourself and how others decide where you belong. That should give people pause. History has shown what can happen when societies begin sorting people into fixed groups. In the Soviet Union, citizens were classified by class. Worker. Farmer. Enemy.

These were not just labels. They shaped lives and limited opportunity. In the People's Republic of China during the Cultural Revolution, people were judged by family background. Good class or bad class. Those labels followed individuals for years and often defined their future. Most Canadians would agree those systems went too far. And today, there is no formal version of that here. But the warning is not about what exists on paper. It is about what is forming in practice.

The shift begins quietly. Words like privilege and victimhood are used more often. People are grouped before they are understood. In many cases, the goal is to address real issues such as inequality and fairness. Those are important conversations.

But something changes when the focus moves from helping people to defining them. The label comes first. The individual comes second. Critics say the New Democratic Party reflects this shift, with messaging that focuses on groups defined by disadvantage or privilege. Supporters call it fairness.

Critics say it risks turning people into categories first, citizens second. That concern is part of a wider shift, not just one party or one idea.

And that is where the warning becomes clear. Because once a society becomes comfortable assigning identity based on group, it becomes easier to assume things about the person in front of you. It becomes easier to judge. It becomes easier to divide. A man standing in line at a grocery store is not thinking about labels. He is thinking about the price of food. But in the wider conversation, he may already be placed into a group before anyone knows his story. That is where the disconnect begins.

Across communities, people are saying similar things in plain language. I just want to be treated fairly. I work hard, but I feel judged before I even speak.

No one sees my situation. These are real voices. Some, especially men of European background, say they feel they are being viewed through the lens of the past rather than their own actions. They hear conversations about history and feel that weight placed on them, even though they had no role in those events.

At the same time, others point out that history still shapes the present. Access to jobs, education, and opportunity has not always been equal. Ignoring that would also be a mistake. Both realities can exist at once. You cannot inherit guilt.

But you can inherit circumstances. The problem begins when those realities turn into fixed labels. Because labels are simple. Too simple. They reduce complex lives into single categories. They overlook effort, struggle, and personal story. They replace understanding with assumption.

And once that happens, something changes. Trust weakens. Conversations break down. People stop listening to each other. History shows that this kind of shift does not happen overnight. It builds slowly. One label at a time. One assumption at a time. That is why this moment matters.

Most people in Canada still see themselves as Canadian. They are not thinking in categories. They are focused on daily life. Paying rent. Buying groceries. Raising their children. Trying to move forward.

Many newcomers feel the same way. They are grateful for the opportunity to be here. They want to work, contribute, and build a stable life. That is the quiet majority. But there is also a smaller group that pushes these ideas more strongly. They speak loudly about identity and categories. They try to define people before those people can define themselves. That is where the concern grows. Because once people accept labels without question, they begin to see others through them.

And that changes how people are treated. It changes how decisions are made. It changes how a country sees itself. The danger is not in recognizing problems. The danger is in deciding who a person is before you know them. Because that decision can be wrong. It can be unfair.

And it can close the door to understanding before it even begins. This is why the idea of a modern card system, even as a metaphor, matters. Not because cards exist. But because the thinking behind them can grow quietly. And when it does, it shapes everything. It shapes language. It shapes judgment. It shapes how people treat each other. So this is the warning. Be careful with labels.

Be careful when you apply them to yourself.

Be careful when you apply them to others. Because the moment you decide who a person is before you understand them, you step into something dangerous. And that danger does not stay in one place. It spreads through conversation, through assumption, through everyday life. Until one day, the label matters more than the truth.

Canada works best when people are judged as individuals. Not as categories. Not as assumptions. Just people. So stay aware. Watch how people treat you. Watch how you treat others. Because the real danger is not the label. It is the moment you stop questioning it.



Try These 'Offbeat' Job Search Tactics to Shorten Your Job Search

By Nick Kossovan

In 2026, being 'qualified' is merely the price of entry into the job market. A major challenge for job seekers is that hiring managers are inundated with AI-slop, creating 'all the same' applications that are not only uninspiring, but also render a candidate's qualifications invisible.

Nowadays, job seekers need a job search strategy that catches the attention of recruiters and hiring managers; to do this, they must 'be different.' Being different involves thinking creatively about how to showcase your skills and enthusiasm to contribute to the company's profitability, which is often more important than your qualifications.

Here are some 'offbeat' tactics to get an employer's or recruiter's attention.

Compile a Failure Portfolio

It's through failures that meaningful lessons emerge and wisdom grows, which is why I'm drawn to comeback and 'here's what I learned' stories.

Employers are terrified of risk, and, as a 2025 Harvard Business Review article noted, hiring managers are increasingly seeking "psychological safety through candidates who've already survived their biggest mistakes."

Create a one-page document that shows you've learned from your mistakes. List your three biggest professional 'train wrecks,' the lessons you've gained, and the safeguards you now have in place to avoid repeating them. Use this document to demonstrate you're a reliable candidate because you've 'been there, done that.'

Before Your Interview, Send a '30-60-90 Day Action Plan'

I favour proactive candidates because they demonstrate their ability and willingness to self-manage.

Prepare a 30-90-Day Action Plan detailing how you'll approach your new job, integrate with your new colleagues, and become a valuable employee as quickly as possible. As with a Failure portfolio, the key is to submit your action plan before your interview. Doing so shifts the conversation from "Do you have the skills?" to "How do you plan to make an impact?" and shows you aren't just looking for a paycheck.

Mail a Physical 'Technical Brief'

With 99% of communication being digital, a physical object arriving on a desk feels revolutionary.

Print a coil-bound 'Technical Brief' that discusses a challenge the company is facing, such as a decrease in customer satisfaction scores or a slow product rollout, and how you'd address it. This document, to be sent by registered mail to your potential boss, provides evidence that you understand the company's pain point and possess the qualifications to address it.

Create a 'Video Proof of Concept'

In a job market rife with bad actors, claiming you can use Salesforce or use Solver to create predictive models often elicits skepticism. Prove you're the real deal! Record a two-minute screen share showing how you'd optimize Salesforce or media spend allocation using Solver. Video proof shifts the decision to hire you from mere trust to tangible evidence, eliminating the 'onboarding anxiety' that often slows hiring decisions. In the words of tech leaders, "The demo is the deal."

Review the Hiring Manager's Public Statements and Offer a Critique

Flattery is cheap and easily ignored. Instead, find a recent article, podcast, or LinkedIn post by the hiring manager and send them a professional, assertive critique or an 'extension' of their idea via email. For example: "When you were a guest on Austin Becak's podcast 'The Dream Job System Podcast,' you spoke about your thoughts on call centre churn, but you overlooked the impact of tiered incentive structures on Tier 2 agents." Sharing your opinions, ideas, or perspectives positions you as a peer rather than a subordinate and demonstrates that you have the confidence to speak up rather than be another 'yes-man,' which often turns hiring managers off.

Treat the Job Posting as a Request for Proposal (RFP)

Who's a less risky hire: a full-time employee, taking on a long-term financial liability, or a contractor with no long-term liability? In case you missed the memo or haven't been paying attention to all the layoffs happening, employees are essentially free agents, so why not start acting like one? The next time you see a job posting for a role you believe you're qualified for, instead of applying, consider submitting a proposal as if you're a consultant (free agent). Include sections like 'Terms of Service,' 'Projected Deliverables,' 'Cost-Benefit Analysis,' and 'Length of Contract.'

Proposing a consultant arrangement not only offers the employer a low-risk, cost-effective alternative to hiring a full-time employee, but also encourages the hiring manager to evaluate you on business grounds rather than against an HR checklist.

Offer to Do the Work

An employer's biggest concern is hiring someone who isn't the right fit or lacks the necessary skills. Ease that concern by offering to do an hour of actual work—such as identifying a process bottleneck, troubleshooting a live technical issue, or outlining a plan for vendor negotiations. Say: "Don't take my word for it; let's spend sixty minutes solving a live problem." A 'try-before-you-buy' approach—walking your talk—is very appealing.

Playing it "safe" keeps you invisible and unemployed. The aforementioned offbeat tactics do more than make you different; they show employers you have the grit and initiative most job seekers lack. As Henry Ford once said, "If you keep doing what you've always done, you'll keep getting what you've always got."



CHARITY CRICKET TOURNAMENT

★ SATURDAY, JULY 4 ★

10 AM TO 10 PM

Trophy Presentation and Ceremony at 10 pm

Bay Ridges Kinsmen Park
705 Sandy Beach Road, Pickering

★ ALL PROCEEDS GO TO PICKERING FOOD BANK ★

1ST PRIZE- \$1500

2ND PRIZE- \$750

\$400 ENTRY FEE PER TEAM

To register or for more info:

pickeringcricketclassic@gmail.com

