

> PREPARING YOUR WORKPLACE

Every organization has its own culture, and it's important that you 'find the right fit' when considering new employees. Your culture includes a set of practices, perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes related to hiring immigrants – whether or not these are stated in formal policies. Sometimes an organization's culture may unknowingly cause it to screen out or fail to identify qualified and capable immigrants who could fit in very well. Is your organization ready to effectively recruit, hire, and integrate skilled immigrants into the workplace?

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An organization's culture is dynamic. It changes. Its leaders can influence change - and are responsible for doing so. If you want to improve your organization's ability to successfully hire and integrate skilled immigrants into your workplace, it's a good idea to look at ways to create a more inclusive work environment.

Generally speaking, the smaller the organization the more readily it can adapt its culture. As a

leader in a small-to-medium size organization, you have many opportunities to influence positive change. You can ensure that recruiting and hiring policies and practices are reviewed and revised; you can equip HR staff with better assessment tools and resources; and you can provide opportunities for all staff – particularly hiring managers – to become more aware of cultural differences and more accommodating of those differences in the workplace.

LEADERSHIP MODELS⁴

Effective leadership requires different approaches in homogeneous and diverse workplaces. Here are some examples:

Aspect of Leadership	Homogeneous Model	Diversity Model
Management Philosophy	Golden Rule Management: I treat everyone the way I want to be treated.	Expanded Golden Rule: I find out how people want to be treated and I respond accordingly.
Perception of Difference	Difference = Less Than	Difference = Value Added
Leader's Role	Mentor and Coach: emphasis on helping people fit into existing culture	Facilitator and Catalyst: flexibility and knowledge of other cultural norms shape evolving workplace culture
Communication Mode	Communication is direct and 'to the point'	Communication can be less directive; attention to individual preferences

⁴ Adapted from Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowel Diverse Teams at Work

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Many small and medium size enterprises don't have Human Resource departments or formal hiring policies and practices. But hiring occurs, and it does so according to some kind of policy and practice, even if unwritten and informal. You can make sure that these policies and practices are identified, reviewed, adapted where necessary, and communicated throughout your organization so that you can more successfully recruit and hire qualified immigrants.

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THE FUD FACTOR

Fear. Uncertainty. Doubt. These concerns sometimes prevent employers, often working under tight hiring timelines, from fully considering immigrant job applicants. You may be unfamiliar with the candidate's foreign credentials and work experience, or may anticipate that perceived differences with respect to the candidate's cultural practices might affect his or her ability to fit in with the team. As a result you may not have a good comfort level with the immigrant applicant and may feel that there's a higher degree of risk compared with other applicants. Cultural familiarity and demonstrated cultural adaptability are the main reasons that many employers prefer to hire candidates with successful Canadian work experience.

Cultural familiarity, however, can work both ways; remember the cultural bridge we described in the previous section. You and your workplace will become more familiar with other cultures – and thereby reduce the FUD factor – through your own experiences in hiring immigrants and going part way across the bridge. The foundation of the 2-way bridge is a set of workplace policies and practices that support and encourage diversity.

Many employers participating in the HIO initiative have begun to review and revise their HR processes and practices that relate to recruiting, hiring, and retaining immigrant employees. Several of these employers have found that relevant policies may exist but are not being fully implemented. The process of policy review

is reminding employers of the importance of communicating and reinforcing the policies throughout the organization. As a result, employers are becoming more engaged in making sure that their policies and processes are not only reviewed and updated where appropriate, but also well communicated and consistently implemented.

TIPS:

There are many things you can do to become more effective in recruiting, hiring, and retaining skilled immigrants. As you might expect, some are very simple and straightforward while others can be more challenging. Here are some good resources for your consideration. You can pick things that seem to make sense for your organization.

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- The *Employers in Action* highlights strategies to address the challenges faced by employers in hiring and integrating skilled immigrants at skills appropriate levels into the workforce. Relevant activities are described on pages 7 through 22.
http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/EmployerInAction___ENG.pdf
 - The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks has produced an excellent checklist as a quick reminder of key areas to support your pre-employment and HR activities with immigrants who have English as a Second Language.
http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/TenWays_BrochureWEB.pdf
 - The Government of Manitoba Immigration website has produced a guide for employers. The guide includes a recruitment section on page 9.
http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/Manitoba_Guide.pdf
 - The Conference Board of Canada has produced a report titled 'Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities'. This Employer's Guide includes a section titled 'The Benefits to Organizations of Focusing on Visible Minorities'. The guide is available through the Conference Board's e-library service.
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/>
 - The Skills Without Borders program has produced an Employers' Resource Guide that includes a section titled 'Improving Hiring Practices' on page 7.
http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/Skills_without_Borders.pdf
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FINDING QUALIFIED IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants arriving in Canada can benefit from the services of many local immigrant-serving agencies. These agencies provide a wide range of integration and settlement services, often including services related to finding appropriate employment. The agencies also provide services to employers (see the “Did You Know” box on this page). They can help you advertise your job posting within the immigrant communities and can also help you interpret immigrant resumé where some language may be unclear.

You can also consider participating in any of the following local programs as an affordable and low-risk way to identify and evaluate potential employees. Contact HIO for more information about these programs.

- Internship programs are short-term employment programs that give applicants an opportunity

to learn about the Canadian workplace while working. The programs are usually from three months to a year in length. Interns generally receive a salary or stipend.

- Bridging programs provide skilled immigrants with formal training as well as work placements (that’s where you can get involved) to bridge their prior education and work experience so they meet the requirements to practice within their professions in Canada.
- In pre-employment mentoring programs, an employed professional acts as a mentor to an un- or under-employed professional (often an immigrant) with qualifications and skills in a relevant field. The mentor – an employee in your organization - gains cultural awareness while potentially identifying a good potential employee.

DID YOU KNOW?

Several immigrant service agencies in the Ottawa region are working in partnership through the Job Match Network. This network provides a one-stop service to local employers to identify qualified immigrants seeking employment.

The highest quality candidates from each of the participating agencies’ databases are efficiently matched with an employer’s skill requirements. Contact the Job Match Network (see Resources section) to provide your specific skill requirements and obtain information about qualified candidates.

INTERVIEWING IMMIGRANTS

Part of being a good interviewer is being able to provide all job candidates with a fair opportunity to present themselves for a position. In some cases, candidates may have all the skills for the job but, because English is not their first language, they may find the interview questions difficult to answer. Often rephrasing a question will provide an opportunity for any candidate to tackle the question appropriately. Here's a resource that gives you some suggestions and reasons why rephrasing

allows you to recognize their ability to succeed at the job despite their lack of Canadian experience and credentials. However, a competency-based approach can still disqualify certain cultural groups from the selection process. For example, an assertive communication style may be included as a competency for a leadership position because it fits the current model of management. But a more collaborative approach may be just as effective.

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an interview question sometimes can make all the difference when dealing with a person who has English as a second (or third) language: http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/RephrasingQuestions%20_HRfinal%20200207%20-AnneHI.pdf

For more information on the competency-based approach to interviewing and how to prevent bias visit <http://www.interview-skills.co.uk/competency-based-interviews.aspx>

Many employers have moved to assessing competencies to predict job performance rather than the traditional approach that focuses on an individual's education and experience. Focusing on competencies and behaviours is appropriate when interviewing new immigrants because it

TIP:

While many workplace orientation programs focus on the organization's history, culture, philosophy, mission, policies and procedures, a new Canadian will often have less experience with workplace norms in Canada and thus require more specific information about your workplace. Ask a seasoned new Canadian in your organization to help you develop orientation topics that challenged him or her when they started. If you do not have a seasoned new Canadian, contact the Job Match Network (see Resources section). They can provide access to a cultural informant in their workplace training department who can assist you.

RETENTION: ORIENTATION AND MENTORING

Once you've hired a new Canadian, the challenge for both of you will be retention: how to ensure that the new employee becomes and remains effective and productive on the job.

The first thing you must do is provide workplace orientation that addresses more than policies and procedures. Orientation for new Canadians should include more specific behaviours than might be appropriate when we all share a similar cultural background. For example, when we say "*We all utilize respectful and professional behaviour at all times*", these terms need to be addressed in behavioural terms. Respect and professionalism are highly regarded norms in most cultures but the behaviours that demonstrate them can be quite different than those we learn here in Canada. For example, if being 'on time' is a sign of professionalism in your workplace, you may need to identify this behaviour as it translates to being to work on time, submitting reports and projects on time, etc.

Cultures with a more flexible use of time often have different designations about when it is appropriate to be exact in timeliness or see a designated time as a flexible guideline.

Another common and very effective workplace integration technique is to assign a mentor to work with and be available to the new employee. An on-the-job mentor is a knowledgeable and experienced employee in the organization who agrees to coach the newcomer. In addition

to coaching the newcomer in the tasks to be performed, the mentor is a cultural informant - someone who helps the newcomer understand anything that is beneath the cultural iceberg. The mentor assists a new employee in learning about and becoming integrated into the corporate culture.

Mentoring can be as informal as pairing a new employee with an existing employee in a "buddy system" to a more formal approach with developed training modules and a coordinator. Mentoring is highly conducive to promoting talent within a company because it is about building relationships and allows employees to learn the intangibles that are needed to succeed in the workplace. New immigrants especially can benefit from a mentoring relationship, because they need to learn about the Canadian workplace at large as well as the specific company's culture.

TIP:

The Government of Manitoba Immigration website has produced an employers' guide to hiring newcomers. It contains a very good discussion of mentoring and a comprehensive set of resources and references. See http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/Manitoba_Guide.pdf

INTEGRATING CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SKILL BUILDING INTO WORKPLACE PRACTICE

Employers participating in the HIO initiative have identified and begun to implement several activities intended to integrate cross-cultural awareness and skill building into their workplace practices. Activities include:

- **Education and Training:** employers are arranging for some of their HR staff and hiring managers to participate in information and training sessions dealing with cross-cultural issues in the workplace. LASI World Skills offers a *Workplace Culture Training* program. The objective of the program is to provide learners with a foundation of cultural understanding as well as specific tools necessary to develop cross-cultural competence and effectiveness. Training goals include fostering the process of developing concepts and skills that facilitate changes in attitude and behaviour.
- **Pre-employment Mentoring:** occurs prior to an immigrant's employment and is not primarily a recruitment activity for your organization. An employed professional – a current employee in your organization –

acts as a mentor to an un- or under-employed immigrant with qualifications and skills in a relevant field. Mentoring allows for the sharing of knowledge and experience between mentor and immigrant. Through a series of structured activities, the mentor supports and encourages the immigrant in his or her efforts to become professionally established. These mentoring programs are typically managed through a third party agency.

- **Networking and Coaching:** employers have begun to host and participate in networking and coaching activities involving employers and skilled immigrants. Through such events, immigrants and employers can gain exposure to each other outside the context of a specific job interview, and can begin to break down some of the cultural and workplace barriers. Employers gain valuable insight into the suitability of skilled immigrants as employment candidates, while immigrants gain valuable networking experience, develop new skills, have opportunities to speak with employers, and become better prepared to seek employment.

Contact HIO for more information about these activities.



Multicultural workplaces are most effective when they are inclusive – when both new Canadians and the workplaces they enter understand the benefits of learning how the other works and thinks. It’s been shown that inclusive workplaces have much higher employee retention and satisfaction ratings.



DID YOU KNOW?

Hire immigrants Ottawa offers complimentary cross-cultural competency training sessions for employers, managers and human resources staff. You’ll learn skills, tools and strategies to help you adapt your workplace for a diverse employee base. There are six modules in this suite of workshops. To register for upcoming sessions, please visit www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/events

Contact HIO at 613-683-3370 or events@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca for more information.

The information, tools and resources in this guide can help you take some important steps towards creating an inclusive workplace. By doing so, you will move part way across the bridge of workplace cultural adaptation. Both you and your new Canadian employee will be better able to cross the cultural gap.

