

HIO Case Study

RBC: Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce that is Representative of the Wider Community

Case Study at a Glance



To provide excellence in client service, improve customer satisfaction, and capture new markets, RBC seeks to leverage the talents of a diverse workforce that is representative of the wider Ottawa community, including Ottawa's immigrant population.

RBC benefits from the leadership and direction of a diversity Council chaired by CEO Gordon Nixon. Given the bank's multi-locations and country-wide employee base, initiatives vary across the country. In Ottawa, RBC undertakes a broad range of diversity and inclusion practices:

- Undertakes a voluntary diversity Census of RBC staff which is used to measure progress on representativeness within all levels of the business.
- Has developed an employee language-skill list which is used as a shared resource for RBC employees in all branches in the Ottawa area, to provide in-person language specific service.
- Uses Census data in combination with the employee language skill list to identify language gaps in service roles.
- Uses the information, resources, and networks provided by HIO and other community immigrant serving organizations to properly place new employees in the Ottawa region according to the specific demographics of clients in the community.
- Participates and collaborates with LASI Worlds Skills and the Ottawa Job Match Network (e.g. hosted mock interviews on site with OJMN clientele) to talk with new Canadians about RBC's skill needs in Ottawa.
- Involves managers in the Ottawa region in diversity initiatives, including creation of branch champions and participation in cross-cultural competency training.

ABOUT HIO CASE STUDIES

Hire Immigrants Ottawa is pleased to profile the innovative and best workplace practices of Ottawa-based businesses and organizations as they pertain to recruitment, integration and retention of new immigrants within the workplace. The case studies describe the types of initiatives being undertaken by local employers, the motivations for introducing the initiatives and their impacts on individual, team, and workplace performance.

By sharing successful recruitment and integration practices more broadly within the management and human resource communities of Ottawa-based organizations, HIO seeks to inform and encourage other workplaces to undertake their own recruitment and integration efforts. The case studies are based on interviews held with company representatives who are actively engaged with the implementation of recruitment and integration initiatives in the Ottawa area.

RBC: Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce that is Representative of the Wider Community

As one of North America's largest financial institutions, RBC employs almost 80,000 people worldwide. RBC is a leader in diversity and inclusion practices and has been recognized with several awards including best employer for new Canadians by the editors of Canada's Top 100 Employers. To learn more about RBC's initiatives to recruit and integrate immigrants into its Ottawa workforce, Hire Immigrants Ottawa interviewed Sue Danahy, Branch Manager with RBC, local diversity champion, and member of HIO's financial sector working group.

RBC Leadership: Setting the Direction and Tone

RBC's commitment to diversity and inclusion begins at the top of the organization. CEO Gordon Nixon founded RBC's diversity leadership council in 2001, which he continues to Chair. The Council, which includes the leaders of RBC's various business lines and other top executives, sets RBC's diversity strategy known as the [RBC Diversity Blueprint](#). The strategy focuses on three key pillars: increase the diversity and inclusion of our workforce globally; offer customized and accessible services and products to diverse client markets; build supplier diversity programs in North America to support the economic and social development of our communities through leadership research, strategic partnerships, donations and sponsorships.

According to Sue Danahy, leadership at the top is hugely important to the success of local diversity and inclusion initiatives in Ottawa. "In some organizations, I might have the difficult job of convincing leadership of what needs to be done, but we have support at the very top of the organization, so that makes it easy. Gord Nixon is setting the direction and the tone".

The key focus for Danahy is taking the leadership and direction from the national office and putting it into practice "here on the ground in Ottawa". "While national office may say this is the right thing to do, and that they want to move forward, we ask how do we move forward? I'm not a diversity specialist, so what do I do?"

Getting Started: Connecting with Community Organizations

When Danahy began her own "diversity journey" some four years ago, connecting with Hire Immigrants Ottawa was an important step in learning about the information and resources available to employers through various community organizations such as LASI World Skills and Ottawa Job Match. These connections allowed Danahy to learn about local immigrant employment networks and how to access immigrant job seekers in order to build a "recruitment pipeline". Hire Immigrants Ottawa also provided opportunities for Danahy to become involved in immigrant coaching events, and to hear first-hand from new Canadians about their struggles and challenges in finding skills appropriate employment. According to Danahy, "it was really about getting out to events, meeting people, getting information from HIO and having my eyes opened as to how challenging it can be for a newcomer, and discovering that we were missing out by not tapping in to this great human capital".

"RBC's objective is always to pick the best candidate to serve our clients and a big part of that involves a diverse workforce. At the same time, we want to make sure all our employees have the appropriate support they need, be it mentoring, coaching, etc. so they can progress through the company."

Through her direct involvement with new Canadians, one of the challenges Danahy discovered was that because banking is different in other countries, immigrants were not necessarily presenting resumes that reflected the particular skills RBC was looking for to support retail banking in Canada. To overcome this barrier, and to help spread the word about RBC's local employment and skills requirements, Danahy attended coaching events, participating in one-on-one mentoring and mock interviewing exercises hosted by immigrant serving organizations. In doing so, she discovered that there was a tremendous talent pool of skilled

immigrants in Ottawa, and that there was a need to encourage more of RBC's Ottawa-based Branch Managers to become engaged and involved in understanding how to access this internationally trained local talent.

Mock Interviews, Coaching Events and Cross-Cultural Competency Training

In Ottawa, RBC continues to expand its engagement with immigrant employment networks and is actively encouraging its managers to participate. The company has hosted mock interviews on site for immigrant clients of the Ottawa Job Match Network, with several

of its local area managers participating. During these events, RBC managers work with new Canadians to share information about RBC's skill requirements, and to provide feedback on immigrants' interview skills and resume preparation. Danahy describes the initiative as "a great awareness and capacity builder within our own team."

RBC managers also participate in cross-cultural competency training, which helps develop the skills needed to effectively communicate and interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, be it their employees, clients or suppliers. The training plays an important role according to Danahy: "We have a great work environment and a lot of other initiatives in place to make sure everybody feels respected and welcomed. That said, there was some opportunity around increased employee knowledge of cultural dimensions of hierarchy, risk tolerance and individualism".

Interest in diversity and inclusion initiatives continue to gain momentum at RBC in Ottawa. As a sign of this growing interest, Danahy is now recruiting diversity champions from every RBC branch in Ottawa, and it is her hope that all RBC's managers take part in cross-cultural competency training.

"Yes, diversity and inclusion is the right thing to do, but it's also a business imperative".

From Diversity to Inclusion

RBC undertakes an internal diversity survey which is intended to assess the proportion of RBC's employees that fall within four main equity groups: visible minorities, people with disabilities, Aboriginal Canadians, and women. The survey allows RBC to gauge the diversity of its employees relative to the population at large, and to see how well RBC is doing in ensuring that people within these categories grow their careers. According to Danahy, "RBC's objective is always to pick the best candidate to serve our clients and a big part of that involves a diverse workforce. At the same time, we want to make sure all our employees have the appropriate support they need, be it mentoring, coaching, etc. so they can progress through the company. Our ultimate goal is to help women, Aboriginal peoples, visible minorities and persons with disabilities in whatever capacity we can reach leadership and executive level roles."

MOSAIC: Employee Resource Group for Visible Minorities and Newcomers to Canada

To further RBC's goal in creating diverse and inclusive workplaces, the company has instituted a series of [Employee Resource Groups](#) that "help bring together employees from a shared background and gives them a resource to help them develop both personally and professionally". According to RBC's 2012 Diversity and Inclusion

Progress Report, more than 6,500 RBC employees participate in self-governing Employee Resource Groups.

One of these groups is called MOSAIC, and its mission is "to help foster an inclusive culture by enabling the success of visible minorities and newcomers to Canada within RBC". MOSAIC provides peer support through networking, mentoring and coaching; promotes education and awareness; and supports employee engagement and retention.

Danahy says the MOSAIC group has been in place since 2008, although "mainly in the GTA, with chapters in Montreal and Vancouver." In order to further diversity and inclusion among RBC's Ottawa staff, a local Ottawa chapter of MOSAIC was recently launched in the fall of 2012. For Danahy, the employee resource group is a key next step in the development of diversity and inclusion in Ottawa: "Because the groups are employee-led, it offers visible minority employees an opportunity to determine the goals they want the resource group to have and which direction they would like to take it in".

Danahy suggests that there may be several initiatives the Ottawa chapter of MOSAIC could consider, such as mentoring events in which RBC executives talk about their career path, information sessions about other jobs available in the organization, or on-boarding practices that would help new employees be successful. Nonetheless, Danahy insists that in order for these resource groups to really have an impact, it is essential that its members take the lead. For diversity to be driven deeper, it needs to come from within these ERGs, at the grassroots level.

Impacts: Leveraging Diverse Talent for Service Excellence

RBC produces and publishes an annual [diversity and inclusion progress report](#) - itself a strong indication of the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion - to publically document the progress it has made in reaching their strategic Diversity Blueprint objectives. The 2012 report shows that in Canada overall, the percentage of RBC's employees who are members of a visible minority increased from 24% in 2006 to 30% in 2012, while visible minorities in middle management and above increased from 21% to 30%. Visible minorities represented 15% of executive level positions in 2012, up from 9% in 2006. Danahy believes this shows some great headway, and in a relatively short period of time.

In Ottawa, Danahy sees the positive impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives first hand, especially as they relate to client service. "We're

starting to see some synergies, for example, when a bank teller, account manager and mortgage specialist connect culturally, it allows us to deliver tailored customer service. It can make it a much stronger experience for the client when somebody can speak your language, understand where you come from and where you're headed". Danahy believes that the positive experience of their clients is vitally important in reaching into new markets, through their connections with family, friends and community.

To further leverage cultural diversity in support of client service, RBC in Ottawa has developed what Danahy refers to as "very practical tools giving very tangible results". One example is an employee language skills list, which is used as a shared resource for Ottawa RBC employees. When the need arises for specific language support, RBC employees can simply contact a local colleague who can provide language-specific assistance. The same language skills list is now being used to identify language gaps in service roles. Danahy explains how this feeds back to the recruitment process: "we always have to hire the best candidate, but if we have a language service gap, we can make sure we reach out to everybody we know who speaks that language and get them in for an interview".

Employee Satisfaction

Another impact of diversity and inclusion is the positive effect it can have on employee satisfaction. As a Branch Manager, Danahy knows that while RBC employees strive to be successful sales people, it is their ability to deliver advice and add value that ultimately brings the most satisfaction: "To enrich the customer's experience through cultural awareness makes it such a more enjoyable and fulfilling work experience".

Lessons Learned

While Danahy is the first to admit that both RBC's and her own personal "diversity journey" continue to evolve, she has gained valuable insights and practical tips that could help other managers wanting to implement their own workplace diversity initiatives.

Danahy says it is important for managers to get a read on where their support is within the organization, whether it's at the leadership level or with someone who reports to you. Danahy also stresses the importance of taking advantage of the resources available through HIO and its community partners such as LASI World Skills, and the Ottawa Community Immigrant Service Organization (OCISO). "Interacting with these organizations, there is so much we can give them and there's so much they can give us. It creates tremendous synergies – it's just a matter of taking the time to make those connections".

Finally, Danahy would encourage managers to participate in Hire Immigrants Ottawa's cross cultural competency training. "Get educated. Do the cross cultural competency training. Even when you think your eyes are open, if you haven't been through it, they probably aren't as open as they could be".

Bringing it Back to the Bottom Line: the Business Case for Diversity and Inclusion

As a public listed company with shareholders, Danahy knows it is important to tie it all back to the impact on the bottom line. "Yes, diversity and inclusion is the right thing to do, but it's also a business imperative now. A diverse workforce allows us to better serve a diverse client base, thus attracting more business. It's this win-win mentality that drives RBC's business in the marketplace. If we don't have the language skills and cultural understanding when people are coming in to our branches, we're going to miss out on that opportunity to provide the superior experience we are striving for. We're looking to go that extra mile because in the banking business, it's all about connecting with clients on a personal level".