

HIO Case Study

TD: Making Diversity and Inclusion a Strategic Priority

Case Study at a Glance



To achieve its mission of being a customer - focused financial institution with a unique and inclusive employee culture, TD has made diversity and inclusion a strategic priority. TD's Diversity Leadership Council is composed of senior executives from all of TD's businesses and whose mandate is to champion diversity across the organization and help embed diversity into the businesses.

In Ottawa, TD undertakes a broad range of diversity and inclusion initiatives relating to the hiring and integration of immigrants, including:

- Recruitment events targeted to new Canadians
- Participation in networking and coaching events with community organizations serving culturally diverse immigrants
- Employee resource groups for diversity groups
- Mentoring programs with new Canadians

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 the 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.

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As one of Canada's largest financial institutions, [TD Bank Group](#) employs more than 85,000 people worldwide, including over 33,000 in Canada, and 2,100 in Ottawa. TD is a leader in workplace diversity and inclusion practices and has been chosen by [Mediacorp Canada](#) as a Best Employer for New Canadians each year since 2008, when the award was first introduced. To learn more about TD's initiatives to recruit and integrate immigrants into its Ottawa workforce, Hire Immigrants Ottawa interviewed Carol Brazeau, Recruitment Officer, and Christine Stigter, Senior Manager, Diversity and Inclusion, Human Resources at TD Bank Group. Both are local diversity champions and Christine represents TD on HIO's Employer Council of Champions while Carol is a member of the HIO Finance Sector Working Group.

A Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

TD's success with diversity and inclusion is by design. The company has made diversity a strategic priority and a key element in support of its corporate vision to "[Be the Better Bank](#)". Group President and CEO Ed Clark writes in TD's [Corporate Responsibility Report](#): "We believe that TD's commitment to diversity is not only the right thing, it's critical to achieving our mission to be a leading North American bank. Our success depends on reflecting the communities and cultures where we do business."

For TD, "reflecting communities" begins with recognition of the multiple diversities that exist in Canadian society - culture, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, nationality, and so on. TD's diversity perspective also includes a special consideration for [new immigrants](#) to Canada, who may have unique needs and challenges as customers (understanding how finance in Canada works), as employees (accessing jobs and adapting to Canadian workplace standards and culture) and as members of

the community (how to find a school or documents needed to get a license or access health care).

TD takes a holistic approach, as it applies a diversity perspective to all its customers, employees and to its involvement in the community. "Our customers want to see themselves reflected in their bank," says Christine Stigter, Senior Manager, Diversity and Inclusion. "This means we have to be able to attract, recruit and retain great people from diverse candidate pools. We also aspire to deliver legendary customer experiences, and this means our employees must be comfortable with diversity, and have the skills and competencies to 'deliver' to all customers – regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability or cultural background."

To be *inclusive*, TD strives to be a place where:

- Every employee and customer is respected, valued and supported
- Employees can bring their whole self to work
- People's differences are respected and supported
- Barriers are removed to create an environment where all employees have the opportunity to achieve their full potential based on merit
- Customers feel comfortable and see themselves reflected in the bank's employees

For TD, diversity is not an "add-on" policy or a secondary business consideration. Instead, diversity and inclusion are embedded as integral parts of TD's business strategy to be a leading North American financial institution.

Leadership and direction of TD's overall diversity agenda is championed by a formal [Diversity Leadership Council](#) composed of senior executives from all of TD Bank Group's businesses and corporate areas. The Council reports directly to the CEO and has the mandate to champion diversity initiatives across the organization and help groups embed diversity into their business plans.

TD also has a Corporate Diversity Office, whose mandate is to oversee the diversity strategy, ensure corporate initiatives contribute to TD's diversity goals and objectives and communicate updates to broader teams.

The challenge of “rolling it out” across Canada

For Christine Stigter, the commitment and leadership of TD's senior executive team, along with the bank's clearly stated business case for diversity, have been extremely important in her efforts to apply TD's diversity and inclusion perspective in its Ottawa business: “Our entire leadership team supports diversity and inclusion,” she says.

Nevertheless, Stigter does point to the unique challenge of “rolling out” diversity and inclusion in the eastern Ontario region in which she operates: “when the business case for diversity was made, it was our senior leadership who very firmly stood up and said this is something we stand behind.”

To implement its diversity and inclusion approach in Ottawa and other areas of the country, TD has taken a flexible, regionally organized and community-based approach that allows Stigter and her colleagues to take on initiatives and seize opportunities that best serve the interests and needs of each area's customers, employees and the community at large. Stigter illustrates this flexibility with this example: “In 2011, TD acquired MBNA, which had headquarters here in Ottawa. MBNA had a very robust local diversity program in place. Instead of coming in and saying “that's not how we do it here,” TD said “we really like what we see, keep doing that.” And so now it's a matter of networking between the regions, learning from the experiences of other regions across the company and what's working for them. More often

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than not you can do something similar, but you can also tailor it to your situation. Atlantic may not need an Asian Leadership Network, and corporate office is not going to make them have one.”

Networking, Coaching, and Connecting with New Canadians in Ottawa

For many years, TD recruitment officer Carol Brazeau has participated in the [Hire Immigrants Ottawa initiative](#). A long-time member of HIO's finance sector working group, Brazeau has taken part in numerous networking and coaching events put on by HIO and its community partners. During a typical coaching event, employers volunteer their time to meet and advise immigrant job seekers about the various positions and careers within the finance sector, the job skills required for such positions, and the job search techniques that will improve their chances of successfully landing a job. The coaching events are designed primarily to be “no pressure” information and support sessions, and they are not focused on recruitment per se.

For Brazeau, the coaching events are valuable, helping to increase awareness of the challenges facing immigrant job seekers, but also as a first-hand demonstration of the high quality job candidates available within Ottawa's immigrant population. Building on her positive coaching experiences, Brazeau and her TD colleagues in Ottawa decided to implement a new local initiative in which TD would focus squarely on the recruitment of immigrant talent.

“The HIO coaching events are great,” says Brazeau. “We meet a lot of terrific people, but I felt that our team in Ottawa could do something more.” By something more, Brazeau is referring to their first-ever targeted coaching and recruitment event, organized and hosted in Ottawa by TD. “We wanted to hold our own

event, one that would focus on immigrant job candidates with the specific skills TD is looking for. The idea was to bring qualified candidates to our offices, interview them, present them to TD's line of business, and hopefully get some successful hires on the books."

In preparation for the recruitment event, Carol's team worked with LASI World Skills, an Ottawa-based organization that provides a variety of programs and services to promote the skills and talents of new Canadians. "They did all of the background screening for us and had conversations with the candidates to make sure it was a fit for them. When the candidates came to us, we were able to go right through to the interview process."

In Ottawa, the majority of TD's hiring is for entry level call centre service representatives and what has traditionally been referred to as "tellers". To fill these positions, TD looks for people who have proven customer contact experience, the ability to interface with customers and to provide excellence in customer service. In addition, TD is looking for people who enjoy talking to people, and who have the ability and comfort level to "cross-sell" (i.e. serving customers while at the same time offering other financial products and services).

According to Brazeau, the recruitment event was a great success: "We had 10 candidates, and we hired three people. But *all* of the candidates had an opportunity to have a one-on-one interview with a recruiter. Even though they might not have been successful in landing a position, they were able to take something away, and hopefully they will reapply in the future."

Christine Stigter says this type of local coaching and recruitment event is part of a broader country-wide strategy, led by TD Bank Group's national recruiting team. "Part of their mandate," says Stigter, "is to hold a specific number of such events across Canada each year, each one designed to enhance diversity at TD.

While the national recruitment team sets the direction, each of eight major regions across the country has discretion to lead and decide what the right opportunities are for such an event. It may be partnering with a college or university, or an immigrant service agency like LASI World Skills. So these types of events can be focused on new Canadians, or persons with disabilities, or any form of diversity. It's been very successful."

Mentoring and Employee Resource Groups

In Ottawa, TD also participates in mentoring programs with local organizations such as LASI World Skills, working with TD's local *Asian Leadership Network* (ALN) program, one of several employee resource groups TD supports in Ottawa. Stigter explains: "Here in Ottawa, we actually have six different employee resource groups. The *Asian Leadership Network* is one of those. Each group is really "grass-roots" and employee-based, and each aims to help develop their members and reach into their community, and have some fun and celebration around their particular culture.

"The ALN reached out to us," says Stigter, "looking for the opportunity for their members to develop skills by mentoring others from the community. A lot of ALN's members are new Canadians and they wanted to give back to the community. As new Canadians, they are able to truly provide good guidance to other new Canadians on 'here's what worked for me, don't give up.' There are other instances where ALN's mentors are not new Canadians, and those mentors also benefit from understanding what that experience is like for a newcomer, hearing it first-hand, one-on-one."

One person who has heard that newcomer experience first-hand is Carol Brazeau, who feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to be a mentor in the ALN program: “When I volunteered, I really had no idea what I was getting into, and I wondered what I could offer. I was partnered with a new Canadian, and we met on a regular basis, maybe once a month for about nine months. The whole idea behind that program wasn’t to get her a job. It was really just to provide coaching. We looked over her résumé, talked about her job search, and discussed ideas that she may not have thought of before. At the end of it, she actually was successful in finding a job. Not with TD, but with someone else. I ran into her almost a year later and her feedback to me was very positive. She was grateful and really felt that mentoring had given her confidence and helped her get that employment opportunity. I didn’t realize how valuable that was. So that was great feedback for me, and I felt really good about it. Even after the program was over, when I interview hundreds of people and look at hundreds of résumés, I keep her in the back of my mind”.

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knowledge to fill in the blanks. You tend to think differently, and fill the blanks in a little differently. And employees share their experiences and stories and open other people’s eyes — and minds. So the more of those opportunities we can provide, without a doubt, the more inclusive our workplaces will become.”

Stigter also talks about what she refers to as the “ancillary benefits” of mentoring. “A lot of the folks who have acted as mentors in the ALN mentoring program are not managers of people within this organization. But the experience of providing that guidance, of discovering you have the ability to have a positive impact – those experiences build new

leadership capabilities and that helps their career develop. There are just so many benefits to that type of mentoring program. We’ve been trying to run this mentorship program every year with [LASI World Skills](#), and I know they are trying to find other employers who are interested in doing something similar. I would strongly encourage it as it is a win-win, for employers and job seekers.”

Impacts – Cross cultural competencies, Inclusive Workplace

The personal experiences of TD managers and employees in mentoring, coaching, networking or other forms of cross-cultural interaction are an important way of “instilling a culture of inclusiveness within our workforce,” says Stigter, who offers a compelling explanation of how that actually happens. “There is a theory of [unconscious bias](#) which says that because the human brain can’t digest every single detail and can’t possibly know everything, we unconsciously fill in the blanks with assumptions. It’s human nature. When you have a one-on-one cross-cultural experience, you learn something about the other person, and you have new