

The WorkBC Employer's Tool Kit:

A Resource for British Columbia Businesses

Booklet 4

Diversity at Work - Recruiting and
Retaining Immigrants



Diversity at Work - Recruiting and Retaining Immigrants

A resource booklet for employers

Why has the WorkBC Employer's Tool Kit been produced for businesses in British Columbia?

British Columbia has a booming economy and our unemployment rate is at a 30 year record low. Much like the rest of Canada and other developed nations around the globe, B.C. is beginning to feel the impact of an impending labour shortage. Canada is facing an unprecedented change in workforce demographics as the first wave of the baby boom generation begins to retire. In fact, for every two baby boomers who retire, there is less than one person to take their place.

In British Columbia, more than one million jobs will be created by 2015. At the same time, more than one quarter of the current workforce will retire. This is a challenge for which there needs to be both short- and long-term solutions. Both developed and developing countries are experiencing similar demands for skilled labour. With this new global reality, British Columbia is in direct competition with other regions for skilled workers.

This WorkBC Employer's Tool Kit is provided by the Ministry of Economic Development to supply businesses in British Columbia with the necessary tools and resources to ensure they are properly equipped to attract, retain and, most importantly, engage their employees.

By using this resource booklet and the three labour pool-specific resource booklets, businesses in British Columbia can develop a range of strategies to help address the current and upcoming labour shortages.

Four Resource Booklets

Booklet 1:	How to Attract, Retain and Engage Employees	1
Booklet 2:	It's About Ability – The Mature Worker	2
Booklet 3:	Under the Labour Radar – Aboriginal People, Women, Youth and People with Disabilities	3
Booklet 4:	Diversity at Work - Recruiting and Retaining Immigrants	4

Inside this booklet you will find the following:

- An overview of current workforce trends
- The benefits of hiring from a culturally diverse labour pool
- Strategies to prepare for diversity in your workplace
- Sources for advertising and creating advertising that invites cross cultural applicants
- Tips and strategies for interviewing
- Resources for further learning

“The ‘perfect storm’ has been created by an aging workforce, a declining 15-24 year old new entrant pool and stiff international competition for talent. Strong economic growth over the last five years has increased the skills gaps in B.C. Small businesses are particularly vulnerable when trying to deal with the impacts of labour shortages.”

The Coalition of B.C. Businesses

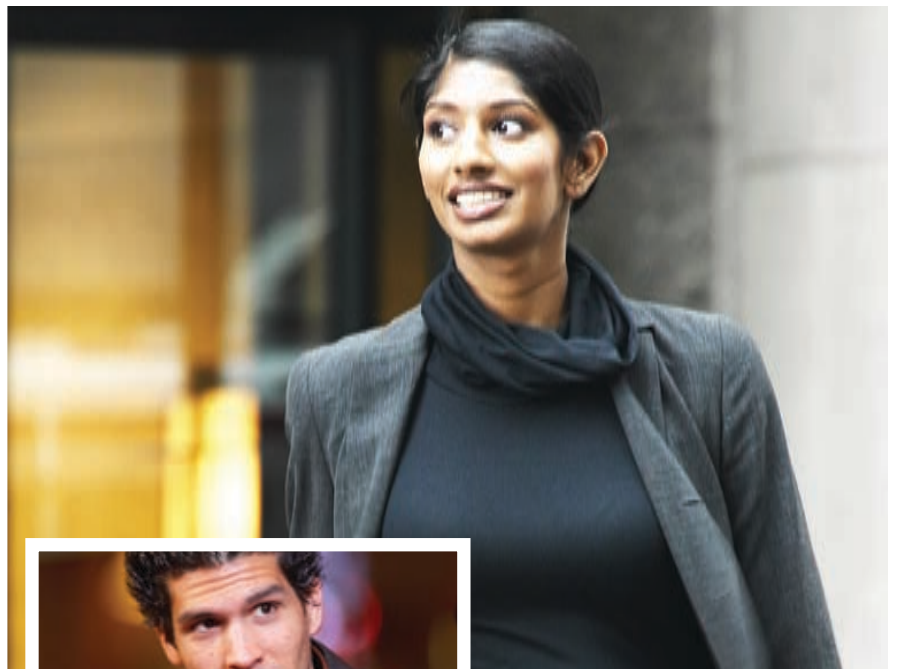


Table of Contents

An Untapped Labour Force.....6

Laying the Foundation.....10

Recruiting.....14

An Untapped Labour Force

Overview

Each year British Columbia welcomes immigrants from all over the world – yet this population remains a poorly recognized and under-utilized labour resource. Immigrant employees are often skilled and knowledgeable workers who can bring enormous benefits to many businesses.

Who is an “Immigrant Worker”?

Immigrant workers are skilled individuals, trained in other countries, who have come to live, work and invest in Canada. Individuals immigrate to British Columbia from many countries around the world – most adapt easily to the Canadian lifestyle while others require more support to integrate into the community.

Why Hire an Immigrant Worker?

Hiring from our immigrant population fills an identified need and provides overwhelming benefits for employers. Diversity in hiring is good business practice and sends a positive message to the community about your organization. Organizations and businesses require diversity to remain competitive and reflect a multicultural workforce and customer base. Managing this diversity well will play a critical role in recruiting and retaining valuable employees.

Immigrants bring vital skills, education, training and experience. Researchers estimate that by 2011, immigrants are expected to account for all net Canadian labour force growth - and for all net population growth by 2031.

Tapping into this labour pool has many benefits:

Discovering New Markets

Hiring staff reflective of the people living in the community naturally invites a broader client base. As new clients become regular customers they may tell others about your business.

Changing Local Markets

Demographics in our community are constantly shifting — bringing demand for new products and services. A diverse workplace is more responsive to the needs of the consumer. Moreover, newcomers provide a wealth of valuable customer and market information.

Doing Business with the World

New immigrants bring cultural diversity and new global perspectives. Reflecting this diversity within your staff provides you with a critical advantage in global marketing — particularly with export and manufacturing.

High Levels of Skill and Education

Many people arrive in Canada with high levels of skills and training which are critical resources as labour shortages intensify.

What Gets in the Way?

Diversifying your workforce can create challenges and opportunities. There are several factors to consider:

Experience

Gaining a full understanding of the potential employee's work history will offer great insight about their track record and their work experiences.

Credentials

People new to Canada may or may not have credentials recognized equally as in their country of origin. The International Credential Evaluation Service available through the British Columbia Institute of Technology helps employers assess foreign credentials (see page 8 for more information).

Communication

Even if a worker is less comfortable speaking English, the cultural competency and awareness they bring to a position will provide you with an advantage in a diverse market.

Connecting to Immigrant Communities

Connecting with support services, agencies and organizations may provide you with greater opportunities and business exposure in immigrant communities.

Hiring a Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW)

Through the TFW Program, the federal government allows eligible foreign workers to work in Canada on a temporary basis. Employers must demonstrate an inability to find suitable Canadians or permanent residents to fill jobs, and must show that the entry of a worker will not negatively impact the Canadian labour market. Employers from all types of businesses can recruit foreign workers to meet temporary labour shortages.

Contact Service Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada to learn more about hiring a temporary foreign worker, or visit their websites at www.cic.gc.ca and www.hrsdc.gc.ca.

In the B.C. Skills Provincial Summary Report of June 2006, employers identified strategies for addressing the skills shortage. "In-house training", "other strategies" and "flexible work schedules" held the top three positions, while "hiring more immigrants" was the least utilized strategy, with only a 2% response.



British Columbia's Provincial Nominee Program

British Columbia's Provincial Nominee Program (B.C. PNP) offers accelerated immigration for qualified workers and experienced entrepreneurs who wish to settle in B.C. and become permanent residents. The B.C. PNP selects and nominates potential immigrants for permanent residence who have the potential to provide significant economic benefits to the province.

B.C.'s Provincial Nominee Program consists of two main program components:

1. Strategic Operations

Supports B.C. employers who need to recruit or retain highly qualified foreign workers including skilled trades, designated health professionals, and international graduates. The B.C. PNP is also available for entry-level and semi-skilled positions in certain sectors.

2. Business

Accepts applications from experienced entrepreneurs who plan to invest in and actively manage a business in B.C.

Contact the Ministry of Economic Development for more information on B.C.'s Provincial Nominee Program or visit their website at www.pnp.gov.bc.ca.

Foreign Credential Recognition

Foreign workers often arrive in B.C. with credentials not recognized by employers and/or the professional associations with whom they are affiliated. The Ministry of Economic Development, through the Skills Connect for Immigrant Program and other initiatives with credentialing bodies, is working to support the recognition of international qualifications.

In addition, credentials can be evaluated through the International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES), a service of the British Columbia Institute of Technology. The assessment evaluates education received outside of Canada – considering the number of years and the level of study required to complete a training or education program.

ICES reports are advisory and do not replace the assessments required by professional or trade associations. Once documentation has been received, reports require four to seven weeks to process.

Contact the British Columbia Institute of Technology for more information on the International Credential Evaluation Service. The International Qualifications Unit at the Ministry of Economic Development also provides information and links to programs available for skilled immigrants. Visit www.ecdev.gov.bc.ca/ProgramsAndServices/IQU/contact.htm.



“Almost 60% of skilled immigrants in 2000 had a post-secondary degree, compared with 43% of the existing population.”

Maclean's, December 16, 2000

Frequently Asked Questions - Beginning Your Labour Search

1. Are there other ways to determine if someone who has international training or education has the appropriate skills for the job?

- Ask for certification or journey papers
- Ask appropriate questions through the interview process
- Offer skills testing on the job/worksite
- Focus on skills and competencies as opposed to specific credentials

2. Does hiring someone who is a temporary foreign worker mean that we are taking a job away from a Canadian worker?

No, hiring someone with international education and training complements your workplace and meets skills shortages.

3. What if there is a language barrier?

Consider whether fluency in English is a necessary job requirement. If knowledge of English is not necessary, then review what skills are required for the job and assess the applicant based on those skills.

If the applicant qualifies for a job, but requires increased proficiency in English, then consider recommending English as a Second Language (ESL) courses.

For more information on ESL programs available in B.C. visit www.welcomebc.ca/en/settle/english.html.



Laying the Foundation

Overview - Setting the Stage for Success

In order to meet the skilled labour shortage head-on, you will need to diversify your workforce and may look to hire skilled workers from outside the country, or within the existing pool of talented immigrants in your community

Your success in retaining these employees will depend largely on how you have prepared your workplace. Although people come to jobs for opportunities, they only stay when they feel connected and have a sense of belonging. This section will focus on how you can create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all employees.

Considerations for Diversity

Introducing diversity to your workplace requires putting measures in place that encourage employee retention. Careful planning and preparation will help new employees feel welcomed by you and your staff. Workplace diversity goes beyond “equal opportunity” and “affirmative action”; it means moving past “tolerating” change toward creating a truly inclusive environment. Most businesses find this is an easy extension of existing business practices.

Planning for diversity includes evaluating some of the following key personal and business values:

- your own personal commitment to valuing diversity

- training or new learning in which you may wish to participate as you lead your team
- what are your current approaches to managing your team and how will they support your efforts to welcome diversity?
- the communication that will need to take place between you, fellow leaders or managers and other staff
- your goals concerning diversity - they should be measurable, realistic, and match the needs and objectives of your business
- your research - who is finding success with diversity management right now, and what can you learn from their example?
- your policies and procedures – are they clear? Do they address harassment, discrimination, recruitment/hiring and promotion practices, a safe working environment, and racism?

Supporting employment diversity is an on-going commitment which can be mutually beneficial for you and your staff. Committing to diversity demonstrates that:

- you value each employee
- you respect and care for the community at large
- you are positioning your business for success

while your employees...

- feel safe in a workplace where they are valued and respected
- are committed to their employer, which means better retention and increased productivity
- will speak highly of their place of work, positioning your business as ‘employer of choice’

“By 2015 it is estimated that 100% of the growth in our labour force will be derived through immigration.”
The BC Chamber of Commerce 2006-2007 Policy and Positions Manual

A Diversity Thermometer

A Diversity Thermometer is one tool that can be used to assist management and staff in examining the ‘temperature’ of their environment. It is meant as a starting place to generate ideas about future planning. As you go through the exercise, either

individually or as a group, consider what you are doing now compared to where you would like to be in the future. This ‘thermometer’ is not meant to call attention to deficits, but rather it should be used as a tool to highlight key areas for consideration.

Taking your workplace cultural temperature

How does your mission statement/philosophy reflect your commitment to diversity?

Policies in your organization are in place to address the following issues (check all that apply):

- Multiculturalism
- Diversity
- Racism
- Discrimination and Harassment
- Inclusive Employment: Recruitment, Hiring and Promotion

Check all that apply in your place of business:

- Policies are available in more than one language
- Policies are available on tape
- Policies are available in Braille
- The use of inclusive, respectful language is the norm, and is expected (i.e. using the term “person with a disability” instead of “handicapped”)
- All levels of staff been involved in diversity training
- Assistive devices (i.e. for people who may be visually impaired or have decreased mobility) are made available
- Job postings target a broad range of media rather than only dominant/mainstream publications
- Physical office environment is welcoming: diverse people are visually represented in non-stereotypical roles, building and office spaces are accessible
- Staff, board and management are reflective of the communities they serve (i.e. ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds)
- Reasonable accommodations are made for individuals
- Information about the

organization/company is made available to as many people as possible

- Brochures and publications reflect diversity
- Brochures and publications are available in other formats (i.e. large font and other languages)
- A support system is in place that includes a complaints procedure wherein people feel comfortable discussing their concerns
- Job descriptions and application forms are worded clearly, invite a wide range of applicants, and identify only directly related and relevant skills
- A trained interpreter is available if/when one is needed



“By hiring immigrants and visible minorities, employers gain employees with great diversity in their education, training, skills and life experience. These employees bring fresh perspectives and diverse points of view, allowing businesses to better connect with their clientele.”

***Roger Heer, Intercultural Employment Department,
Kamloops Immigrant Services***

Did you know...

The Human Rights Code protects all individuals from discrimination in employment?

The Code states a person must not refuse to employ or discriminate against a person because of their *race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation or age.*

What is the Purpose of Diversity Training?

Diversity training is a critical part of any initiative. Training should be provided by a skilled facilitator and be designed to heighten awareness, strengthen communication, generate discussion and enhance teamwork. Diversity training can provide a safe place for people to explore their own experiences, values and beliefs and can help to alleviate fear associated with change.

Diversity training...

- demonstrates the commitment of management
- highlights the importance of diversity
- provides new skills and awareness
- shows individuals from varying backgrounds that the organization values people

Important considerations when planning diversity training include:

- what issues need to be discussed (i.e. values, creating understanding, human rights information, etc.)
- timing and frequency of training
- who should attend (everyone!)
- budget
- finding appropriate resources for successful training

Well thought-out and consistent training:

- gives staff the opportunity to learn about themselves in relation to others
- illustrates the workings of value systems
- breaks down barriers
- increases communication
- helps employees feel connected in an inclusive environment free of discrimination

“Pollard Banknote’s diverse workforce brings with it a wealth of experience, knowledge, culture and profound understanding that enhances our relationship with our customers and more importantly, with each other.”

Kathy Fournier, Human Resources Coordinator, Pollard Banknote Ltd.





Recruiting

Overview

This section reviews skills and resources required to recruit, interview and hire immigrant workers.

Advertising - Sources for Employers

Many employers look for new employees through the local media and internet. However, other sources, including immigration agencies, can also offer opportunities to reach a diverse pool of applicants.

Effective methods of attracting/ advertising to immigrant candidates include:

- a) **Develop your literature and marketing materials to be reflective and inviting to immigrants** – include diverse images and include a statement about your commitment to diversity.
- b) **Develop a relationship with agencies who work directly with immigrants new to your community** – think about sponsoring/being a part of multicultural events to increase your profile and connections to immigrant communities.
- c) **Advertise postings in immigrant/ethnic media and publications** – ensures you are reaching a broad cross-section of people.
- d) **Use personal contacts of current employees** – by simply encouraging employees to refer people they know are qualified. Some companies create formal employee referral programs, where employees are rewarded for referring qualified friends.
- e) **Networking** – consider social and professional functions: colleagues, neighbours, sports club members, etc.
- f) **Job Fairs** – are an excellent way to provide information to a large audience in a relaxed environment. Be sure to include key items such as a display, application forms, business cards, and your marketing communications materials.
- g) **Website** – is one of the best sources of information on your company. Your application process should be clear with all contact information up-to-date. Provide links to other sites promoting British Columbia as a great place to live and play.
- h) **The Internet** – is a cost-effective way to post current job openings and has the potential to reach thousands of people from all over the world.
- i) **Private Employment Agencies** – find job seekers that fit the qualifications that you are searching for. Fees paid by the employer are usually equivalent to a percentage of the successful candidate's annual income.
- j) **Professional and Trade Associations** – can provide information on applicants with the skills you may be looking for. Many associations circulate newsletters and/or magazines to members.

66.9% of 160 new immigrants said that “finding a job” was their most important concern when coming to Canada.

Canadian Immigrant Magazine Online

Writing for Diversity – Advertising that Invites

Your job advertisements should always consider the following:

- **Style**
Use active, powerful and engaging language when describing the position (i.e. dynamic working environment)
- **Format**
Brand your ad with your company logo, slogan or tag line, and be creative. Publications often have in-house marketing departments that can help you create an advertisement that fits your budget
- **Content**
Be clear about your application process, contacts and deadlines

When accessing a diverse labour pool, you also need to:

- Focus on all relevant skills and qualifications the job requires and consider other skills relevant to the job. Ensure the qualifications you are asking for do not inadvertently rule out other potentially qualified applicants.
- Keep language positive by removing wording such as “people not authorized to work in Canada will not be considered.” If this must appear in your ad, consider rewording it to read “proof of eligibility to work in Canada necessary”.
- Clearly reference your diverse/inclusive hiring practices. This may appear as a statement with regards to equal opportunity hiring, but could be a statement you have created for marketing your business (i.e. “A company who values the diversity and integrity of all people”).

Plain Language A Checklist for Employers

Plain language means writing in a clear and precise manner and offers potential applicants an understanding of what the position requires. It is a style that avoids wordiness and uses everyday language. This will appeal to a large cross-section of people. Some considerations for writing in plain language are:

- ✓ create a list of information critical for potential candidates to know
- ✓ present the information in a logical order (avoid jumping around)
- ✓ use a personal and conversational tone such as “You may be the right person if..”
- ✓ avoid long and complex words (i.e. instead of “utilize”, consider saying “use”)
- ✓ use a simple sentence structure (i.e. subject, verb, object) and make sure sentences are not too long
- ✓ avoid using very technical language and jargon
- ✓ avoid acronyms

Screening Resumes - Points to Ponder

Employers typically take between five seconds and one minute to screen resumes for potential candidates. However, as you begin considering foreign-trained candidates, take time to assess this information more carefully. Employers unfamiliar with foreign credentials and/or education may give less preference to or screen out potentially qualified applicants. Time invested upfront will pay off in the long run.

Consider the following points:

- resume formats will vary depending on someone's country of origin. North American resumes are typically one to two pages and are generally formatted for the job. International resumes tend to focus on the scope and depth of experience resulting in resumes of up to ten pages.
- a resume is first step - while the interview will provide the insight you need to assess a person's skills, experience, credentials and history.
- The International Credential Evaluation Service can assist you in evaluating foreign credentials and qualifications.

Interviewing across cultures can pose a challenge to employers but with practice and awareness, these need not be barriers. Culture, including what we consider Canadian culture, plays a huge role in influencing body language, values, interests, work ethics, habits, and even how people choose to express these parts of themselves. It is not realistic to know all of the norms for every culture - but being aware of when and how culture might be a factor in an interview will help the applicant feel valued.

Cross-Cultural Interviewing

Interviewing across cultures requires awareness of cultural differences and norms. Being conscious of how culture influences body language, values and interests, work ethic, habits, and self-expression will help you evaluate the applicant's job skills and qualifications more fairly.

Helpful Strategies to Successfully Navigate Cross-Cultural Interviews

1. Speak Clearly
 - Be prepared with a list of questions to ask in a logical order.
 - Be concise, and avoid jargon, slang, and/or metaphors.
2. Be an Active and Patient Listener
 - Candidates need time to fully consider and respond to questions.
 - Avoid confusion by repeating a candidate's response to ensure you understand each other clearly.
3. Be Aware of Cultural Differences
 - Your values may differ from those of the interviewee. Recognize when this may be a factor.
4. Consider Your Body Language
 - Body language is linked to culture. What may be perceived as "non-traditional" behaviour is not necessarily indicative of the interviewee's potential performance or abilities.
 - Crossed arms or legs can often be interpreted as defensive.
5. Recognize How Culture is Linked to Behaviour
 - Be aware of how differences in status, age, gender and class can challenge traditional methods of conducting an interview.

THE POWER OF BUSINESS PARTNERING TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

Immigrant serving agencies serve as a bridge between British Columbia employers and local ethnic groups. They can provide a platform that offers businesses invaluable resources to assist with diversity recruitment needs, while equally assisting and supporting immigrants / visible minorities with labour market integration to achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

Common Interview Biases to Watch Out For:

- Age
- Gender
- Skin colour
- Physical Appearance
- English language and accent
- Perceived culture
- Ability/Disability
- Stereotyping

Watch for tendencies to make assumptions based on perceived norms and remember

Same Language Does Not Equal Same Culture and Background!

“As an immigrant myself, I was told by employers: ‘You need experience.’ So now as an employer my simple rule is: give people an opportunity.”

***Arun Kumar Deo, General Manager,
Comfort Inn***



Way forward...

“Diversity at Work – Recruiting and Retaining Immigrants” is the fourth booklet in a series of four designed for British Columbia’s business community.

As you move forward in developing a business strategy that addresses the impending labour shortage, use this booklet for information on how to access and welcome diversity into your workplace.

There are a number of short- and long-term solutions to this skills and labour shortage challenge. Competition for skilled labour is fierce and will be an ongoing challenge for the foreseeable future.

The businesses that embrace and commit to employee engagement, developing great leaders, becoming employers of choice, and tapping into specific labour pools, will have the greatest success in dealing with the challenges of the labour storm that British Columbia and the rest of business world is facing.

Good luck in your journey!





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