



TIP SHEET 3

HOW TO CONDUCT A CULTURALLY-SENSITIVE JOB INTERVIEW

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Everyone involved in the hiring process strives to find the perfect fit, and as an employer, you understandably want to hire the right person for the job. Current demographic trends indicate that net growth in the Canadian labour force can be increasingly attributed to immigration. This presents opportunities for employers, but also requires them to review their recruitment processes and tools so they don't miss out on great talent. The focus of this Tip Sheet is on how to review resumes to "screen-in" top talent, use interview techniques and questions with immigrant-friendly language, and allow for different communication styles.

Screening Resumes:

A resume is often your first impression of a candidate. It is your opportunity to take a step back, objectively assess the talent that is interested in your role, and screen in high quality candidates. Resumes from immigrant candidates may raise questions or challenges for you in regards to understanding their past credentials and experience, and fear around being politically correct in correspondence or interactions with them. This section is devoted to helping you overcome these barriers.

a Essential/Non-essential skills:

- Separate your "must-have" from the "nice-to-have" skills required for the job.
- Immigrant candidates who do not fulfill your wish list of "nice-to-have" skills may compensate with other skills, such as experience with international markets or connections to growing segments of the local market.

c Experience:

- Look for related work experience instead of screening for very specific experience like Canadian work experience, a certain number of years of experience, or recent experience.
- Hiring someone who has done a very similar job is great; there are also benefits to bringing in someone who can learn the job, and who has additional skills such as international experience.

"BC's total population increase over the twelve months ending January 1, 2014 was 51,046 persons, and largely due to international migration. Immigrants (+36,190) and non-permanent residents (+20,129) continue to be steady providers of population growth for the province."

BC Stats: Population Highlights, March 19 2014

b Ability:

- Look for ability, or signs the candidate has the potential to do the job, as demonstrated through past achievements, including volunteer experience. For example, look for evidence the candidate can learn, interpret and apply a law, rather than evidence the candidate knows the law itself.

d Communication:

- Look for the candidate's ability to carry-out the specific communication tasks required, rather than generalized "effective communication skills."
- Assess problems with readability, spelling or grammar problems in a resume carefully: a person whose first language is not English may make written errors, but may still be able to communicate verbally at an acceptable level in order to do the job.

e Cultural norms:

- Be aware that immigrants may include religious greetings, mention of their family or other personal information that Canadians do not generally include in resumes.
- Focus on content, not the style of the resume. What and how information is communicated, including on resumes, varies widely across cultures.

f Time at previous jobs:

- When reviewing resumes, remember that long tenure at a job can be interpreted either as a sign of loyalty or a lack of ambition, and frequent job changes could mean a lack of commitment to employers.
- Immigrants may have many reasons for atypical employment histories, and it is best to ask for clarification before dismissing a potentially excellent candidate.

Culturally-Sensitive Job Interviews:

A job interview can be daunting for even the most experienced job seeker, but for many immigrants, responding to interview questions is a brand new skill that has to be learned. Interviewing across cultures requires awareness of cultural differences and norms. Employers who are conscious of how culture influences body language, values and interests, work ethic, habits, and self-expression, etc., will be better equipped to evaluate an immigrant's job skills and qualifications more fairly.

a Review interview questions for bias:

- Use scenario-based questions to assess how the candidate would perform on the job. Ask for examples and specifics to enable the candidate to demonstrate their skills.
- If language is a barrier to accurate assessment, use practice-based ways of determining a candidate's ability.

c Practice active listening:

- When the candidate has a strong accent, do not assume that their communication skills are not suitable for your workplace. Seek clarification and encourage them to speak more clearly and slowly to help you understand them better.
- Accents both lessen and become easier to understand with experience in the workplace.

b Be aware of body language:

- Ideas of "personal space" and appropriate body language differ between cultures.
- What may be perceived as "non-traditional" body language may not be indicative of the candidate's potential or abilities. For example, lack of eye contact rather than being a sign of being untrustworthy or shifty may be an indication of respect for authority.

d Avoid "jargon" or technical terminology:

- Technical terminology may differ across workplaces and regions. Instead of using jargon or acronyms that may not be clear, communicate using simpler language that will allow you to assess the core competency required for the role.

Resources:

Surrey Board of Trade: HR Solutions for Immigrant Talent Employer Toolkit
Mastering the Job Interview Process Handouts.pdf

For more help, visit MindTheGapBC.com to access additional resources and download essential guides (free!)

Previous Tip Sheets:

Tip Sheet 1: How to Create Barrier-Free Job Descriptions
Tip Sheet 2: Where to Post a Job Vacancy

Upcoming Tip Sheets:

Tip Sheet 4: How to Assess Skills and Negotiate Competencies
Tip Sheet 5: How to Create a Culturally Inclusive Work Environment

“Diversity is a key goal for IBM Canada. To help the tech giant reach that goal, the 15-person core recruiting team is comprised of people from different cultures as well as several skilled immigrants. To find the best possible candidates, and ensure a bias-free selection process, hiring managers are trained on behaviour-based structured interviewing (BBSI) and look at a candidate’s full profile rather than making hiring decisions based on one single factor.”

IBM Creates a Structured, Bias-Free Recruitment Process

There’s more... IEC-BC provides an extensive online library of employer tools and resources. The IEC-BC Employer Tools and Resources Library is a collection of materials developed, in part or entirely, by partners or key organizations throughout Canada. If you’re ready to dig deeper into attracting immigrant talent click the button below.

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