RETAINING INTERNATIONAL TALENT: AN EMPLOYER CHECKLIST

Looking for ways to improve your ability to attract and keep people with the skills you need? This quick reference guide will help you assess your current practices and suggest ways to effectively orient and retain internationally skilled employees.

Are You Ready?

Use the checklist below to assess your current practices. Are you setting yourself up for success?

☐ Do you hire employees based on skills and abilities regardless of ethnicity, religion, and other differences?

☒ Do you have a mentor or buddy system in place to help new hires settle in?

☒ Do you have policies for creating an inclusive and diverse work environment? Are they stated in plain language? Do they, for instance, address a modified work schedule to accommodate religious holidays?

☒ Do you ensure that your internationally-trained hires are comfortable in expressing their opinions and making contributions to the workplace?

☐ Do workers treat each other with respect and remain open minded to diverse opinions, and are they accepting of people from different backgrounds?

☐ Does your workforce reflect the demographics of the communities you work in?

☒ Do you tap into the expertise of your diverse employees to better understand customer needs?

☒ Are you aware of local resources to help to improve cross-cultural communication, assess international credentials, and support the new hire’s settlement process?

☐ Do you have a clear plan to meet your future workforce needs?

Learn how to be diversity-smart...

► Becoming a Diverse Organization: A Diversity Organizational Change Roadmap
http://tinyurl.com/a7ejhae

► Diversity at Work: Supporting Employees from Different Cultural Backgrounds
http://hrouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-cultural.cfm

► Diversity Quiz, Diversity Team: Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
http://www.diversityteam.org/quiz

Hiring Immigrants: It’s Just Good Business

Look inside for recommended orientation and retention practices
The First Day: Orienting Your New Employees

Below is a list of suggested practices for orienting new immigrant hires. Use your discretion to determine what will be useful and appropriate for your business.

Company introduction

☐ Provide company information such as description of different departments, organization chart, staff contact list, policies, and safety and security procedures.
☐ Explain how IT and administrative supports work within your organization.
☐ Introduce direct manager(s), others they may receive direction from, and team members.

Working environment

☐ Review hours of work, breaks, and expectations around punctuality and absences.
☐ Tour the facilities and point out entrances and any special features (dining areas, exercise rooms, bathrooms, fire exits and routes, etc.).
☐ Openly discuss possible accommodation for religious practices and beliefs.

Job expectations

☐ Review the job description and any additional duties and expectations. Explain wage structures, benefits, and payroll deductions.
☐ Clarify how performance will be evaluated and details around the probation period.
☐ Provide an overview of training opportunities, both required and optional.

Matching a new immigrant hire with an established employee is a powerful way to smoothly integrate a him or her into your company and workplace culture. Consider adopting a mentor or buddy system. Clearly explain the expectations of this relationship. Check in periodically with the mentor and mentee to see how things are going.
The First Week: Settling In

Immigrant hires have to take in a lot of information during the first days and weeks of a new job, especially if they are new to the Canadian workplace. It’s likely that some areas will require further explanation. Below are tips on how to provide more clarity after orientation.

- Choose a coffee break to sit down and discuss work and non-work-related topics. Suggest local services or activities that might be interesting or helpful.
- Look for ways to include new hires in appropriate workplace activities such as lunches, informal gatherings, or team sports.
- Note progress and challenges related to work quality, communication style, and relationships with supervisors, team members, and mentor.
- Arrange a meeting for the end of the first week to...
  - Give clear feedback, keeping in mind that your words could be interpreted as more positive, negative, or neutral than intended.
  - Discuss each area of work and performance. Make written plans for improvement where necessary. Give new hires a copy for their records.
  - Recognize and praise ability to adapt and any successes.

The First Month: Working Towards Retention

Over the first month, it’s important to check in regularly and informally with your new immigrant employees. Remember that although they are able to do the work, many elements of the work and workplace may be very different than what they are used to. Below are some areas to consider.

- Discuss their experience so far. Note any differences arising in workplace culture and check in on their relationships with their mentor or buddy and other staff.
- Provide feedback on performance often.
- Keep an open mind and learn about new employees’ background and work experiences. Ask for their input and ideas about company practices.
- Make a note of areas (skills, technical, software, language, etc.) that call for development, training, changed behaviour, or upgrading.
The First Three Months: Establishing Success

Many organizations expect that new employees be settled after three months, usually the end of the probationary period. The support and training given to them during this time is critical, especially for those new to the country. Below are suggestions to help your new immigrant hires succeed.

- Discuss successes and areas for improvement related to work quality, communication skills, integration into the workplace culture, and relationships.
- Review records of punctuality, absences, and overall behaviour. Let new hires know that this is a normal organizational practice.
- Benefit from your immigrant hires’ knowledge and experience. Seek input on how to improve your company.
- Ask about their career goals and encourage them to research training options. Discuss what development is available internally and externally.
- Remind employees that they can request accommodation for religious holidays.
- If a new immigrant hire has not worked out, take time to do an exit interview. Give him or her feedback on how to improve for future success, and determine if changes are needed in your work place.

Resources for hiring a diverse workforce

- [www.hireimmigrants.ca](http://www.hireimmigrants.ca)
- [www.thinktalentthinkglobal.ca](http://www.thinktalentthinkglobal.ca)
- [Training Videos, Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)](http://triec.ca/find-solutions/for-employers/learning/training-videos/)
- [Mentoring for Skilled Immigrants Toolkit](http://alliescanada.ca/resources/toolkits/mentoring-for-skilled-immigrants/introduction/)

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