

Employers' Guide to Hiring Newcomers



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1 Introduction

Put Global Experience to Work for You

The purpose of this guide is to help employers find the best employees for their jobs, regardless of where those employees come from. It is well known that culture influences the way people seek work, speak about their experience or expertise and perform a job. As well, culture plays a role in how businesses select and develop employees.

Now that the labour pool includes more newcomers, it is increasingly important that human resources (HR) professionals and hiring managers gain awareness of the role cultural differences can play in the recruitment process. Newcomer candidates can easily be misinterpreted, so it's a good idea for businesses to establish strategies to deal with cultural differences.

This guide will help you:

- Assess and modify your recruitment and selection processes to avoid unintentionally rejecting culturally different candidates for reasons that are unrelated to their ability to do the job.
- Attract, select, develop and retain culturally diverse employees so that you can take advantage of the opportunities they represent for your business.

Note: This guide is organized to provide background information on topics or issues followed by strategies for your consideration.

Immigration Makes Manitoba's Economy Stronger

Manitoba has one of the most stable economies in Canada. But like many Canadian provinces, Manitoba's skilled workforce is shrinking because of a low birth rate and an aging population. Unemployment rates remain moderate and demand for skilled workers increases, as baby boomer generation workers retire (between 2006 and 2023), while employment growth has remained steady.

To maintain economic stability and ensure growth, Manitoba businesses must be able to attract, recruit, employ and retain qualified employees. To address the need for skilled labour, the Province of Manitoba and Manitoba businesses are increasingly turning to immigration as a source of skills and knowledge.

As a result, recruitment strategies that acknowledge the value of immigrants and culturally diverse employees will position Manitoba's employers to address labour demands, meet their fiscal goals and remain competitive.

The Face of Today's Workforce

In 2003, the Province of Manitoba, established an immigration target of 10,000 newcomers per year. This goal was reached and, as a result, a new target doubling annual immigration levels over the next 10 years was set. Since 1999, Manitoba has received over 60,500 immigrants. In 2007, Manitoba attracted 4.6 per cent of all immigrants to Canada, well above our provincial population share.¹ (See Endnotes on page 35.)

Manitoba immigration experiences are consistent with what Canada's Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration said in 2002:

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has predicted that by 2026, immigration will account for all population growth, and by as soon as 2011, it will account for all growth in the nation's labour force.

Manitoba Immigration: Quick Facts

The following quick facts describe the success of Manitoba's immigration initiatives as reported in the Manitoba Immigration Facts 2007 Statistical Report. These statistics provide a view of annual change in the number of immigrants arriving each year, source countries, education, occupation and language ability.

In 2007:

- Manitoba welcomed 10,955 immigrants.
- Economic class immigrants made up 76 per cent of all immigrants to Manitoba.
(Note: economic class entry is based on the principal applicant's ability to contribute economically)
- Of immigrants to Manitoba, 76 per cent settled in Winnipeg with increasing numbers settling in Winkler, Brandon, Steinbach and Morden (the other top destinations).
- The median age of immigrants was 27 years, while the median age for Manitobans was 37.4 years. Ninety-five per cent of all newcomers spoke an additional language, enhancing Manitoba's linguistic diversity.
- More than 84 per cent of Manitoba's economic class principal applicants (2,368) over the age of 25 had post-secondary education.²
- Economic immigrants had work experience in over 360 occupations.
- The top occupations were industrial butchers, welders, engineers, truck drivers and motor vehicle mechanics.

 To view Manitoba Immigration Facts – Annual Statistical Reports, go to: www.immigratemanitoba.com


Benefits of Hiring Newcomers

Newcomer candidates represent a significant resource that can bring a wide variety of relevant skills to your company. Keep in mind the challenges faced by immigrants in entering our country. We know that by the time a newcomer candidate has entered the Manitoba workforce, he or she has already demonstrated significant commitment, perseverance and adaptability to his or her new environment. While we know that all new employees have to display a degree of openness and flexibility when adapting to their new work environment, newcomers in particular, demonstrate an exceptional ability to adapt to the needs of their workplace.

In addition, newcomers bring their international employment experiences and add a fresh perspective on improving processes and techniques. Their intimate knowledge about both their home and other countries, complemented by their sensitivity to culturally diverse customers, can provide you with the potential to help fulfill your company's global initiatives and expand your client base. Finally, it is well known that newcomers offer a positive work ethic and self motivation that can quickly translate into company loyalty.

Hiring newcomers, many of whom are trained professionals, makes good business sense:

- Internationally trained newcomers can fill your vacancies.
- They offer a range of skills, talent, resources and experiences.
- They may help you to grow your business.

 To learn about companies across Canada that have benefitted by hiring skilled immigrants, go to: www.hireimmigrants.ca

2 Strategies to Assess Company Readiness

Is Your Business Ready to Hire Newcomers?

In a 2007 survey of Manitoba businesses conducted by Legacy Bowes Group, the majority of respondents confirmed that they employ immigrants. However, the employment of immigrants was incidental, rather than the result of a proactive recruitment strategy. Larger employers were the only businesses that indicated diversity was a key part of their human resources strategy.

On the other hand, it is noted that more and more businesses are receiving applications from newcomers and are wondering where they can learn more about recruitment, selection and integration strategies that address cultural differences.

Recruiting and hiring newcomers to the workforce requires employers to conduct a self assessment and review their recruitment, assessment and hiring practices. The core purpose of this is to identify practices that support inclusive workplaces, treat all employees fairly and promote the best in every employee.

“Equality is about treating people the same, thereby ignoring their differences, while equity is about treating people fairly, which means acknowledging their differences.”

TWI Inc. website: Beyond Diversity to Human Equity – Visioning, 2008

Equity of treatment is the foundation of inclusive workplaces. In other words, in order to treat people fairly, you must treat them differently. For example, you might orient a recent college graduate differently than someone with experience from a company that does the same type of work as your company. The type and depth of information required by these individuals is likely quite different.

Consider these questions when determining your company's readiness for attracting, assessing, hiring and retaining newcomers.

- Is there awareness within your company's management team that skilled newcomers are a significant part of the Canadian population and skilled labour pool?
- Is there acceptance and commitment from the management of your company towards the practice of recruiting and hiring newcomers? Do you have an action plan?
- Is there awareness of the value and transferability of international training, skills and credentials?
- Does your company support practices that promote diversity, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment?
- Is there commitment within your company to hold all staff accountable for these practices?
- Is there a process in place to provide training and awareness of the value of diversity in your workplace?
- Is there awareness of how stereotyping, prejudice and personal bias affects selecting the best candidate?
- Is there a recruitment philosophy based specifically on skills, regardless of where the skills were developed?
- Have job requirements been reviewed recently, or are they simply carried over from past recruitments?
- Are the skills required for the position actually the bona fide skills required for the job, or are they an ideal? (ex: Is it necessary to have five years of experience to do this job?)
- Are you aware of strategies for assessing candidates from diverse backgrounds?

i Discover how other employers created greater awareness of diversity opportunities within their workplace. Visit: www.hireimmigrants.ca and www.5stepsolution.ca. Search for information on *welcoming and sustaining cultural diversity*. This website provides a list of cross-cultural tools and on-line diversity resources.

The Manitoba Diversity and Intercultural Trainers provide a wide range of support services and training for industry, business, social service groups and community agencies in Manitoba. For further information, and to discuss your organization's training needs, contact by email: ditmanitoba@gmail.com.

The next section sets out an action plan to help develop a recruitment process that establishes realistic job requirements and methods to assess the skill sets of the newcomers applying for work at your place of business.

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Strategies to Attract and Recruit Newcomers

Strategy 1: Expand Your Recruitment Practices

Consider all possible options to attract and recruit newcomers to your company.

- Contact an immigrant employment service agency for assistance in accessing qualified candidates, programs and services or provide notice of a job opening. These agencies work with employers who need job ready candidates. They are also available to provide follow-up support.
- Participate in job fairs and employment trade shows, particularly if job fairs are aimed at newcomers.
- Post job notices with ethnic media – newspapers, newsletters and radio.
- Post job notices with the federal job bank. The job bank is linked to the Working in Canada website tool that many newcomers use to find job openings (see www.immigratemanitoba.com and click on the *Career Research Working in Manitoba* link to access this tool).
- Recruit through educational programs that attract newcomers.
- Host on-site information sessions about your company, its hiring practices and job availability.
- Increase your profile in the community and make sure the public is aware that your company welcomes newcomers. Ensure your website reflects this.
- Review and revise your communication materials to address the needs of newcomers.

i For a listing of immigrant employment service agencies sponsored by Manitoba Labour and Immigration, go to *For Employers* at: www.immigratemanitoba.com

For a link to the federal job bank and a listing of ethnic newspapers and ethno-cultural organizations in Manitoba, go to *For Employers* at: www.immigratemanitoba.com

Strategy 2: Review Your Company's Written Materials

Review information used to advertise, promote and recruit for your company.

- Make sure the requirements of the position are clearly stated and indicate how often the required skills will be used.
- Position descriptions should indicate the minimum skills needed to do the job and identify additional skills that may increase a candidate's likelihood of employment.
- Position descriptions or job requirements should be clearly stated. Acronyms, jargon and slang may not be understood by new Canadians.
- Determine what language skills are essential to the job and describe them fully. For example, presenting reports, communicating on the telephone, writing reports and completing forms should be mentioned specifically.
- Explain the hiring process used in your organization by describing the steps involved and the length of time these steps may take.
- An orientation to, or description of, your company and its products or services can help new Canadian applicants learn more about your company and apply for positions that most closely match their skills and experience.
- Describe how to get to your company or worksite. Identify bus routes.
- Have communication materials posted on your company website or readily available for distribution at your workplace.

The reality is that blanket job ads aren't working, and job titles don't translate well cross culturally. This calls for changes to the HR recruitment process.

Strategy 3: How to Select the Best Candidate: Screening Resumes

A recent immigrant from China said he realizes he must boast about achievements to get hired in Canada. It's never an easy thing to do because Chinese culture values humility. He said people back home would lose respect for him if they heard him blowing his own horn.

Awareness of cultural differences can mean the difference between rejecting a qualified applicant and potentially hiring a highly skilled employee.

In the recruitment and selection process, newcomer applicants try to show they have the required skills for the position through their behaviour and words. The employer evaluates who is the best person for the job, based on the information presented. However, when applicants and recruiters come from different cultural backgrounds, their interpretations of each other's behaviour and words can result in misunderstandings. A candidate may be rejected for reasons unrelated to his or her ability to do the job.

For instance, there are many differences in the ways resumes are constructed and presented. This section describes seven major ways that a newcomer's resume may look different, provides some explanation for the differences and helps you to understand how the differences may affect the resume screening process. Topics include:

- A Greater Emphasis on Education
- Organizational Expectations – Generalists vs. Specialists
- Stating Accomplishments
- Documenting Career Advancement
- Unexpected Emphasis on Personal Information
- Canadian Work History
- Cover Letters

In many countries people don't use resumes to get jobs. They use word-of-mouth references.

A Greater Emphasis on Education

Background

NEWCOMER: Many countries consider a candidate qualified for a position based on a minimum educational requirement. The candidate's degree(s) and the reputation of the university he or she attended are the primary selection criteria. The best candidate would also have a range of experience.

IN CANADA: In contrast, in Canada a strong candidate emphasizes his or her experiences and the match between those experiences and the experience required to do the job for which he or she applied.

Result

As a result, the resumes of many newcomers begin with and emphasize their education. Candidates that exceed the minimum education required for the position will proudly emphasize this (*Note: this is also true in the interview*). A newcomer may also emphasize their school and their numerical ranking or standing at university.

When a newcomer is unable to land a suitable job in a reasonable time, he or she may conclude that further education is required. Sometimes newcomers may appear over-qualified for the position for which they are applying.

Impact on Employers

As the institutions from which the candidate graduated are generally not familiar to a Canadian employer, the individual's alma mater, their ranking and even their credentials are often considered an unknown variable and may be discounted.

Organizational Expectations – Generalists vs. Specialists

Background

NEWCOMER: In some countries, businesses value employees who can see the interactions between various parts of the organization and, as a result, have obtained working knowledge of a variety of skills. Employees who are generalists are valued. Newcomers often comment that in their country of origin, skills are more transferable than they are in North America.

IN CANADA: Many businesses and positions are quite specialized. Employers tend to give priority to a candidate with the specialized skills and experience, and focus less on transferable skills.

Result

Many newcomers will try to show that they have broad experience by listing all of the different things that they have done, from the first day he or she started work, and in as many areas as possible. Newcomers may state that they are capable of doing any type of work in their field.

Impact on Employers

To a Canadian employer it may look like the candidate has a little experience in many things, but lacks depth of experience. The employer may discount much of the listed experience as irrelevant (particularly if the business is specialized) and may feel that the applicant's claim about extensive experience is not credible.

Stating Accomplishments

Background

NEWCOMERS: The expression of accomplishment varies among cultures. Candidates from many countries are not comfortable with stating their accomplishments. They can find it extremely difficult to sell themselves. In many countries, others do this for the candidate (ex: family, friends or even the interviewer) and he or she is expected to downplay his or her accomplishments.

IN CANADA: "Employers look for descriptions of career accomplishments, particularly those that are quantified, since they can compare the numbers mentioned in the resumes to their own experiences and determine whether these numbers make sense or not."³ For example, they may want to know the average number of sales in a month.

Result

As a result, the resumes of newcomers may list projects they've worked on or their responsibilities, but may not include specific accomplishments.

Impact on Employers

An employer may not appreciate the newcomer's skills and may screen out a newcomer applicant because their resume does not list any accomplishments.

Documenting Career Advancement

Background

NEWCOMERS: Resumes and covering letters may include information and words or phrases that are peculiar within a Canadian context, but in some cultures, indicate progress in job skill development and in upward movement through a business hierarchy.

IN CANADA: Resumes and cover letters are designed to help you match the experiences and accomplishments of candidates with the requirements of the position. Career advancement is emphasized through the accomplishments.

Result

Resumes from newcomer candidates may include many or lengthy job titles. Similarly, the number of people who reported to him or her might be included. Numerous letters of praise from former supervisors may be attached to the resume indicating that the individual was highly regarded in their previous job.

Impact on Employers

Canadian employers often discount letters of reference that accompany a newcomer's resume stating that the letters can't be verified. They might also conclude that the candidate does not know how to sell their achievements and therefore does not understand Canadian business culture.

Unexpected Emphasis on Personal Information

Background

NEWCOMER: In some countries, personal life is as important as work skills and experience when being considered for employment. Interviews might begin with discussion regarding the status and well-being of family members.

IN CANADA: Although small talk or chit chat is a business norm, inquiries about family members is considered personal and not appropriate for recruitment and selection purposes.

Result

Being unaware of Canada's human rights legislation, a newcomer may include a photo, their age, gender, place of origin, marital status, religion, family background and number of dependants.

Impact on Employers

Because Canada has strict laws about discrimination, employers not wishing to be perceived as biased may discount the application as inappropriate.

Canadian Work History

Background

NEWCOMERS: Newcomers often take a survival job while continuing to search for a job that more closely matches their international training and work experience. They may also take a part time job while attending English classes, because they know strong English skills will be required to advance in their profession. They may have worked for several employers for short times or more than one employer at the same time. Newcomers often emphasize their experience from their home country and may downplay or not mention their Canadian work experience, especially if it is unrelated to their profession.

IN CANADA: Although Canadian attitudes are changing slowly, we tend to devalue individuals who we think have had too many job changes within a short period. As well, many employers do not respect the personal sacrifice people make when they take a lower level job while searching for their desired job.

Result

To a Canadian employer, it may appear that the newcomer is job hopping rather than making sacrifices and adjustments that are not necessarily matters of choice.

Impact on Employers

Newcomers may have a work history that gives the impression of instability and little or no Canadian work experience. Canadian employers are often quite interested in Canadian work experience, as it makes assumptions easier about the transferability of skills and experience. Employers also want to know if a newcomer can successfully understand and communicate with people in a Canadian work environment.

What makes a good resume in one's home country may seem to make a poor resume in Manitoba.

Cover Letters

Background

NEWCOMER: Cover letters may also include unexpected wording. For example, the statement, I pray to God you will consider my application, is common protocol in some countries. Likewise, names, titles, greetings (ex: Your Excellency) and closings (ex: Your humble servant) may appear formal in nature. Other cultures may send cover letters that appear overly blunt (ex: Reply to me by...).

IN CANADA: A standard business format (formal, polite and impersonal) is used and enhanced with a description of how the candidate's skills and experience relate to the position.

Result

The immigrant's covering letter appears overly prim and proper, or contains flattery by North American standards. Conversely, the covering letter may seem to be demanding and may cause a potential employer to interpret this as representing the personality of a potential candidate.

Impact on Employers

Although this wording may indicate the best of manners or the norm in another culture, in Canada, it can be misinterpreted. If the letter or resume is seen as containing a lot of flattery, it may raise doubts about the sincerity of the new Canadian candidate. If the wording is blunt the employer may feel that the person is being rude or pushy.

To summarize, interpreting a new Canadian's experience and credentials can be quite challenging. A well-suited newcomer candidate may be overlooked because their cover letter or resume appears different from what Canadian employers are used to and expect to receive.

Strategy 4: Be More Flexible when Screening Resumes

The following five strategies outline how even the smallest change to your resume screening practices can increase flexibility and enable you to take into account the sometimes unique resumes of newcomer candidates:

- If possible, include employees who are known to be culturally sensitive on the recruitment and selection team as they are more likely to recognize behaviours that are culture based.
- Don't reject resumes because they describe responsibilities rather than accomplishments. You can ask about accomplishments in an interview.
- Focus on the candidate's progression in their home country. A newcomer may need to start at an entry level position to get their foot in the door in their profession in Canada.
- "Overlook frequent changes in positions after and immediately before the time they immigrated."⁴ Stability may be better determined by looking at their work experience from their home country.
- In general, academic credentials assessment is not required by employers in non-regulated professions or trades. Employers are encouraged to accept international credentials at face value and confirm the duration of study (number of years) in combination with an applicant's skills and experience during the interview.

If an academic credentials assessment is a condition of employment to complete the application process, or to maintain employment following a probationary period, individuals can be referred to Manitoba Labour and Immigration's Academic Credentials Assessment Service (ACAS) to confirm the comparable level of education in Manitoba.

To minimize the processing period for an assessment, ACAS requests that only applicants pre-screened by an employer be referred for an assessment. The current processing period for an academic assessment varies from two to six weeks.

 For more information on ACAS, go to: www.immigratemanitoba.com

While new Canadian job seekers want to make a good first impression, they often do not quite connect with Canadian employers as they are unfamiliar with resume and covering letter requirements in Canada. Thus rejection of skilled newcomer candidates often happens at the resume screening stage.

Strategy 5: How to Address Concerns about Language and Communication

Employers have limited means of determining language proficiency practically and fairly. Often employers will state that all employees must communicate at a particular level, ex: grade 6 level. Selection criteria stated in this way can be problematic.

Language skills assessments are often based on generic or academic content and do not reflect the real language demands of the workplace. While a new Canadian may know enough language to perform the job, this may not be reflected in their scores on standardized tests used by employers in the selection process. Also, language proficiency is not the same as the person's education or grade level.

While a newcomer may not have perfected his/her English skills, he/she may possess all the knowledge and skills required for the position. He or she may be well educated, but the skills and knowledge were acquired in another language. In many instances, performing the job does not require as high a level of English language proficiency, as is required to describe the job. English language skills will improve on the job.

One solution is to review the job description and identify key tasks. Consider the necessary and optional requirements for the position. Determine the language and communication skills required to do the job well. Is it important that the candidate has excellent speaking and listening skills to use in consulting with clients and leading project team meetings? Will the candidate be expected to write lengthy business proposals or reports? Does the job require referencing complex texts and documentation?

It should be noted that the interview could be particularly challenging for a candidate whose mother tongue is not the language of the interview. Pausing to search for the right word or phrase is common when you are learning to speak another language. Long pauses when speaking may not indicate a lack of skills and knowledge. Rather, the new Canadian candidate may be reviewing the best way to answer the question in the language of the interview.

If higher levels of language skills are not essential to do the job, then the candidate could be considered despite English or French language difficulties. Keep in mind that the best way to learn a language is to use it in a practical real life situation, like at work.

Telephone interviews are particularly difficult for newcomer candidates because there is no ability to observe non-verbal cues, which can aid communication and understanding for both the candidate and the interviewer. As a result, you may wish to allow candidates whose mother tongue is not English or French the chance to participate in an in-person interview, especially if communicating by telephone is not required for the position for which they are applying.

An accent is only one component of language and cannot be used as an indicator of a person's communication abilities. Keep in mind that your ear naturally becomes accustomed to variations in accent as you work regularly with a colleague. Some employers may have concerns in positions which are especially demanding of clear speech, for example, in cases where service is frequently over the phone. Free courses specifically on pronunciation are available in which individuals can work on a range of skills (such as stress, rhythm, intonation) to contribute to clear speech. This training can be taken while employed.

 For information on language training sponsored by the Manitoba government, go to *Learning English*, at: www2.immigratemanitoba.com

Strategy 6: Interview Strategies to Help You Assess Language and Communication Skills

The interview can provide an opportunity to assess the communication skills required to perform the job. The following strategies will help make your interview a success:

- If spoken language is important to successful performance on the job, then include a scenario to assess this skill. For example, if the position involves leading a project team, the candidate could be asked what they would say in a meeting to a member of the team who was repeatedly missing deadlines. All candidates could be asked this question.
- If telephone skills are necessary, a recorded, simulated telephone conversation could be used to evaluate the applicant's abilities to accurately transcribe and follow instructions. This type of evaluation can be done for all applicants for the position. If reading is an essential skill of the position, the applicant's skill can be assessed by providing examples of the types of documents the applicant will typically be reading, followed by either questions or an activity that demonstrates comprehension. This type of assessment can be done for all applicants for the position.
- If writing plays a large part in carrying out the job duties, ask the candidates to either provide samples of their past work similar to what will be expected of them, or develop a specific writing activity to test skills and abilities. Note: Writing tests should not require styles or specific technical knowledge that is only gained through experience in your workplace or company. Remember that technical terminology can vary from country to country. This type of assessment can be done for all applicants for the position.
- Many employers hire newcomers who are still improving their language skills. Language supports are available to employers through the Adult Language Training Branch of Manitoba Labour and Immigration.

i Supports available in Manitoba include generic language classes, job-specific language training and support in communication assessment. For more information, go to: www.immigratemanitoba.com

Visit the "Work Ready" site for its Resources for Counselling, Hiring and Working with Internationally Trained Individuals (ITIs). It is a collection of language-based tips and resources for employment counsellors and human resource (HR) professionals. Go to: <http://elearning.language.ca> (you will need to create an account, login and search *Work Ready: CLB Resource for Hiring and Working with ITIs*)

Strategy 7: Understanding Non-verbal Communication in the Interview

“Your gestures and the way you hold your body (body language) account for as much as 55 per cent of the first impression you make. How you speak (ex: your tone of voice, whether you sound nervous or confident) accounts for 38 per cent. What you actually say (the words spoken) accounts for only seven percent. According to A. Mehrabian, these three elements account for our liking the person who puts forward a message.”⁵

This section describes some common cultural differences in the use and understanding of non-verbal communication. Physical contact in greetings, personal space, eye contact, gestures, body language and intonation can all have an effect on interview decisions.

Greetings

In many countries it is not common to shake hands, especially between men and women. Some people shake hands softly or may only move their hand up and down once. Other cultures kiss on the cheek, hug or bow to greet each other.

Some cultures are uncomfortable with familiarity. For example, they may refer to the interviewer by their formal title, especially when they involve an educational degree. Out of respect, they may continue to call the interviewer doctor, sir or madam, even after being asked to use their first names.

Employers should feel comfortable continuing to conduct business as usual (ex: shaking hands). Newcomers learn non-verbal communications that are the expected Canadian business practices over time, as part of the settlement process.

A recent immigrant from Pakistan said Canadian employers expect a firm handshake from the people they interview—as a sign of assertiveness and confidence. But keep in mind women from my culture don’t usually shake hands with men.

Personal Space

Differences in acceptable levels of personal space may be expressed by the applicant, by leaning close to the interviewer, or by leaving extra distance between them. Differences in personal space can result in a feeling of discomfort without the participants being aware of the cause.

Eye Contact

Some cultures consider direct eye contact with people in higher positions to be a sign of disrespect. Looking away from the interviewer or casting eyes downward may be a sign of respect, rather than uncertainty, or a lack of confidence, trustworthiness or interest in the position.

In contrast, other countries emphasize continual direct eye contact. Although this may indicate the candidate's keen interest in the position, to Canadians, this may feel like the person is prying or is aggressive.

Gestures

The meaning of gestures varies considerably from country to country. In Canada, candidates are expected to smile in the interview. However, in some countries people smile much less, because a smile means something other than friendliness.

Body language

In an interview we expect to see candidates nod to indicate that they understand or agree with what is being discussed. In other countries agreement may be indicated by rolling the head from side to side or a single downward movement of the head.

Intonation

Different intonation may be perceived as lacking interest or confidence. In some cultures, deference to authority is expressed through lowering the voice or speaking softly. Conversely, the intonation of some languages when translated may sound overly direct in English.

Reduce the Impact of Cultural Differences on Non-verbal Communication

It is impossible to learn the non-verbal cues of every culture, but being aware that differences exist is essential. If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable or irritated, and you are not sure why, consider that differences in non-verbal communication might be the cause. Seek more information before making a judgment based on non-verbal communication alone.

“Non-verbal communication plays a more significant role in the job interview than in everyday interaction because the interviewer is diligent in observing eye contact, gestures, posture, tone of voice and emotion. This often creates a problem for candidates from other cultures.”

Graybridge Malkham Cross-cultural Training website, Understanding the Dance, The Challenges of Interviewing Across-Cultures (2008)

Strategy 8: Interview Strategies to Help You Select the Best Candidate

The interview is held to assess technical knowledge and skills, and workplace culture or interpersonal skills (ex: customer contact skills, or the ability to work in a team). However, the interview process is prone to cross cultural misunderstandings. It involves strangers who must interpret each other's behaviour and interactions, based on personal knowledge and experience of what is expected in an interview. Many internationally educated candidates are passed over because of cultural misunderstandings.

This section suggests strategies that will allow you to fully assess the newcomer's skill set while minimizing cultural challenges within the interview process:

- Screening practices should be similar for all candidates, yet ensure that the differences in the life experiences of the candidates are taken into account during the interview process.
- At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer may wish to outline the topics that are going to be discussed. This will help the applicant understand how the questions relate to the discussion topics. Some companies provide questions in advance, at the time the interview is arranged or at the interview.
- Ask one question at a time without jumping back and forth between topics.
- Ensure the questions are clear and concise. Avoid jargon or humour that may be challenging or uncomfortable for the applicant.
- Invite the applicant to take brief notes during the interview.
- Allow time for the applicant to think about the question. Applicants may need to translate mentally back and forth between English and their first language. You can assure candidates by telling them they can take time to think about how they want to answer the next question.
- Ask for examples of past job tasks completed, rather than asking about the applicant's skills. This will give you an idea of the skills they have acquired.
- Prepare a task that all candidates will do to demonstrate skills required to perform the job, (ex: read a brief and write a memo or describe a process).
- If the answer seems short or inappropriate, consider rephrasing the question, since it may have been misinterpreted. Be prepared to ask follow-up questions in a different way.
- Use: "Tell me about..." or "How did you...?" in asking questions about skills and experience.

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- If you do not understand a word or phrase, ask for clarification. Some technical terms commonly used in other countries are not used in Canada.
 - Be aware that some cultures consider the North American custom of self-promotion within an interview to be prideful and to be avoided. The applicant may downplay accomplishments. The commonly used question: "Why should I hire you?" may not generate a response listing skills and accomplishments from many newcomers. Conversely, some newcomers may sound like they are boasting as they state that they can do any project that might be given to them, because of their wide ranging experience and skills. You may wish to re-phrase, asking the applicant to describe the tasks involved in (the last job, a specific project, etc.) or you might ask them to describe how they would carry out duties of the position if they were hired.
 - In some cultures, harmony and co-operation are seen as preferable to competition. In their previous work involving teamwork, there may not have been a division of roles and responsibilities. Phrasing questions in terms of: "Describe an initiative that you were responsible for?" may result in a response that downplays their responsibilities as an individual and is viewed as somewhat insulting. Re-phrasing the question as "Describe an initiative you were part of?" may lead to more information.
 - Behavioural questions like: "Describe a time when you...?" or "Give me an example of when you...?" that are designed to assess how the candidate might act in a difficult or complex situation, are not common in many parts of the world. Some cultures may focus on the theory of what should be done and it may not sound like they have any actual practical experience. You may need to ask a follow-up question to determine practical experience.
 - Asking applicants if they have any questions may not convince them that they are allowed to ask them.
 - By learning more about the technical skills that the candidate possesses, you may be able to determine that the applicant has transferable skills that might fit another position within your organization.

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- Make the job requirements clear from the beginning of the recruitment process. If an applicant is denied the position based on the assessment of their skills and suitability for the job, this will make it easier to understand why they did not match what you were looking for.
 - You may wish to offer a probationary period or a work experience position to assess the suitability of an internationally trained candidate.
 - Consider providing cross cultural training to all staff involved in recruitment and selection.
 - Ensure that all candidates are aware of the next steps such as checking references and the expected timelines for making a selection decision (ex: You will be notified by phone within five working days.).
 - Finally, be aware of the effect that faith based holidays and celebrations have on an applicant's availability to interview.
 - Be prepared for surprises when interviewing applicants from different cultures. Suspend judgment until you have collected more information.

 For information on wage assistance available to employers who employ immigrants with full-time professional or technical work related to their educational background, go to: www.immigratemanitoba.com

For further information on cross cultural training for staff e-mail: ditmanitoba@gmail.com

For an instructive website that includes: audio and video interviews with immigrant professionals; help to recognize how misunderstandings occur, and the specific behaviours to improve your ability to interview candidates from different cultures, go to: www.upwardlyglobal.org/interviewing

For further tips and stories from specific employers who strive to provide an inclusive selection process, go to: www.hireimmigrants.ca

Strategy 9: Provide Specific Feedback when Rejecting New Canadian Candidates

Ultimately, all applicants must have the skills necessary to fulfill your company's needs. If newcomer candidates demonstrate skills close to your requirements, you may wish to recommend resources to them to improve their skills or consider them for different positions and provide training on the job.

If you are rejecting an applicant, be considerate and fair. If it's because of poor communication skills, insufficient credentials or other reasons, provide specific reasons to the candidate. Avoid generalities, such as a lack of Canadian work experience. The applicant will benefit from the specific feedback you provide.

You also might consider referring newcomers to the Manitoba government website to help with their job search. Visit: www.immigratemanitoba.com.

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Strategies to Integrate and Retain Newcomers

Strategy 1: Develop an Orientation Plan

Because candidate recruitment and selection is expensive, more employers are investing the time and resources to offer orientation and mentoring programs along with specific skills training to prepare their new employees and increase their productivity.

Develop a comprehensive orientation specifically for newcomers. Orientation is particularly important to newcomers who may have more to learn and require greater adjustment. Orientation material can be used to minimize misunderstandings and save time and resources in the future.

Orientation strategies for newcomer employees:

- Introduce the new employee to the people they will be working with, and explain how they will relate.
- Provide a detailed orientation to the company, including:
 - A. General background information on the company:
 - products and services
 - organizational structure and leaders
 - corporate telephone directory
 - the location(s) of the company
 - how to get around the building, including a site or building map
 - B. Function specific information:
 - names of supervisors and managers
 - information on the employee's assigned work group
 - corporate terminology glossary that includes acronyms
 - health and safety requirements
 - emergency and security procedures
 - company policies
 - company support services
 - location of equipment needed for work
 - how to access supplies

C. Provide an orientation to the job, including:

- duties and responsibilities
 - standards for judging performance
 - reporting relationships
 - expected interactions with co-workers, suppliers and clients
 - what to wear to work
 - the correct time to arrive at work
 - what to do if sick and unable to work
 - how lunch and coffee breaks work
 - recreational activities, etc.
 - wage structure and benefits
 - training and development opportunities
- Don't expect this information to be absorbed in one sitting. Provide the new employee with key material in print form for future reference and let them know who to contact regarding different types of questions that they may have later.
 - Consider providing an orientation on the business culture of your organization.
 - Assign a culturally sensitive mentor to provide regular and detailed feedback to the newcomer on his or her job performance, and to help with day to day questions.
 - Provide the opportunity for team building activities that acknowledge diversity.
 - Some newcomers may be recent arrivals who require information or help (ex: short time off) with enrolling children in schools, applying for health cards, obtaining a driving license and finding accommodation.

Strategy 2: Establish a Mentor Program

Mentoring is a system where new employees are matched with an experienced and culturally sensitive staff person (not the employee's supervisor) that is willing to provide additional support. Mentors can help newcomers learn about the company's corporate culture and offer existing employees a chance to meet and interact with the newcomer. The mentor can also provide specific feedback on job performance to the new employee.

If an employee has difficulty with language, match him or her with someone in the company who has good English and is both sensitive and skilful. A buddy system, especially in the case of language practice, can be very effective, and resources are available to support the establishment of a language partner program.

- ① Supports available in Manitoba include general language classes, job-specific language training and support in communication assessment. For more information, go to: www.immigratemanitoba.com (click on *for employers*, click on *improve employee English*)

The ability of the company's employees to work and communicate effectively as a team can be greatly enhanced through a mentorship program.

- ① For a more detailed description and ideas on mentorship models, including a list of mentorship resources, go to: www.5stepsolution.ca (look for *Mentoring for Success*)

Strategy 3: Other Training Supports and Activities to Help Increase Cultural Awareness

Staff conflicts and interpersonal issues can negatively effect the smooth operation of your business and can be expensive. Your staff may benefit from receiving diversity training, and managers may benefit from receiving formal training on cross-cultural management. Management and supervisory staff need to understand the value of having a diverse workforce. They should be able to discuss diversity goals with staff on a regular basis and handle communication problems immediately.

A company's strategy must be based on transparency, fairness and equality.

Consider new opportunities to share and teach best practices and celebrate the company's cultural diversity. Lunch and learn events, posters, newsletters or casual social events can help encourage acceptance of newcomers before issues arise, and can contribute to a happier and more productive workforce. Your efforts will help position your company as an attractive place to work. For new ideas, you may wish to access the pool of diversity and intercultural trainers sponsored by Manitoba Labour and Immigration. These trainers deliver workplace diversity and intercultural training, including:

- Intercultural Communication
- Culturally Sensitive Supervising
- Developing High Performance Diverse Teams

 For more information or to discuss your businesses training needs contact: ditmanitoba@gmail.com

Explore additional services that support newcomers:

- Access English language training to improve communication. The English at Work program provides businesses with experienced instructors to teach employees the language skills they need at a specific work place. The program is offered on a cost shared basis.
- Introduce welcome activities that include newcomer employees' entire families to boost support systems for immigrants.
- Use your existing diverse worker pool to increase the newcomer's opportunity to meet other newcomers who share their perspectives and experiences.

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- Connect with other employees who can help with interpretation or act as cultural liaisons. Use mediators or work counsellors when needed.
 - Offer on-site childcare so the challenges of finding childcare while adjusting to a new job and community are lessened.
 - Involve your company in community events to help introduce new Canadians to their new community.
 - Hold celebratory events such as multicultural lunches, or events to highlight the wide variety of cultures and foods enjoyed by employees.

 For a more information on the English at Work program including answers to frequently asked questions, go to: www.immigratemanitoba.com

For more tips and stories from specific employers on their efforts to create a welcoming workplace, go to: www.hireimmigrants.ca

Putting these strategies to work can benefit your company in a number of ways. Additional skilled workers may be attracted to your company when it is known that you demonstrate understanding of their needs.

5 Resources

Recruiting, Retaining and Promoting Culturally Different Employees

By Don Rutherford and Lionel Laroche

ISBN 075068240X. Available for order online, at: http://culture-connect.com/Recruiting_book.html

The Manitoba Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act

This act legislates informed, fair and systematic approaches to improving professional recognition for skilled individuals educated outside of Canada. Go to: <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/2007/c02107e.php>

The Canadian Human Rights Commission Guide to Screening and Selection in Employment

Go to: www.chrc-ccdp.ca/publications/screening_employment-en.asp

6 Endnotes

- 1 Manitoba Labour and Immigration, *Manitoba Immigration Facts: 2007 Statistical Report*, page 2
- 2 Ibid, page 18
- 3 Laroche, Lionel and Rutherford, Don, *Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees*, Copyright Elsevier, Inc, 2007, page 21
- 4 Ibid, page 29
- 5 Mehrabian, A., *Silent Messages*, Wadsworth, Belmont, California, 1971, page 24

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