

Employer's Guide to **HIRING** **NEWCOMERS**

A user-friendly guide of information, tips, and resources to support employers when hiring newcomers.



Including a **South Asian Community Profile**

FOREWORD

Workforce is not bound by physical boundaries anymore and has become global, with workers and immigrants from various countries not only having professional skills and experience similar to those from developed countries, but having worked with multinational companies and being aware of the requirements, environment and work standards in developed countries.

Employers should not undermine or discredit the skills of newcomers, as this combined with the shortage of skilled workers will put Canada's economic future at a serious risk.

According to Stats Canada (2011), about one person out of three in the labour force would belong to a visible minority group by 2031. This proportion was 15.7% in 2006. It could reach about 40% in Ontario and British Columbia by 2031.¹

As elsewhere in Canada, the changing demographic profile of York Region has changed considerably and immigrants currently make up the largest labour force.

The globalized society has created an opportunity for smart employers to utilize highly skilled newcomers and immigrant professionals to remain competitive, increase business opportunities globally and succeed.

"Employer's Guide to Hiring Newcomers" contains comprehensive information that would help employers when hiring newcomers and immigrants. It also includes a profile of the South Asian community, the largest visible minority in Ontario and Canada that will be a valuable resource when hiring the members of this community. The Workforce Planning Board of York Region and Bradford, West Gwillimbury has produced this guide with the purpose of increasing the cultural competency of employers so they can acquire skilled workers with confidence, effectively interact and conduct business with diverse ethno-cultural communities.

Human Endeavour, one of the organizations serving South Asian and other newcomer and immigrant communities across York Region and Simcoe County to improve and enhance their socio-economic well-being, recommends this guide as a useful resource that showcases a clear value proposition for businesses for hiring newcomers and immigrants.

Noor Din,
CEO, Human Endeavour

¹ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-010-x/2011008/part-partie3-eng.htm>

NOTE: This guide provides general information on the possible experiences of newcomers as they attempt to find employment in small and medium enterprises in Canada. It is meant to create awareness only. More detailed information should always be attained to completely understand an issue or belief. No intention is made to offend anyone or their beliefs. The opinions and advice expressed herein are intended as a guide only. The publisher and author accept no responsibility for any loss sustained as a result of using this booklet.

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Thriving Newcomers, Thriving Community

York Region is a thriving community that is experiencing tremendous growth and success. York Region is currently (Statistic Canada 2011) the fastest growing largest municipality in the country, attracting over 20,000 new residents annually.

The Region's businesses create approximately 12,500 new jobs a year and filling those positions requires a skilled and experienced labour force. Accessing the newcomer workforce is an important part of contributing to the Region's resiliency and success.

WPBoard is pleased to update and re-release "Employer's Guide to Hiring Newcomers". This guide has been produced to support small and medium-sized business owners in developing their relationship with the newcomer workforce in York Region.

In this guide, you will find:

- **Valuable information** on the challenges recent newcomers may face as they try to find meaningful employment.
- **Helpful Tips** on welcoming a recent newcomer into your workforce and maximizing their potential.
- **Valuable Resources** on a range of topic related to newcomers and the labour market

A Guide to Help the SME's

This user-friendly guide is designed to help and support you, the small and medium sized enterprise (SME) owner, to successfully integrate newcomers into your workforce. It covers such important topics as sourcing, hiring and retaining employees.

The guide is meant to help you understand all the benefits of having a diverse workforce. It focuses on more recent immigrants to Canada (called "*newcomers*" or "*newcomer employees*" in the guide), versus those that have been in Canada for longer periods of time. It considers potential challenges that some newcomers may face in adjusting to the Canadian work environment. It gives critical information meant to ensure success as you expand your labour pool to include more newcomers.

The goal of this guide is to build bridges between SME's in York Region and newcomers.

The guide has five key topic areas:

- 1) Who are Canada's Newcomers? Why Should I Hire Them?**
- 2) Sourcing Newcomer Applicants**
- 3) Selecting Newcomer Applicants – Resumes & Interviews**
- 4) Orienting and Training your New Employee**
- 5) Communication on the Job**

A note of caution

This guide is meant to build bridges between recent newcomers and SME's in York Region. It provides general information on newcomers only. Not all the information applies to every newcomer, and each individual's situation needs to be considered differently.

As well, significant differences between newcomer communities also exist. In fact, there is no "newcomer community" but rather, many newcomer communities. For example, people who live in Ontario are all called "Ontarians". However, there are many communities of people within Ontario that are all unique. Even within those communities, each person is unique. It is the same for all newcomers.

The guide is not intended to generalize, stereotype or oversimplify. It is intended to give you, the SME, basic information so that you better understand and appreciate others in your work environment. The guide is meant to help you break down barriers. It is very important not to generalize, but to use the information in the guide to learn through discussion with others and through accessing the suggested resources.

Who are Canada's Newcomers and Why Should I Hire Them?²

You might read some terms that you haven't seen before when you look through this guide. A few basic definitions will help you before you get started:

Newcomers - Newcomers are broadly defined as any people that are thinking about immigrating to Canada, people who are in the process of immigrating, and people who have recently landed as immigrants to Canada.

Skilled Immigrant / Internationally Educated Professional (IEP) - A person residing in Canada for ten years or less, who gained qualified and / or skills and experience in a trade or profession in their country of origin.

Note: For the purposes of this guide, newcomers are considered skilled immigrants.

Diverse community - Diversity can be broadly seen as all the differences that people bring to an organization or group. Diversity can include, but is not limited to, race, age, place of origin, religion, ancestry, skin colour, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability/ability, marital, parental or family status, same-sex partnership status, citizenship, creed, educational background, literacy level, geographic location, income level, cultural tradition and work experience. Welcoming diversity not only acknowledges and respects differences but also recognizes the worth of every individual and their value to their communities and to society at large.

Note: For the purposes of this guide, diversity refers to ethnocultural and/or ethnoracial communities.

Cultural competency - Refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence is made up of four components: (a) Being aware of one's own culture, (b) Attitude towards other cultures, (c) Knowledge of other cultures, and (d) Cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

² Working in Canada, Government of Canada, 2008

² Skilled Immigrant Info Centre: www.pwp.vpl.ca

² Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition

² Adapted from Diversity Training University International

The Benefit of Newcomers in Canada's Economy

Key labour market trends impacting business

There are key trends impacting business now and in the future for York Region, Ontario and Canada:

1 The demand for labour is growing and the Canadian born workforce is shrinking.

The labour pool has changed dramatically. It is projected that Canada will welcome up to 413,000 immigrants per year by 2030 strengthening Canada's economic growth.³ As well, many sectors and occupational groups are supposed to grow. The shortage in the labour market and the aging of Baby Boomers mean that employers need skilled immigrants and their talents.

Your business can benefit from this trend by:

- **Developing a better understanding of diverse communities within your employee base**
- **Enhancing how you source, screen, select and develop talent from diverse communities.**
- **Learning to evaluate skills and competencies gained in countries other than Canada.**

³ <http://www.cicnews.com/2016/10/canada-needs-immigration-to-balance-aging-population-108568.html>

2 Skilled immigrants are a key source of information for Canadian companies in the new global economy.

Canadian companies don't just compete locally anymore; they must now respond to a worldwide market. This is especially true of employers that service the needs of international trade operations.

Your business can benefit from this trend by:

- Learning how to build better international networks.
- Increasing your understanding of diverse communities from a global market perspective.
- Hiring staff with multiple language skills.

3 The local labour market is changing.

Today, over two-thirds of Canada's population growth has been due to immigrants. Skilled immigrants are a valuable resource for understanding the service needs of ethno-specific markets.

Your business can benefit from this trend by:

- Improving networks and relationships with diverse communities.
- Increasing your understanding of diverse communities so you can compete in changing local markets.
- Having staff who can communicate with customers in the language of their choice.

These trends continue to grow. This guide will help you think strategically to meet them head-on. It will help you hire newcomers into your workforce, retain them once they are hired and expand your local and global markets. The bottom line is that your business and York Region stand to gain.

Newcomers can offer your business...

Newcomers are an important part of your future and the future of York Region. They offer a wealth of skills and expertise to SME's, including:

Education and Work Experience

Almost nine out of ten newcomers with credentials above a high school diploma had a university degree at the time of landing in Canada. Two-thirds held professional jobs before immigrating to Canada; in management and business, administration, natural sciences, health and education.⁴

⁴ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2010109/article/11342-eng.htm#a3>

Understanding of Global Business Context

Some newcomers bring a keen understanding of the emerging world economy and its effect on your business, due to their work experience in many other countries. They can also be an important source of information on the buying habits and selling practices of newcomer communities that are your present and future customers.

Ability to Bring in More Business

Just as with any other employee, the networks of many newcomers will undoubtedly help grow your business in the local market. They can spread the word to friends and family about your working environment, as well as your products and services.

Retention and Recruitment of Other Workers

Companies that have considered entering global markets can leverage some newcomers' strong community connections abroad. Everyone wins – the employer gets access to new markets, and newcomers get to make a significant contribution to the company, to their community, and to their home country's economy. Capitalizing on the networks of newcomers can also include recruiting other workers with similar levels of skills and expertise.

Sourcing Newcomers

Where and how to recruit
newcomer applicants

How to promote
your company as
an employer of newcomers.

"The human resource needs of leading Canadian businesses are as varied as the firms themselves, but one thing is common to all. Canadian businesses want qualified, professional and skilled personnel, and they will go to great lengths to find the best person for the job, regardless of nationality."

***Right Before Your Eyes: Internationally
Trained Workers In Canada***
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, 2003.

Where to recruit newcomers

If you don't know where to begin to access the growing newcomer labour force, you are not alone. Businesses can't just put an advertisement in a newspaper and wait for responses anymore. Just as job seekers should use their networks to meet employers, employers also have to network to find diverse applicants. When recruiting newcomers, you need to work with community agencies that support the integration of newcomers into the labour market and build relationships with community leaders, in addition to all your usual sources. Your message needs to be clear - newcomers are welcomed and encouraged to apply.

SCENARIO

"My business is located in a part of York Region where more and more people from the Philippines are coming to live. As a medium-sized grocery store, I realized that I may not have products that would cater to their needs. I often found people would come in the store looking for an item and I didn't know what it was.

I decided I needed to do some research on what the community needs. I didn't know where to begin, but started asking some of my customers as they came through the door. Usually, people had lots of ideas! One of my other employees suggested that I needed to hire someone who was from the Philippines, in order to get a handle on what to do and to have an ongoing source of expertise. I asked a few customers if they knew of anyone who was looking for work and ended up getting quite a few applicants. I now have someone who is experienced in the food business from her work in Manila, and she has been able to help me understand the Filipino market. Business is booming!"

SME Owner

Strategies for sourcing newcomers

The following are some key places to consider contacting when sourcing newcomers:

- Employment Ontario Service Provider in York Region
- Welcome Centre Immigrant Services in York Region
- Settlement Agencies
- Word of mouth (e.g. Other employers or SME owners, current newcomer employees, suppliers, customers)

SOURCING NEWCOMERS

- Social Media
- Local Community Centres
- Places of Worship (e.g. temples, synagogues, mosques, monasteries, churches)
- Ethnic businesses and shops

Some other strategies for sourcing newcomers include:

Expand your networks to include newcomers

Get familiar with a few cultural and community events in York Region. Get out and meet people. Consider stopping at some of the booths at local events and ask if they will keep a few of your business cards or pamphlets on display. Doing this recognizes that the “networking” required to get jobs is very difficult for newcomers. If at all possible, you should try to reach out them and not wait for them to come to you. You can even consider sponsoring a community event to attract people to your business. See the Resource Section for a current list of all York-based community celebrations.

Call your business association, trade certification association and union

Find out if they have strategies or resources for hiring newcomers.

Use the programs and services offered by employment service providers and immigrant serving organizations in York Region.

- Employment counselling
- Training programs
- Community mentorship programs
- Job fairs
- Job posting services
- Job databases
- Referrals to other agencies that provide workplace cultural training, language training in the workplace etc.

Refer to the Resource Section for the organization closest to you and ask to speak to someone in their Employment Program about advertising your jobs there.

Develop connections with leaders in newcomer communities

Great places to approach in York Region include Chambers of Commerce, Human Endeavours and the Social Services Network (See the Resource Section for details).

Recruit via educational programs

Some community colleges and job training programs focus on reaching newcomers. The Government of Ontario funds employers, colleges and universities, occupational regulatory bodies and community

SOURCING NEWCOMERS

organizations to deliver bridge training programs, with support from the Government of Canada. Ontario Bridge Training programs help skilled newcomers get their license or certificate in their profession or trade enabling them to find employment commensurate with their skills and experience in Ontario. As part of these programs, newcomers are supported in their job search for employment.

Visit: <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/keyinitiatives/bridgetraining.shtml> to search for a Bridging Program for your industry sector and a delivering organization to connect with job ready candidates.

Become a Mentor

Becoming a mentor allows you to connect with skilled immigrant interns, students or job ready candidates who are networking and job searching. You can meet with them to offer guidance and suggestions regarding their job search. Introduce them to your network of connections increasing their job search opportunities or even offer them an internship within your organization. This allows them to gain Canadian experience in their field and provides you a chance to scope out new talent.

The Mentorship Project in partnership with TRIEC (Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council) in York Region is delivered by:

Seneca College - www.workforceready.ca

COSTI - www.costi.org

Use word of mouth

For the next month, everywhere you go and to everyone you meet, say you are trying to source newcomer employees. Ask if they know someone they can refer to you. This includes the people who already work for you. This informal networking is perhaps the most powerful way to attract talent to your business.

SCENARIO

"I was looking for work. I was ready to move on from the first job I had in Canada, as it had given me good experience, but it wasn't exactly in line with my skills. I wanted to get something that matched my knowledge, but I also knew I had to get something that would feed my family.

I had been a Line Supervisor, and knew the work inside and out. If I couldn't get that kind of job, I wanted to get something that would eventually work its way up to that title. It isn't so much about the status, although that is important. It is about keeping my skills current and learning as go on in my working life.

I have worked hard to train in this field, and I have a lot to offer."

Applicant

Promoting your company as a desirable employer

Once you have identified some sources, it's time to start thinking about your job posting and how to attract newcomers to your business.

What newcomers are looking for in a job

Compensation and Benefits

One of the most important things people consider is salary, and the chance to increase salary if they show good work performance. Many newcomers spend a considerable portion of their life savings to come to Canada, so making enough money to both live and to save is important in creating stability. This is especially true when you consider that some newcomer families are living on one income because it can be so difficult to find work.

Benefits are also usually important to people. This includes benefits for immediate family, and often also for extended family members (e.g. elderly parents).

Opportunity for Promotion

Like most people, newcomers want to know if there is an opportunity for promotions (or even horizontal moves) within the company based on performance and loyalty.

Job Security

Almost everyone needs to know that a job, once secured, is relatively stable, notwithstanding fluctuations in the market that businesses cannot control. Sometimes people may want temporary or contract work, but for most people, permanent, full-time work is usually the goal. People also look at how businesses are doing. Times have changed – now employers must also show that they are a fit for a potential employee.

Being Valued for Work

We all have a desire to be valued for the work we do. This can mean bonuses, being mentioned in the company newsletter, being named employee of the month or special opportunities to get further qualifications, certifications, promotions, etc. For most people, job status is valued, and positions that offer job titles and/or duties that match skills are attractive.

Opportunities to Grow Canadian Networks

Many recent newcomers are eager to develop connections from a Canadian work context, as people tend to spend most of their time in their own communities, especially in the early years of immigration.

A job opportunity that provides a chance to expand Canadian networks (both personal and professional) will hold great appeal.

Companies that Value Diversity

Many newcomers will want to work for companies that value the benefits of skilled immigrants and diversity. This can be demonstrated in many ways, including recognizing cultural and community celebrations and being flexible re: cultural holidays and religious practices.

Posting the Job

Now you know where to go and what kinds of things your job posting needs to say. But how do you go about writing it?

- Emphasize competencies rather than past experience.
- Be sure that the qualifications for the position are really needed to do the job, and not based simply on historical assumptions.
- Be open to international equivalencies.
- Use plain, clear language and avoid slang terms and acronyms. If you are unsure, ask for help from an employment resource centre (See the Resource Section for more information).

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
Outgoing, easy to work with is a must!	Strong interpersonal skills an asset
Experience with systems required	Certification in systems management required
Looking for someone who is able to hit the ground running	Looking for someone who can learn quickly

An example:

New, fast-growing catering company looking for people who love to cook!

We are hiring experienced line cooks and sous chefs for our catering company that specializes in ethnic foods. We offer a great salary, full benefits and discounts on prepared meals. We are looking for someone who can learn the business quickly and who has skills working in a professional kitchen. Opportunity for advancement, the chance to learn the Canadian food industry and the chance to work with great people are waiting for you now! If you are trained outside of Canada, we welcome applications from all qualified candidates.

Promoting your company starts with sourcing. If you reach out to newcomers in a strategic way, you will get qualified candidates, and the rest of the process will become easier. Sourcing requires thorough planning and creative thinking. More than anything, it requires you to get out and talk to people. The key is to network.

The Interviewing Process

How to fairly evaluate a newcomer applicant.

Understand and address some of the challenges that a newcomer applicant may experience during an interview.

“One of the biggest obstacles for newcomers to the Canadian labour market is the focus on Canadian experience and credentials within the hiring process. Understandably, employers look for a familiar point of reference when assessing a candidate's skills and background. They look for experiences and companies they recognize on a resume or in an interview.

However, this (oversight) of international experience places new immigrants in a ‘Catch 22’ situation where they can't get a job without Canadian experience and can't get Canadian experience without a job. It also means employers are missing out on a valuable talent pool and the opportunity to tap into a growing customer base.”⁵

⁵<https://pseupdate.mior.ca/links/category/international-students/>

The Interview Process

Research shows that in the typical Canadian job interview, the interviewer usually makes his/her hiring decision in the first 3 minutes. That can put pressure on applicants, especially newcomers. It can also create an automatic disadvantage, because people may not be able to show that they are the best one for the job in such a short time. That means you could be missing opportunities to hire qualified newcomers who could make valuable contributions to your business.

It is also important to remember that job interviews are not the same all over the world, and some newcomers will be less familiar with the typical Canadian interview format. For example, some people may not be used to a formal interview. Some people have been placed in jobs after sitting for highly competitive exams. Some people have been tested out in jobs for a while before getting hired on permanently. It is not that newcomers do not want to get interviewed – it just may be that they are unfamiliar with what they are supposed to do in the interview itself.

From resume review to the actual selection of new employees, you can ensure that everyone applying for a job has the same starting place to succeed in the competition. By taking a careful look at how you handle the hiring process, you can ensure that there aren't any hidden obstacles preventing newcomers from getting the job.

SCENARIO

"I was holding job interviews for the Manager job and I was quite excited because I had a few candidates from diverse communities applying. In the past, I have had the candidates meet the team that they would be working with, and so I took my first candidate into a room where the team was waiting for him. He seemed a bit shocked, and didn't participate much in the conversation. Afterwards, people said he seemed quiet and felt worried he wouldn't fit in, but I knew from my one-on-one conversation with him earlier that he was quite outgoing. I'm not sure what to do."
Business Owner

Reviewing Resumes

One of the hardest things for newcomers to do is to get their resumes through the screening process. This may be because some employers unconsciously assume that they need someone with "Canadian

THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS

experience” for the job. However, the marketplace is changing. Today, international experience is just as important as “Canadian experience”. Still, many newcomers seek help writing their resumes to reflect the demands of the Canadian market, as resumes in Canada are generally longer and focus more on “selling” oneself.

Reviewing resumes requires more than “going on your gut instincts”. Employers may tend to lean toward resumes with formats and qualifications that are familiar, thereby potentially missing qualified applicants. Therefore, it requires you to take a bit of extra time to make sure the resume review process is fair and open.

Consider the following:

Employer: *I have over 40 resumes to look at for the new administrative assistant position. Can you believe it?*

Colleague: *Do the resumes look good?*

Employer: *Well, I haven't had a very good look yet. I try not to look at any resumes until I have written out exactly what skills and qualifications I am looking for.*

Colleague: *Why do you bother with that? You know what you need, don't you?*

Employer: *Yes, I know. But I don't want to make any assumptions based on what I read. So, if I keep a list of skills in front of me, I can easily see how the different resumes match up to the skills. I don't even really need to know who the person is – it's all skills-based assessment. And that way, it allows me to equally consider people who have the experience I am looking for that have qualifications from countries other than Canada.*

Colleague: *Wow – but how do you do it exactly?*

Employer: *I just write out the skills I think I am looking for, then the qualifications. I create a checklist for both of them. For example, I write out strong communication skills, typing speed, things like that. Then, I cover up the name of the person and just read the resumes for skills. If they have a skill, they get a check.*

Colleague: *Does all that really help get the best candidate for the job?*

Employer: *I think it does, and it also helps make sure everyone has an equal chance of getting the job*

Skill based assessments help make sure that the focus is on the person's qualifications, so that anything else does not unintentionally bias the employer.

Job Interviews

Once you have your short list of candidates for the job, it's time for the interview. Job interviews are usually challenging for everyone. For some newcomers, the ability to discuss skills in an interview may be especially difficult. Consider that interviews in Canada may be quite unique. Canadian interview formats are usually quite short (30 - 60 minutes), have minimal personal conversation (the discussion is about work), focus on assessing a person's skills and abilities for the job and usually follow a question-answer format quite strictly. This fairly rigid structure may not be the way job interviews occur in other parts of the world. It might be hard to know how to bridge such differences. The good news is that you can make the interview process fair and successful for everyone involved by following some simple tips:

Phone Screening

Phone interviews are often used to screen candidates for longer, more formal interviews (usually held in person). One of the key challenges newcomers face in giving phone interviews is perceptions about their accent. But consider that everyone in the world has an accent, including you! The trick is to not make assumptions. Your goal is to find the best person and to give everyone a fair chance to show you that they are the one to hire.

Simple Tips

- Focus on a few key things you need to know, instead of overwhelming the person with too many questions
- Don't assume if people are stumbling for words that it means they don't have the skills and experience; be patient, tell the person to take their time and repeat the question if needed
- Don't assume if people seem quiet on the phone that they lack enthusiasm
- At some point, ask the candidate something about themselves, so they can speak more freely about something they know
- Screen everyone in the same way (i.e. everyone on the phone or everyone in person)
- Provide all candidates advance notice of phone interviews

Face-to-Face Interviews

Face-to-face interviews are the main way people are hired in Canada. They are usually the most important part of the process and allow employers to assess candidate's skills and qualifications for a job in detail.

Interviewing newcomers could be the most important thing you can learn to do well. If you can develop interview skills that recognize the abilities of newcomers, then you reduce one of the biggest barriers to their success in Canada.

Getting Started

- To reduce potential for personal bias ensure that two or more people interview each candidate
- Give lots of notice for interviews so people have a chance to prepare
- Outline the process right at the beginning or beforehand if possible so people will know what to expect (e.g. panel-style, written portion, any specific tests that will be given)
- Choose a location that is quiet and private, so people can feel free to speak and so you aren't interrupted
- Develop job descriptions and interview questions based on the exact qualifications required for the position
- Say up front that it is okay if people feel nervous! This can help reduce anxiety.

Here's an example of getting started:

Interviewer:

Welcome to ABC Company. We have about 45 minutes today and we plan to ask you about 8 questions in that time. The questions are all meant to give you a chance to tell us about your skills and experience for the job.

Although we have seen your résumé, we would like to be able to talk to you in person to get to know you and to learn more about you. I will stop once or twice during the interview just to see if you have any questions about our process. I know this can be hard – it is okay to be nervous.

We'll go slow and take our time. Do you have any questions about what we'll be doing today?

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INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
Why should I hire you?	Tell me one good thing your supervisor or a colleague said about you in your last job.
Can you tell me about your bookkeeping experience?	Tell me what your duties were in your last bookkeeping job, including your major accomplishment.
Tell me more about some of the other positions you have held, other than the one with ABC Cheese?	Your resume says you were at XYZ Cheese before ABC Cheese. Please discuss two major responsibilities you had there.

The Interview Itself

There are three key things you need to do when you are interviewing a newcomer: ask good questions, listen with an open mind and be aware of the impact of culture on the interview.

1. Ask good questions

Just like resumes, it is a challenge to “sell yourself” during an interview. It helps if interview questions are specific, in order to give an opportunity to respond with as much detailed information as possible.

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
Why are you the best candidate for the job?	What is the number one thing you can offer our company?
What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?	What was your biggest accomplishment in your last job?
What will you offer that others cannot?	Tell me one thing you did in your last job that no-one else was able to do.

Other Tips on Questions:

- Check in during the interview to see if any questions are unclear.
- If you are interviewing more than one person at a time, use the concept of “rounds” to ensure fairness (go around the group and

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ask each person to take a turn and speak). Set a limited time to speak to make sure that one person doesn't dominate the group. Change the order of who speaks first.

- When you ask interview questions, clarify any confusing terms, even if the chances are really small of being misunderstood.
- When you ask questions, be patient and give the person some time to come up with the answers. Tell them that they can take a moment to think about their response, so they don't feel they have to speak right away.
- Use behaviour-based interviewing questions. Instead of asking hypothetical questions, consider asking the interviewee to describe their past behaviours in specific situations. How interviewees answer behavior-based questions can help predict someone's future job performance.

Examples of behaviour-based questions include, *"Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with an upset customer and how you dealt with it."* Or *"Tell me about a time when you had to decide between two courses of action that both had benefits for your company. How did you decide?"*

2. Listen with an Open Mind

Have you ever asked a question and then realized that you already had an idea of the answer you wanted? It happens more than you think! Often, when we ask people something, we have an idea of what we want to hear. Being able to listen carefully, to be open to what you hear, and to make sure you have understood the response is important to reducing barriers in job interviews. It is listening with an open mind that helps you get to know someone so you can assess if they are the best person for the job.

Try the following tips to be a better listener:

- When someone has given an answer you don't understand, say, *"Can you try giving me your answer again? I'm not sure I understood..."*
- Try saying *"So what you're saying is..."* and then repeat back to the person what you think you've heard so they can verify the information
- Take notes when the person is talking so you can ask about anything you need to clarify.

If you treat listening as a challenge, then you will be alert and able to be as helpful as possible during the interview. When people feel they are being listened to, they usually can relax and make their best impression.

3.The Impact of Culture on the Interview

Culture can be defined as a shared, learned, symbolic system of values, beliefs and attitudes that shapes and influences perception and behaviour. In a job interview, culture impacts the candidate's answers and the way the hiring decision happens.

For example:

- Some people will not maintain direct eye contact lasting longer than a second or two. This is an acceptable sign of respect to some people, yet can be seen as a sign of disrespect or nervousness for others
- Some people will keep gestures close to the body, and are quite restrained. While large gestures are common in speaking Canadian English, they are not used in other parts of the world.
- Some newcomers may not shake hands or touch others during conversations. This is especially so between men and women in the workplace. For some people, this is seen as a sign of respect, while for others, it is a sign of being reserved.
- It is a fairly common posture to sit with your arms crossed in front of you in some cultures, which can be seen as a sign of anger in Canada.
- Some people do not shake hands when they are first meeting someone new, as it is not part of their culture to do so.

Being aware of the impact of culture on a job interview means understanding your own culture, realizing that others also have their own culture and learning how to be unbiased during interviews. Your goal is to effectively interact with people across cultures.

Remember...

- **Practice, practice, practice.** That's the best way to get better at cross-cultural interviewing.
- **Don't assume that there is one right way to conduct interviews.** Keep questioning the "right way".
- **Make sure that anyone doing the hiring is familiar with techniques for cross-cultural interviewing,** so that they are in a better position to fairly evaluate candidates during the hiring process.

Orientation and Training

How to help your newcomer employee to understand new workplace policies and procedures.

Develop a strong orientation program targeted to helping your newcomer employee to succeed

“Most employers acknowledged that skilled immigrants are a growing part of the employee landscape... but expressed a need to “improve integration” of immigrants into Canadian culture. They claimed that there is a lack of understanding by many immigrants about expectations and business practices in the Canadian workplace...”⁶

⁶http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/resources/roadmap/North_Peel_Report.pdf

All of us have started a new job at one time or another in our lives. We can remember how exciting the first day was - the feeling of anticipation and the desire to do well. We can also remember some anxiety in the first few days. There is new information to absorb, you must remember everyone's name and begin to understand all the procedures. No matter what field you are in, adjusting to a new workplace is a challenge.

For newcomers, it can be even tougher. In addition to a new company, many newcomers may be adjusting to the Canadian workplace in general, which means there is even more new information to absorb. Imagine starting a new job, in a new country, without your usual support network, especially when English may not be your first language. It is a lot to learn. You, as an employer, can help make things easier.

Orientation and Onboarding of New Employees

Making a smooth transition into any work environment is about providing a good orientation. Successful onboarding promotes employee engagement and motivates productivity. New employees need to understand company culture, policies and procedures. Your new employee also needs to understand the informal rules in your business.

General ideas to consider when planning your orientation

- If possible, get a range of people involved in the orientation. For example, if you can involve your new employee's teammates, every one can start making connections early. Consider also giving your new employee a mentor, and have the mentor attend at least part of the orientation (see page 28 for more information on mentors).
- Try to give the information you provide to your new employee in writing as well as verbally, in order to give them the chance to take the information away and review it over time.
- Don't overwhelm your new employee with information. Give key information at first and then plan follow-up sessions to talk about other things.
- Encourage new employees to note any questions they have along the way and set aside time to meet with them to answer them.

Establishing a clear understanding

There are different rules and regulations that exist in any business. Canadian rules and regulations are set according to Canadian culture and legislation. They may not be fully understood by newcomers who were brought up in a different country and culture.

Before you start getting into the orientation, it is important to be clear about the rules, why they need to be followed, consequences of breaking rules, etc. You also need to ask yourself which rules are to be followed without fail, and which ones you usually bend on and why. One of the ways to decide is to ask yourself what category different rules fall under in your company. Which rules exist as principles? Guidelines? Formal agreements? Contracts? Laws? When giving orientation, be clear about what falls under each of these categories.

Potential Orientation Plan

General overview of company history

This will help give your new employee a sense of purpose. History can include:

- How the company came into being
- Net growth over the years
- Service areas
- Number of employees
- Major achievements and/or milestones

Company Mission

This is a review of your core business. Any links to the global market that you have and/or hope to make can be mentioned here.

Company Structure

Structure means the roles and relationships between different management levels including whom new employees report to, when and how. If possible, the supervisor should be part of the orientation, or should at least meet with the new employee on the first day.

It is also important to be clear if the new employee could also be expected to take direction from someone other than his/her supervisor, so that everyone understands.

Use of Time Sheets/Time Cards

The use of time sheets and time cards is common in many businesses in Canada. However, that may not be the case in other parts of the world. Helping your employee to understand that timesheets are a part of managing your company and not a disciplinary measure is important. An example of a completed time sheet is very helpful during orientation.

Human Resources

A review of all services and policies related to human resources, such as:

- Training and professional development
- Support for newcomer employees re: settlement issues
- Pay structure and salary increases
- Working overtime
- Accessing benefits
- Statutory holidays and vacation
- Sick leave, short and long term disability
- Leaves of absences
- Probation periods and performance reviews
- Expenses
- Resignation
- Separation / Termination
- Exit Interviews

Employee rights and how to raise concerns to supervisors and/or management should also be addressed here. This includes a review of such policies as:

- Complaints
- Confidentiality
- Violence in the workplace
- Performance review/Termination
- Grievances
- Policy Violations
- Anti-discrimination/harassment policies
- Union related policies (if applicable)
- Respect in the workplace policies (e.g. titles to address supervisors and coworkers, offensive or discriminatory jokes, etc.)

Privacy and Confidentiality

Employees must be made aware of Canadian legislation and any business rules on privacy and confidentiality, including both formal and informal guidelines.

Evaluation of Employees

This is where you can discuss how new employees will be evaluated, positive or negative consequences of evaluations, opportunity for promotions, pay raises and other benefits based on good performance.

Health and Safety

Safety standards may vary around the world. Preventing work-related illness and injury is the most important job at any workplace. Any specific safety rules or standards in your business should be made clear to all new employees as part of the onboarding process and continued to be re-emphasized to all employees.

Environmental Practices

Recycling programs, waste reduction measures, etc. may not be familiar to every newcomer employee. These kinds of programs are usually an important part of Canadian workplace culture, so be clear about what is expected. If you have anything written, provide it as part of the orientation process.

Dress Code

A review of requirements for dress should be offered, including safety standards related to dress (e.g. helmets, safety goggles). It is important to clarify dress code early and to stress it over time so the employee understands what is okay to wear in your work environment.

The Rules of Daily Working Life

Beyond all the formal rules, there are many informal rules of daily working life. Some of these may be written down and some may not, but all of them are important.

They are especially critical for the newcomer employee to understand, in order to give them the best chance of being successful in their job.

Punctuality

The definition of how “late” one can be varies according to culture. In some cultures, being 5 -10 minutes late is acceptable. In other cultures, being late is not considered a problem and people can be up to 30 minutes late and events continue on. Your expectations regarding punctuality should be clearly explained to new employees, including consequences of not being on time. What is critical here is to be honest with yourself and your new employee. If you say that staff must be on time, and then it is observed that other team members arrive late without consequence, you run the risk of looking biased toward or against certain employees. Think carefully about what you want to say about punctuality before going forward.

Use of Memos and Other Communications

A common practice for companies is to use memos and/or emails to announce new policies, decisions, announcements, etc. It should be explained that any memos and emails sent out are how important directives may be communicated and that reading and following them is required.

Lunch Breaks, Coffee Breaks and Kitchen Care

It is important to be clear about breaks - when they can be taken, for how long and any rules (e.g. smoking during breaks, personal phone calls, using the Internet for personal use, etc.)

It is also good to provide information regarding the use and care of kitchen facilities. The labeling of personal items and the use of communal kitchen supplies (e.g. microwaves, fridges, dishes) need to be clearly laid out to new employees.

Expectations outside Regular Job Hours

Some companies hold annual events in the community, such as customer appreciation events, public relations events, etc. New employees need to understand if, when and how they are expected to participate in these events.

Open Door Policy

If you have an open door policy, it is important to talk about what it means - who the employee can talk to, about what and appropriate timing should be discussed, so that everyone is aware of the kind of support they can get as they do their job.

The Rules of the Team

If your new employee is part of a team, she/he needs to understand how that team works. If possible, get someone from the team to come in and talk about how things happen.

Topics to discuss

- Team meetings
- Formal and informal team communication
- Working as an individual versus working on the team
- How decisions get made on the team (e.g. consensus versus hierarchical decision making)
- Team culture – informal gatherings, supporting each other

Workplace Mentor

When a new employee first starts working, it helps if they can be assigned a workplace mentor to help them navigate the company culture. Having a mentor allows people to ask for help confidentially; otherwise, they may not seek it. Mentors are a key way to help break down perceived and real barriers for new employees. It is a successful method adopted by a number of companies with diverse workforces.

Mentors can be experienced workers doing the same type of job as your new employee or employees with an understanding of working across cultures. Mentors should be chosen because they have enthusiasm and/or experience to offer that can help your newcomer employee to understand:

- The information given during orientation
- Their additional training needs

- The informal culture and the ways that people interact with each other
- Who to ask for help
- How to problem solve in the early days of employment

Mentors can also help new employees to connect to their new team. You can see if it is possible to have the mentor, new employee and other team members work on some projects together to begin.

The mentor can also discuss meeting agendas with the new employee beforehand so that they have a chance to give agenda items some thought and come prepared to speak up at the meeting.

Training

You need to provide training to successfully retain any employee. Training helps employees feel supported and that they have the opportunity to learn and grow. In particular, newcomers need training on exactly what is expected on the job and how to complete tasks, including detailed reviews of the job description. This training should be provided after orientation to the company is completed.

When it comes to training, the interactive, learn-as-you-go style common in Canada is quite unfamiliar to many people from other countries. For example, being directly asked if they have questions might be difficult for some students, as they may feel that they will look

SCENARIO

"I had my first training session with all the bank tellers today. It went fairly well. I noticed that one of the new staff seemed a little uncomfortable during the training. She had told me she was a newcomer earlier in the day.

She was taking a lot of notes as I was speaking, even though I told her that there would be handouts with the information summarized in them. She didn't ask one question during the first part of the day. In the afternoon, when it came time to do some role playing of bank tellers' interactions with customers, she wouldn't volunteer until the very end when she was the second to last one left. She did the exercise, but then didn't really want to talk about it. Some of the others gave her some suggestions, but at the end of the class, she came to me and asked me for my suggestions. I told her that the suggestions made by others were good and she should focus on those, and she seemed quite disappointed."

Trainer

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

uninformed and therefore shouldn't have been hired. It can also be difficult to say "I don't know" to direct questions. As well, some people may never have done such exercises as role playing, group dialogues and debates. All of this can be even more challenging if your first language is not English.

There are ways you can make your training as useful as possible to newcomers:

- Stress to new employees that no-one needs to have all the answers to questions, as everyone is learning. Keep making that point throughout the training.
- Give examples at the beginning about the typical questions people might ask during training.
- Try to remember what your own questions were when you started this work! If possible, ask other colleagues to help you think about what questions might come from trainees.
- Try to avoid putting people on the spot! Instead:
 - Direct your questions to the whole class instead of individuals.
 - Encourage general discussion, instead of asking people to respond to something you have said.
 - Use videos, webinars, guest speakers, training handouts, written manuals and visual aids to improve your training and to recognize different learning styles
 - Schedule one-to-one time with each trainee to check-in, see how things are going for them, see if they have questions, etc.
 - Offer options for sharing ideas so people aren't put on the spot, including writing down ideas on paper and handing them in, giving ideas during one-to-one supervision and keeping a Suggestion Box.
- Be sensitive to some people's need to work independently at first. Help people slowly start to work together; match up people with similar personalities, work styles, etc.
- Do not expect your new employee to jump in with ideas at first. Make it clear that giving ideas will not make or break employment with the company.

Once initial job training is done, you can also explore ongoing professional development opportunities. Ongoing training results in loyalty, better skills and more enthusiasm. For many newcomers, training could focus on learning about Canadian culture and the typical Canadian workplace. In fact, some studies show that if an employer

spends time on orienting newcomer employees not just to the workplace, but to Canadian culture in general, that those employees make a bigger contribution to the company for a longer period of time. There are many different training resources available. Look in the Resource Section for some great ideas and places to go.

Ultimately, you can never assume that training will mean that a new employee will have no issue on the job. For example, a woman was hired at a bank and was performing poorly. She had completed the internal training for new employees, but she was still having trouble. Then the supervisor discovered that there was some acronyms that she just assumed the employee knew, which she didn't. The information had been given during the training, but the new employee had been overwhelmed and didn't remember it. No one had checked in with her about it, and she felt too embarrassed to ask. They developed an acronym dictionary and the employee's job performance immediately improved. This example is an important reminder that we cannot assume that everyone understands the same workplace systems, and that basic information must always be reviewed with new employees.

Training For All Employees on Cultural Competency

It is likely that many of your employees live in York Region. As such, they know first-hand about living in diverse communities. Many of them will expect that working with newcomers will be a reality, and, in fact, common. Some of them may feel some uncertainty in terms of working with newcomers and understanding the unique ways of doing things that come with diverse workforces.

Any good employer needs to focus on more than supporting newcomers in the workplace to adapt. You must also spend some effort and energy in supporting people who are not newcomers to develop their cultural competency. For example, it is well researched that retention and advancement of employees from diverse communities is better when front-line managers who supervise those employees have cultural competency skills.

It is a myth that cultural competence is an ability that some people just have and others do not. It is a skill that everyone can learn. Simply working with someone from a cultural background that is not your own does not necessarily lead to a better understanding of each other's communication styles, and values. Having a better understanding of others takes work!

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

The key to success is to provide your employees with training. Training should focus on such topic areas as:

- Importance of cultural beliefs and practices in the workplace.
- Individual reflections on interactions with diverse communities to date; successes, challenges and learning along the way
- Basic understanding of terms like race, ethnicity and culture.
- Understanding how people adapt to a new culture.
- Strategies for integrating different cultural perspectives in the workplace.
- Basic training on interacting with others with sensitivity and respect.

Other ideas to promote cultural competency and shared understanding among your employees include:

- Promote cultural competency in your organization by providing a calendar that list the significant faith days represented by the different cultures in your organization.
- Organize pot lot lunches once a quarter so that people can share their favourite dishes from their country allowing employees to experience and appreciate what each culture has to offer.

Your goal should be a workforce of individuals that understand how culture shapes their attitudes, perceptions and behaviours with others.

A formula for success

There is a lot of pressure on newcomers to succeed. Often, more than individual reputation and respect are at stake. The drive to succeed can be very high.

You have hired your new employee because they are qualified to do the job. The supports outlined in this chapter are about being sensitive to their adjustment to a new country, a new workplace, and a new way of life. Any regulations or rules that must be strictly followed should be stressed. As well, ongoing on-the-job training for all staff is critical. This is the best formula for everyone's success.

Communicating on the Job

Strategies to improve
communication and
effectively promote communication
between employees.

Good communication is at the heart of good business. It is the primary area for you to invest resources and energy. The pay-off will be great. The consequences of not doing it will likely be even greater.

Good Communication

The way people communicate varies widely between, and even within, cultures. One aspect of communication style is language usage. The same word can be used in different ways across cultures. For example, even in countries that share the English language, the meaning of "maybe" varies from "yes, I'll consider it" to "definitely," to "it's highly unlikely", with many shades in between.

The number one rule of good communication is to double check to make sure you have been understood. Don't assume you have understood correctly, or that what is being communicated is somehow "wrong". Try to ask your question or give your information in a few different ways, so that you can help good communication along.

Helpful communication tips:

- Don't assume that breakdowns in communication occur because newcomer employees are on the wrong track or don't understand what you are saying. Remember that people who speak English as a first language experience communication breakdowns all the time! Search for ways to make communication work, rather than automatically thinking the other person is wrong.
- If your newcomer employee seems quiet, remember that he/she may be thinking about the information you are giving and need more time to respond.
- Listen carefully. Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. When another person's ideas are very different from your own, try not to judge but instead ask a question or two to help you understand what they are saying and why.

Communication Scenarios

Answering Questions or Obtaining Feedback

You may find that some people choose not to give preferences or opinions, even when prompted. You may also find that how people present their opinion varies:

Supervisor: *What kind of improvements do you think we can make to the new menu for the Sunday rush crowd?*

Employee: *It is really excellent - very well done. I don't think any changes are needed.*

Supervisor: *But we had feedback from some our customers that it isn't very good. Do you think it caters to the diverse community in Toronto?*

Employee: *No, it's fine, I guess.*

TIP:

Clearly communicate to the employee that disagreeing is acceptable! Encourage them to express their view by telling them that their opinion is valued. The clearer you are, the more information you will get.

Try this:

Supervisor: *We usually like to ask our employees how they feel about menu changes. It would be great if you share any ideas or thoughts you have about the latest menu for the Sunday rush crowd. Any suggestions are welcome. What kind of improvements do you think we can make?*

Employee: *It is very good, but if you want my idea, I think it should have some more colours in it, as that would attract more*

people. Also, I think we should have a few more dishes from other countries.

Spoken and Unspoken Rules

In any company, there are spoken and unspoken rules. Learning to read between the lines takes time for any new employee. When someone is adapting to a new culture, that process can be even more time-consuming and difficult:

Colleague: *Do you want to join us for lunch?*

Employee: *I don't have these forms filled out and our supervisor said they should be done this morning.*

Colleague: *Oh, you don't need to worry about that if they are done by mid-afternoon, it's no problem. They always just say to finish them by morning to make sure that we work on them as a priority. We would all love it if you join us as we want to get to know you.*

Employee: *Well...*

The conversation has the potential to put the new employee in a bad position. She has to decide between doing what she thinks she should in order to accomplish her job duties and trying to make connections on the team.

TIP:

- If a new employee seems nervous about leaving work responsibilities behind, don't put pressure on them. Accept a declined invitation, and ask them to join the next time when it may be more convenient.
- You could suggest a different time, if they are busy when you first approach them.

Asking for Help or Giving Help

Any new employee may find it difficult to ask for help, or accept it, especially when they feel they need to establish themselves in the workplace and demonstrate their skills. Consider the following example:

Supervisor: *How is the work going so far? You're not having any problems?*

Employee: *It is going on very well, madam. No problem at all.*

TIP:

- Try to bring up specific examples of things that you suspect might be a challenge for your new employee - for example, it can be difficult to learn a new company's systems, operating procedures, databases, computer technology, etc.

- If possible, ask your new employee's mentor how things are going so that you can focus your questions.

Try This:

Supervisor: *I wanted to see how you're doing so far. It can always be tough to start a new job. How has learning the new ANIX database been for you?*

Employee: *It has been fine.*

Supervisor: *I know when I started, I particularly had trouble with the access points for the system. How was that for you?*

Employee: *It was a little tough, but I got the hang of it.*

Supervisor: *Is there anything else you could use some help with? I'm thinking of the E-Tool for Time Management?*

Employee: *Well, maybe the...*

Problem Solving

In many Canadian businesses, problems are usually resolved through discussions based on current facts, possible solutions and future prevention. For example, employers often ask teams to "brainstorm" solutions to issues where they ask each person to contribute something to the dialogue. This way of discussing things can be very challenging for many people, not just newcomers.

SCENARIO

"I was very uncomfortable with the way my new team dealt with problems. Instead of each of us working on it on our own, our supervisor would tell everyone at the meeting that a specific person was having a problem and then ask for everyone to solve it! I felt very embarrassed for my colleagues when this happened, although they seemed okay with it. I was feeling reluctant to tell my supervisor if I was having any issue, because I thought she would talk about it in the team. My mentor, John, then told me that it is good if I bring up issues in the team, as everyone wants me to succeed and can help solve it together, and I still will get credit for the work I do. I tried it at the next team meeting - it is something to get used to!"

New Employee

Not everyone is used to “brainstorming”, and may need time to adjust to the idea. If you want ideas from people, state that clearly, and ask them specific questions. This will increase your chances of getting the most out of all your employees.

Nonverbal Cues

It is commonly known that the majority of our communication is non-verbal. Facial expressions, gestures and body language are important clues that we use to interpret other people's intentions and the meanings behind their words.

Consider the following:

SCENARIO

You know, I was at my first team meeting today and it was very strange in some ways. My manager was looking at two people the entire time - she did not look at any of the rest of us during the meeting at all. It was as if she was talking to those two people only. Others asked questions and made comments, and when they did, she acknowledged them but then went back to looking at those two people. I think they must have some special relationship going on.

Employee (to his friend after work)

The new employee here observes that the two people who sit close to the supervisor seem to get her attention. He senses favouritism, whether it is true or not. He may also not feel trusted because his opinion is not sought out.

As a manager, make a point of changing who you sit next to at each team meeting. When asking questions, make a point of looking at everyone in the room. When others are speaking, direct your attention to them, including making eye contact and turning toward that person. Set some ground rules for meetings, so that there are no interruptions and that everyone has the chance to speak.

Workplace Courtesy and Communication

Workplace courtesy differs all over the world. For example, in many cultures, new employees will interact with their peers for extended periods, in order to make the connection and to develop the team. In Canada, the expectation is to get to know people over a number of shorter interactions, with a focus on working first and “team” second.

Another common example is that in some cultures, you stop and acknowledge each other, even if for a few seconds. This is not so in Canada - people say hello as they keep walking. While considered quite rude in some countries, this is considered normal practice in Canada, and some newcomers may need help to understand such differences.

When thinking about workplace courtesy, ask yourself how people interact with each other in your business? What words describe the feel of the place? Try to give your new employee a sense of the informal practices that go on in the workplace.

See the Resource Section for some websites that give information on common courtesies in Canada's business world.

A Word about Small Talk

In Canada, small talk is accepted, even for people who know each other quite well. "How was your weekend?" and "This is some kind of weather we've been having!" are things we hear from each other all the time. In other parts of the world, small talk is not a part of interacting. People will sit in silence versus making conversation about "nothing at all". This is not to be interpreted as being rude, but understood as a part of that culture.

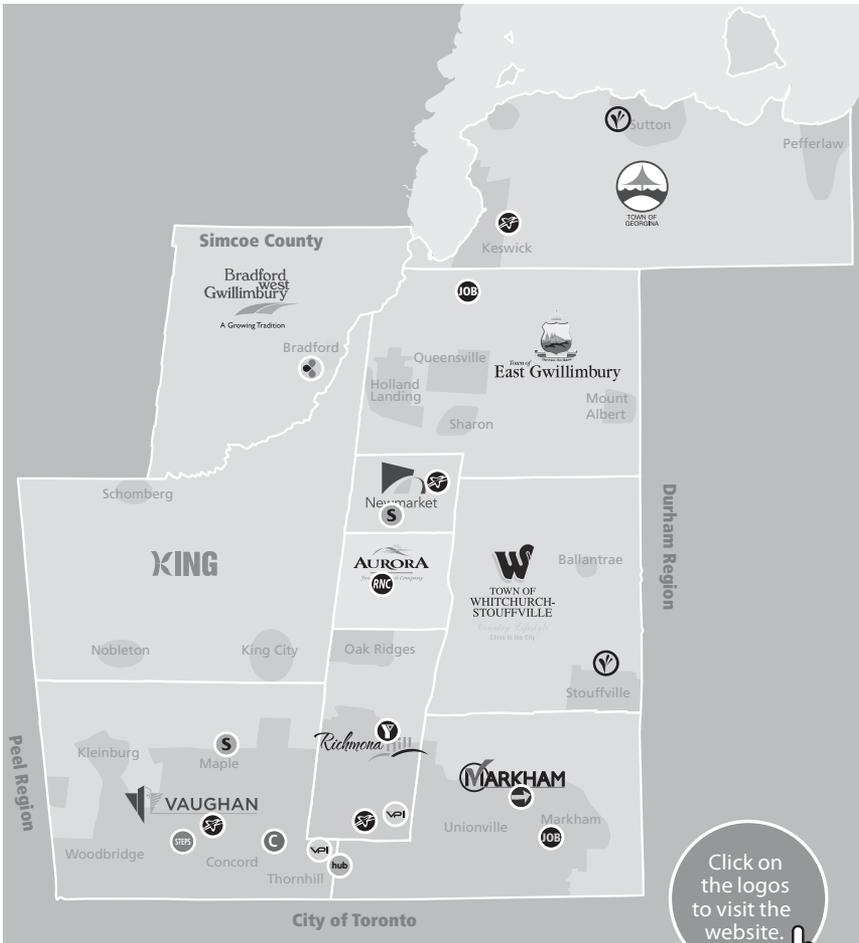
These kinds of cultural differences require raising mutual awareness. That is, your new employee should be supported to understand the nature and purpose of small talk. At the same time, your other employees need to understand that not everyone indulges in small talk and that it doesn't mean they don't want to engage.

Effective communication is critical to success in the workplace.

Information can be interpreted in many different ways. These differences can create misunderstandings if they aren't discussed. Be aware, be clear, and support people to ask questions. Remember that every interaction is an opportunity to ask yourself how culture may be shaping your own reactions. Try to see the world from a different point of view!

Support Resources

To access qualified job ready newcomers, use the interactive map to connect with Employment Support Services for Employers.



SUPPORT RESOURCES

Additional Resources for Employers:

Magnet

www.magnet.today

Skills for Change

www.skillsforchange.org

Hire Immigrants

www.hireimmigrants.ca

Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council

www.triec.ca

Bridging Programs in Ontario

http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/keyinitiatives/bridgetraining.shtml

South Asian Community Profile

Overview of factual Information
and suggested resources
for mutual understanding

*A vibrant, dynamic
and growing
community*

A vibrant, dynamic and growing community

The South Asian community in Ontario is one that is vibrant and growing. In fact, according to Statistics Canada, it is the fastest growing immigrant group in Ontario. It is the single largest visible minority group, accounting for 29.5% of visible minorities and 7.6% of Ontario's total population. The South Asian population grew 21.6%, from 794,170 in 2006 to 965,900 in 2011.⁷

Nearly one person in four (24%) living in Toronto CMA in 2031 will belong to the South Asian visible minority group and will continue to be the largest minority group in this area at approximately 2.1 million people.⁸

This Community Profile provides factual information about the South Asian community that will support you, the small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) owner, to be more successful in bringing South Asian community members into your workforce.

You might ask yourself why WPBoard is offering information specific to certain cultural communities. The answer is simple. York Region is home to certain newcomers communities in large numbers, for example the Chinese and South Asian communities. Other regions in the GTA have their own demographic picture. If you are interested in diversifying your workforce, you need a basic understanding of who is living in your community to be hired.

The information on the South Asian community in this Profile is basic and factual only. It is not comprehensive or complete – no information ever can be, as there is so much uniqueness between and within communities, and between individuals. All South Asian communities have their own culture, language, food, dress, customs, beliefs and religious practices. The guide is not intended to stereotype or oversimplify. It is only intended to give you information and resources so that you better understand and appreciate others.

South Asians All Over the World

In the last decade, the term “South Asian” has become increasingly common. While it is not universally used, many individuals define themselves as South Asian, choosing this term over a label that refers to a national origin. In Canada, the South Asian designation has become a way to generally refer to people from the South Asian subcontinent that that have historically migrated to other parts of the world, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, some countries in Africa (e.g. Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania) and some countries in the West Indies (e.g. Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago).

⁷ <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/census/nhshi11-2.html>

⁸ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2010001-eng.pdf>

SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY PROFILE

It also includes India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, which are the three top source countries for York Region.⁹ South Asian communities bring with them unique culture, including art, literature, history, food and music. Their history is one of exploration, trade, development of civilization and the emergence of major world religions.

Many people are familiar with the modern history of South Asia (also called the subcontinent). For example, in 1947, after 200 years of British rule, India gained independence led by Mahatma Gandhi. India was split as a result and was divided into India and Pakistan. Pakistan was led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.¹⁰ Sri Lanka, also under British rule, gained independence in 1948. All three countries developed unique cultures as a result, but still share a similar way of life. For example, Pakistani and Indian people have very similar languages (Urdu and Hindi). As well, British rule resulted in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka having political, economic and institutional systems that are very similar in structure and design to English speaking Canada. It has also resulted in English being widely spoken in all three countries.¹¹

South Asians in York Region

The Toronto GTA area is Canada's largest immigrant receiving area and includes Toronto, Peel, York Census Divisions and parts of Durham and Halton. The share of new permanent residents¹² arriving in the GTA who intend to settle in York Region has increased from 9% in 2003 to 14% in 2012.¹³

Forty five percent of York Region's population as of 2011 is comprised of immigrants¹⁴ and is projected to grow to 31% in 2031¹⁵. Specifically the South Asian population is forecasted to increase to 211,997 (21%) by 2031.¹⁶

In 2006, South Asians are the second largest immigrant group with 70,436 (11%) population. At the current high growth rates for York Region, south asians population is forecasted to increase to 211,997 (21%) respectively, by 2031.

⁹ www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/southeast-asians/
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asia

¹⁰ <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/india/indiasbook.html>
http://cs.mcgill.ca/~rwest/wikispeedia/wpcd/wp/m/Muhammad_Ali_Jinnah.htm

¹¹ <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/india/indiasbook.html>

¹² A new permanent resident is someone who has been granted the right to live permanently in Canada

¹³ Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), RDM, Permanent Residents Facts and Figures 2012 data extract

¹⁴ Statistic Canada, 2011 National Household Survey

¹⁵ The Regional Municipality of York, Corporate Services, Long Range Planning Branch, 2031 Cultural Forecast Projection, 2012

¹⁶ http://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/37abf76c-d572-45e3-ac6f-92b53a914989/diversity%2Bfactsheet_web.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=37abf76c-d572-45e3-ac6f-92b53a014989

SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY PROFILE

The main source countries of South Asians in York Region are India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Between 2003 and 2012, 53% of the new permanent residents who intended to settle in York Region had a bachelor's degree or higher, including 36% with a bachelor's degree and 17% with a master's degree or doctorate.¹⁷ Many also come with extensive work experience in their chosen field. Lastly, the majority of South Asians coming to Canada and York Region arrive from urban centres, which informs their lifestyle and perspectives about culture and community.

India

As one of the top source countries of South Asians in York Region, India is the seventh largest country in the world by geographical area, the second most populous country, and the most populous democracy in the world. Hindi, with the largest number of speakers (30%), is the official language. India also recognizes 14 other languages.¹⁸ Eighty percent (80%) of Indians follow Hinduism.

Pakistan

Pakistan is situated directly west of the Indian subcontinent. The name Pakistan is derived from the Urdu words Pak (meaning pure) and stan (meaning country). Pakistan has one of the world's most rapidly growing populations. Its people are a mixture of many ethnic groups, for example Pashtuns, Baluchis, Punjabis and Sindhis. Urdu is the official language, but many other languages are also spoken.¹⁹ The majority of people from Pakistan follow Islam.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is officially known as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka was known as Ceylon before 1972). Sri Lanka is located just off the southern coast of India in the Indian Ocean. In Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese community forms the majority of the population. Tamils form the largest ethnic minority. Some Tamils were brought as indentured labourers from India by British colonists to work on estate plantations. These Tamils are distinguished from the native Tamil population that has resided in Sri Lanka since ancient times. The vast majority of immigrants to Canada from Sri Lanka are from the Tamil community. Sinhalese and Tamil are the two official languages of Sri Lanka.²⁰ The majority of Sri Lankans are Buddhists.

¹⁷ Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), RDM, Permanent Resident Facts and Figures 2012 data extract

¹⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.worldlanguage.com/Countries/Pakistan.htm>

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka

The Religions of South Asia

South Asian is home to many major world religions. Like everywhere else in the world, there will be those community members that are absolutely devout in their faith, others that choose to practice certain parts of their faith, and others that may not practice their faith at all.

In many world religions, there are significant numbers of sects, or sub-groups. For example, the Christian faith has many denominations (e.g. Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, etc.). Most of these sects will have adopted their own unique way of practicing the religion, with differences in how beliefs are interpreted, events are acknowledged, and rituals are performed. For example, the same religious observance may be acknowledged at different times and in different ways within the larger Muslim community. Some Hindus celebrate certain festivals and others do not.

There are many celebrations and beliefs in religious life that are not mentioned below. The information provided is *very basic* only. As well, in different geographic or cultural communities, these events can be celebrated on different days and in unique ways, even within the same religion.

The major religions represented in the South Asian community in York Region are Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. "Major" is defined by the number of followers of that religion in York Region. Christianity, Jainism, Judaism and Zoroastrianism are also religions of South Asia, though the number of followers of these religions is fewer. For more information on these religions, see the Resource Section.

Buddhism

Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world, with about 365 million followers - 6% of the world's population. Buddhists represent about 1% of the total Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2001). There are three paths of Buddhism: Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. Buddhism follows the teachings of Lord Gautama Buddha.

Religious Observances/Celebrations

Buddhists observe a number of holy days based on their regional and cultural affiliation. They use both a lunar and a solar calendar simultaneously. Specific observances and dates may be determined by consulting local Buddhist temples.

Special Observances include:

- **Buddha's birthday**, determined by the lunar calendar.
- **Buddha's day of Enlightenment (Rohatsu)**, determined by the lunar calendar.

- **Wesak**, a celebration of Buddha's birth, enlightenment and Parinirvana (everlasting peace) that is celebrated by all Buddhist groups.
- **Buddha Day (Visakha Puja)** which celebrates Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death
- **Dharma Day (Asalha Puja)**, celebrating the Buddha's first sermon after his enlightenment.

Buddhist Golden Rule or the Ethic of Reciprocity:

↔ Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful

Hinduism

Hinduism has grown to become the world's third largest religion, after Christianity and Islam. It claims about 837 million followers - 13% of the world's population. Hindus make up 1.5% of the total population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Religious Observances/Celebrations

Hindus observe a number of holy days based on their regional and cultural affiliation - and at times with a mix of solar and lunar calendars. Specific observances and dates may be determined with local Hindu temples.

Special Observances include:

- **Diwali** is an annual festival to pay homage to Lord Krishna and Lord Rama; earthen lamps are lit to reveal the beauty of the world and to pay homage to God.
- **Holi** is an annual festival that celebrates spring and is time of general merrymaking.
- **Navaratri ("Nine Nights")** is a colourful festival celebrated with devotion, love and fervour. It pays homage to Goddess Durga who exists in many forms and is the manifestation of the absolute energy that pervades the Universe. Navratri culminates in a final celebration called Dusserha
- **Raksha Bandhan** is a festival, which celebrates the relationship between brothers and sisters; the festival is marked by the tying of a "rakhi", or holy thread by the sister on the wrist of her brother. The rakhi may also be tied on other special occasions to show solidarity and kinship between men and women
- **Shivaratri** is a festival that pays homage to Lord Shiva
- **Sri Krishna Jayanthi** commemorates the birth of Lord Krishna

Hindu Golden Rule or the Ethic of Reciprocity

↔ This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.

Islam

Islam is the world's second largest religion and is the fastest growing religion with approximately 1.6 Billion (23%) in 2010. According to Canada's 2011 National Household Survey, there were 1,053,945 Muslims in Canada or about 3.2% of the population. The word Islam means voluntary "Submission" or "Surrender" to the Will of God. It derives from the root word "salam," meaning peace.²¹

Religious Observances/Celebrations

Note: There are two main denominations of Islam, Sunni and Shi'a, although many other smaller groups (e.g. Ismailis and Ahmdiyyas) also exist.

Specific observances and dates may be determined by consulting an Islamic centre.

- In terms of rituals, there are five pillars of Islam that include the declaration of faith, prayers (five times in a day), fasting (for a month during Ramadan), Zakath (obligatory charity of 2.5% of the annual saved assets), and Hajj (pilgrimage). The daily Prayer is performed five times: at dawn, at noon, in the mid-afternoon, at sunset and in the evening. In addition to the above, there are congregational prayers on Friday's at noon.
- **Eid-UI-Fitr:** The first day of Shawal, the 10th month of the Islamic calendar, celebrates the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting. On this day, Muslims do not work; instead, they visit the mosque to pray and visit their families.
- **Eid-UI-Adha (the day of sacrifice):** The 10th day of the month of Zul-Hijja, the 12th month of the Islamic calendar, commemorates the intention of the prophet Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael to God, who prevented the sacrifice.
- **Mawlid-al-Nabi** (celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed in 570 CE). (Note: Some conservative sects of Islam consider celebration of this event idolatrous).
- **Al-Hijral Muharran** (the Muslim New Year): the beginning of the first lunar month.
- **Ashura** (marks the martyrdom in 680 CE of 70 of the faithful, led by Imam Husain, grandson of Mohammed).

Muslim Golden Rule or the Ethic of Reciprocity

↔ An Islamic moral principle which calls upon people to treat other the way they would like to be treated²²

²¹ <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Rpeng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=0&PID=105399&PRID=0&PTYPE=105277&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2013&THEME=95&VID=0>

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/23/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group/>
<https://www.whyislam.org/islam123/what-is-submission/>

²² <http://islam.ru/en/content/story/golden-rule-islam>

Sikhism

Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world, with over 23 million followers. According to Statistic Canada 2011, 455,000 people reported they were affiliated with the Sikh religion or 1.4% of the population.²³ Guru Nanak (1469-1539), is the founder of the religion. The word Sikh means disciple - who follows the teachings of the 10 Sikh gurus.

Religious Observances/Celebrations

Sikh religious holidays are observed according to the Nanakshahi calendar, named after Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The years of the calendar start with the year of his birth, 1469 CE. The Sikh New Year starts on Chet 1, or 14 March. Chet 1, or 14 March. Sikhs meet in congregation for a prayer service and a common meal on primary holidays:

Special Observances include:

- **Baisakhi** – A holy day to mark the birth of the Khalsa – the word for “saintly soldier”
- **Guru Gobind Singh’s birthday**
- **The Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev**
- **Installation of the Guru Granth Sahib**
- **Guru Nanak’s Birthday**
- **The Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur**

Sikh Golden Rule or the Ethic of Reciprocity

↔ I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all.

The information above is meant to open the door to your learning about the South Asian community. Clearly, the community is one that is diverse and unique. We encourage you to share this information with all the people working for you and beyond. It is hoped that the information provided will help you, the small or medium sized enterprise owner, to better welcome and support South Asians to be a part of your workforce, by creating understanding and curiosity about South Asian cultures.

Major Sources Consulted:

1. Census of Canada. Statistics Canada. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca>
2. Golden Rules. Scarborough Missions. Toronto.
http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Golden_rule/index.php
3. Religions in Canada. http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/dn-nd/D2-147-2008-eng.pdf
<http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/pub/rc/index-eng.asp>
4. The 2017 Multifaith Calendar.
<https://multifaithaction.jimdo.com/2017-multifaith-calendar/>

²³ <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm#a6>

Support Resources

Immigrant Serving Organizations in York Region

Welcome Centres in York Region www.welcomecentre.ca
Five locations throughout York Region to support newcomers

Markham North (289) 846-3645
8400 Woodbine Ave, Suite 102-103,
Markham, ON L3R 4N7 (South of Highway 7)

Markham South (905) 479-7926
7220 Kennedy Road (Hollywood Square),
Markham, ON L3R 7P2 (South of 14th Avenue)

Newmarket (289) 841-3032
6655 Yonge Street, Unit #26,
Newmarket, ON L3X 1V6 (South of Mulock Drive)

Richmond Hill (289) 842-3124
South Hill Shopping Centre, 9325 Yonge Street, Unit 31A,
Richmond Hill, ON L4C 0A8 (Northeast Corner of Yonge & 16th)

Vaughan (905) 761-1155
9100 Jane Street, Building H, Units 56-67, Vaughan, ON L4K 0A4
(South of Rutherford Road)

Additional Organizations that Support Newcomers

Catholic Community Services of York Region (905) 770-7040
21 Dunlop Street, Richmond Hill, ON L4C 2M6
www.ccsyr.org

COSTI Immigrant Services (905) 669-5627
3100 Rutherford Road, Suite 102, Vaughan, ON L4K 4R6
www.costi.org Email: vaughanemployment@costi.org

Job Skills (905) 948-9996
4961 York Regional Rd 7, Unionville, ON L3R 1N1
www.jobskills.org Email: MarkhamES@jobskills.org

Human Endeavours (905) 553-9291
439 Glenkindie Aveune, Maple, ON L6A 2A2
www.humanendeavour.org Email: info@humanendeavour.org

Social Services Network (905) 554-9033
8 Shadlock Street, Unit 5A, Markham, ON L3S 3K9
www.socialservicesnetwork.org Email: info@socialservicesnetwork.org

The Cross-Cultural Community Services Association (905) 948-1671
York Centre - Metro Square, 3636 Steeles Avenue East, Unit 213A
Markham, ON, L3R 1K9
[www. http://tccsa.on.ca](http://tccsa.on.ca) Email: echeng@tccsa.org

Promoting a Skilled, Relevant and Inclusive Labour Force

The Workforce Planning Board of York Region and Bradford, West Gwillimbury (WPBoard) is a community based not-for-profit organization that gathers local labour market intelligence. WPBoard works with both the supply side (job seekers) and the demand side (employers) to identify emerging skills needs and discuss barriers to hiring from the local labour market.

Our role is to work collaboratively with community partners at a grassroots level to support the development of the local labour market by:

- Acting as a conduit in the community to connect stakeholders and identify labour market issues
- Analyze and identify priorities and opportunities
- Measure, refine and add value to the local labour market through projects and resources

Working successfully with newcomers is a long-term commitment. It starts with being open to learning, understanding basic information about your own culture and the cultures of others, and then looking at the way you are of doing business. By looking at the assets and needs of newcomers as your source applicants, conducting interviews, providing orientation to the company, offering ongoing training and learning about communication are ways you can embrace a diverse workforce. The potential gains for both your business and the community are invaluable.

*Serving the communities of
York Region and
Bradford, West Gwillimbury*



Building tomorrow's workforce together

Workforce Planning Board of York
Region Bradford West Gwillimbury
www.wpboard.ca



This Employment Ontario project is
funded by the Ontario Government.