Immigrant-Friendly Businesses
Effective Practices for Attracting, Integrating, and Retaining Immigrants in Canadian Workplaces
Preface

This report looks at how businesses across Canada can attract, integrate, and retain immigrants and international talent. It highlights the value of implementing immigrant-friendly programs and practices to address the needs of immigrants and articulates a number of “keys to success” to attract international top talent. Through an analysis of award-winning business programs and practices and a series of key informant interviews, this report provides practical insights that businesses can use to more effectively leverage the skills, knowledge, and creative capacity of international talent.
CONTENTS

Executive Summary ................................................................. i

Chapter 1—Hiring Immigrants and International Talent: A Business Imperative for Canadian Employers .......... 1
Research Objectives and Methodology ....................................... 2
Immigration and Canada’s “Demographic Crunch” ....................... 3
The Benefits of Culturally Diverse Hiring Practices ..................... 4

Chapter 2—The Challenges of Integrating Into Canadian Workplaces ................................................................. 7
Systemic Barriers to the Integration of Immigrants Into Canadian Workplaces ............................................... 8
The Challenges Businesses Face When Integrating International Talent and Immigrants Into Their Workplaces ... 12

Chapter 3—Attracting and Recruiting Immigrants and International Talent ......................................................... 14
Stage 1: Immigrant-Friendly Attraction and Recruitment Practices ................................................................. 15

Chapter 4—Integrating, Developing, and Retaining Immigrant and International Talent ..................................... 29
Stage 2: Immigrant-Friendly Integration and Development Practices ............................................................... 29
Stage 3: Immigrant-Friendly Retention Practices ......................... 34

Chapter 5—Conclusion: Improving the Bottom Line by Building an Immigrant-Friendly Organization ................. 37

Appendix A—Listing of Select Resources and Tools for Employers ................................................................. 43

Appendix B—Bibliography ............................................................... 45
Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared for The Conference Board of Canada’s Centre on the Future Workforce (CFW), a CanCompete initiative, under the direction of Douglas Watt and Diana MacKay. Funding was provided by our CanCompete investors.

The report was researched and written by Vadim Kukushkin, with contributions from Douglas Watt. Thanks go to Daniel Munro and Michael Bloom for their constructive feedback.

We also extend our thanks to our two external reviewers of this report: Dr. Margaret Yap, Assistant Professor, Human Resources Management Director, The Diversity Institute in Management & Technology, Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University; and Jill Bucklaschuk, Research Affiliate, Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.

Any errors and omissions in fact or interpretation remain the responsibility of the authors. Content is for informational purposes only. Neither the authors nor The Conference Board of Canada accept liability resulting from the use or misuse of the information found within this report.

ABOUT CANCOMPETE: COMPETITIVENESS FOR SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

CanCompete is a three-year program of research and dialogue designed to help leading decision makers advance Canada on a path of national competitiveness.

CanCompete explores five of the seven strategies presented in the Conference Board’s report Mission Possible: Sustainable Prosperity for Canada. To accomplish this, the Board created five new research centres designed to move from individual strategies to specific action plans.

The five research centres are:

- Centre on Productivity
- Centre on Regulation
- Centre on the Future Workforce
- Centre on Infrastructure
- International Trade and Investment Centre
Launched in October 2007, CanCompete actively engages private and public sector leaders in setting national policy direction. Some 30 companies and organizations have invested in the project, providing invaluable financial, leadership, and knowledge support.

For more information about CanCompete, please visit the Conference Board website at www.conferenceboard.ca.

**CANCOMPETE INVESTORS**

The Conference Board of Canada is grateful to the sponsors of CanCompete, who made this report possible:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Investors</th>
<th>Sustaining Investors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KPMG LLP</td>
<td>Merck Frosst Canada Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Ministry of Finance</td>
<td>Microsoft Canada Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC Financial Group</td>
<td>National Bank of Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotiabank</td>
<td>Nexen Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lead Investors</strong></td>
<td>Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPMG LLP</td>
<td>PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Ministry of Finance</td>
<td>Rio Tinto Alcan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC Financial Group</td>
<td>Saskatchewan Telecommunications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotiabank</td>
<td>Siemens Canada Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lead Investors</strong></td>
<td>SNC Lavalin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining Investors</td>
<td>Social Sciences and Humanities Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing</td>
<td>Council of Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombardier Inc.</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Technology Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Development Bank of Canada</td>
<td>Symcor Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deloitte &amp; Touche LLP</td>
<td>TELUS Communications Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.H. Price Limited</td>
<td>Viterra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EnCana Corporation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Saskatchewan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydro-Québec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many immigrants who come to Canada do so with the intention of finding work that matches their skill sets, credentials, and previous work experience. Often, however, their knowledge and talents are not recognized or are underutilized, leading to lost productivity and performance within organizations. With strong competition for top talent among Canadian businesses, those organizations that choose to utilize what immigrants have to offer will reap the rewards.

This report considers two aspects of capitalizing on this available source of skills: the role that immigrants can play in the success of Canadian businesses; and the steps needed to be taken to attract, integrate, and retain this international talent. In short, businesses across Canada—whether small, medium-sized, or large—need to do a better job of recruiting and integrating immigrants into their workplaces, recognizing credentials, and leveraging the benefits of a diverse and multi-cultural workforce.

The report outlines how businesses—in their pursuit of improved productivity and performance—can make immigration work for them. In particular, it focuses on the programs and practices that make workplaces appealing to international talent, and what businesses need to do to attract, hire, and retain international top talent. Specifically, this report provides insights on ways that Canadian businesses can design and implement “immigrant-friendly”:

- **attraction and recruitment practices**, including ways to expand recruitment methods to reach a broader international market, implement culturally sensitive screening practices, and provide assistance to immigrants in obtaining recognition for their foreign credentials and international work experience;
- **integration and development practices**, including effective ways to provide professional language and communication skills training programs, offer workplace mentoring programs, and support international talent in developing new skills and achieving professional goals; and

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Immigrant-Friendly Businesses**

**Effective Practices for Attracting, Integrating, and Retaining Immigrants in Canadian Workplaces**

**At a Glance**

- Businesses that attract, integrate, develop, and retain international talent benefit from an expanded knowledge and skills base.
- Systemic barriers to the integration and retention of international talent in Canadian workplaces (e.g., discrimination, discrepancies in recognizing foreign qualifications, lack of workplace integration and diversity training programs) must be addressed.
- Immigrant-friendly programs or practices—those that promote cultural awareness and diversity, that expand a firm’s recruitment methods, that offer bridging and mentoring services to new recruits, and that recognize foreign credentials—can have a significant impact on an organizations’ bottom line.

**exeCutIve summary at a glance**

Businesses that attract, integrate, develop, and retain international talent benefit from an expanded knowledge and skills base. Systemic barriers to the integration and retention of international talent in Canadian workplaces (e.g., discrimination, discrepancies in recognizing foreign qualifications, lack of workplace integration and diversity training programs) must be addressed. Immigrant-friendly programs or practices—that promote cultural awareness and diversity, that expand a firm’s recruitment methods, that offer bridging and mentoring services to new recruits, and that recognize foreign credentials—can have a significant impact on an organizations’ bottom line.

The report outlines how businesses—in their pursuit of improved productivity and performance—can make immigration work for them. In particular, it focuses on the programs and practices that make workplaces appealing to international talent, and what businesses need to do to attract, hire, and retain international top talent. Specifically, this report provides insights on ways that Canadian businesses can design and implement “immigrant-friendly”:

- attraction and recruitment practices, including ways to expand recruitment methods to reach a broader international market, implement culturally sensitive screening practices, and provide assistance to immigrants in obtaining recognition for their foreign credentials and international work experience;
- integration and development practices, including effective ways to provide professional language and communication skills training programs, offer workplace mentoring programs, and support international talent in developing new skills and achieving professional goals; and
• **retention practices**, including effective ways to promote cultural awareness and to engage executive support for diversity.

Canadian businesses need to recognize that, increasingly, their employees are coming from diverse backgrounds. Businesses need to improve labour market transitions for immigrants by setting up programs, such as internships, that give them the opportunity to gain meaningful workplace exposure and experience. They need to spend more effort in creating and supporting inclusive work environments (where diversity is respected from the bottom-up and the top-down) that make immigrants feel welcome and that give them the confidence to use their full range of skills and knowledge. By assisting international talent integrate into their workplaces, and by investing in their development—beyond the initial recruitment and settlement phases—Canadian businesses and immigrants alike have the opportunity to mutually benefit and succeed.
CHAPTER 1
Hiring Immigrants and International Talent: A Business Imperative for Canadian Employers

Chapter Summary

- Immigration plays a critical role in alleviating Canada’s skills and talent shortages.
- In the coming years, Canada’s competitiveness will depend, to an even greater extent, on how well employers can attract, integrate, and retain immigrants and international talent.
- Human resources practices that recognize and respect the needs of immigrants and international talent can give employers the opportunity to benefit from an expanded knowledge and skills base, potential links to new markets and global business opportunities, and fresh perspectives on business practices.

Talent is the lifeblood of successful economies, but like other valuable commodities, it is a scarce resource. With falling fertility rates and aging baby boomers, the supply of skilled and productive workers in Canada and elsewhere in the developed world is declining. Many organizations are now competing for skilled international talent.

Immigration is playing an increasingly critical role in alleviating Canada’s current and anticipated talent and skills shortages. Canada’s competitiveness in the world depends, to a great extent, on how well its employers attract, integrate, and retain international talent—including recent immigrants, temporary foreign workers, and international students. (See box “Recruiting International Talent Through Temporary Foreign Worker and Provincial Nominee Programs.”)

Many organizations are now competing for skilled international talent.

Jeffrey Reitz points out in Immigrant Skill Utilization in the Canadian Labour Market that “helping Canadian employers deal with the real and very practical problems of using the new global workforce could be a low-cost way of dramatically improving returns from our investment in immigration.”

Those organizations with “immigrant-friendly” policies and practices in place that address the needs and issues of international talent are the ones that will attract and retain the workers needed to succeed. Gordon Nixon, President and Chief Executive Officer of RBC, recently noted that “newcomers to Canada bring skills, including language and cultural skills, knowledge, and networks that can help us reach out to emerging economic giants like China and India, as well as emerging immigrant...

1 Watt, Krywulak, and Kitagawa, Renewing Immigration, p. i.


Find this report and other Conference Board research at www.e-library.ca
The majority of Canadian businesses hire from the pool of landed immigrants (those who are already living in Canada as permanent residents) and those who are international graduates of Canadian post-secondary institutions. However, some companies find that recruiting workers in foreign countries is an effective means of attracting immigrant talent. In recent years, dozens of Canadian companies from across Canada in the trucking, food processing, service, construction, energy, and other sectors have recruited skilled workers from abroad using two programs:

- Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)—a federal program that enables Canadian employers to bring foreign workers to Canada on work permits for up to three years in order to address critical talent shortages; and
- Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs)—employer-driven immigration programs that allow applicants to receive permanent resident status in Canada based on provincial selection criteria.

Using one or both of these programs allows employers and their prospective employees to avoid the often long wait times associated with the Federal Skilled Worker program. Canada’s current business landscape abounds with examples of successful direct recruitment from abroad. For instance, McCain Foods Limited, headquartered in Florenceville-Bristol, New Brunswick, has used the TFWP to hire approximately 100 information technology specialists from South America, India, and Eastern Europe over the past five years.

In some industries and regions, businesses are actively pursuing the option of moving their temporary foreign workers (TFWs) to permanent residence status as a way of retaining immigrant talent, reducing turnover, and stabilizing their workforces. And many PNPs contain streams that allow employers to help their international talent “convert” to permanent residents by supporting their applications for provincial nominee status with full-time job offers. It is estimated, for instance, that over 90 per cent of the TFWs at Maple Leaf Foods in Brandon, Manitoba, apply for permanent residency through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

The pros and cons of the TFWP and PNPs are the subject of an ongoing debate in Canada. Critics have raised such issues as potential exploitation of TFWs by employers; their ineligibility for many social services; and the potential negative effect on the employment prospects of Canadians and permanent residents, especially in difficult economic times. Some experts also argue that the wide use of the TFWP has contributed to the emergence of a “two-step” immigration system, which encourages future Canadians to come to the country initially as temporary residents—a practice that these experts believe reduces Canada’s competitiveness as an immigrant-receiving nation.

the Immigrant Success Awards,6 and Canada’s Best Diversity Employers Awards7 programs—the report provides small, medium-sized, and large businesses and human resources practitioners with insights into ways to more effectively tap into and use the skills, knowledge, and creative capacity of international talent.8 It also sheds light on what sorts of “immigrant-friendly” programs and practices are available to international talent working in Canada. Finally, it identifies some common obstacles and challenges that businesses can face when implementing or running immigrant-friendly workplace practices and programs. (See box “There Is No Cookie-Cutter Approach to Being an Immigrant-Friendly Business.”)

The objectives of this report are to:
- identify the challenges and benefits of integrating international talent into Canadian workplaces;
- present effective practices in attracting, recruiting, integrating, developing, and retaining international talent in Canadian workplaces; and
- provide businesses and other stakeholders with keys to success in making Canadian workplaces more “immigrant friendly.”

**IMMIGRATION AND CANADA’S “DEMOGRAPHIC CRUNCH”**

The face of the Canadian workforce is changing. While the demand for skilled, well-educated workers continues to grow, Canada’s domestic labour pool is shrinking as the baby-boom generation moves toward retirement. If new sources of talent are not found, most Canadian employers will face critical skills and talent shortages within the next decade.

Canada’s domestic labour pool is shrinking as the baby-boom generation moves toward retirement.

According to 2006 Census data, the number of Canadians aged 55 to 64 stood at nearly 3.7 million—representing 16.9 per cent of the working-age population, compared with 14.1 per cent in 2001. It is anticipated that the proportion of people in this age group still in the workforce in 2016 could reach more than 20 per cent.9 Because of the country’s low birth rate, in 10 years Canada may have more retirees than new entrants to the labour market.10 The resulting skills and talent shortages will affect the entire economy, hurting Canada’s competitive position in the global economy.

---

6 The Immigrant Success Awards recognize employers and individuals in the Greater Toronto Area as leaders in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of skilled immigrants in the workplace. See: www.triec.ca/programs/is.

7 Canada’s Best Diversity Employers Awards recognize employers with successful workplace diversity and inclusiveness programs (including members of visible minorities). See: www.canadastop100.com/diversity/.

8 It is beyond the scope of this report to provide a more in-depth evaluation of the programs mentioned (e.g., the program’s keys to success, challenges, impacts, and outcomes). Additional research is warranted on how these “immigrant-friendly” programs and practices have contributed to the success of an organization.


10 Ibid.
While immigration is not the only answer to replenishing Canada’s “maturing” workforce, it is a critical part of the solution. Over the next decade, immigration is projected to account for 100 per cent of net growth in the domestic labour force. And after 2025, all net population growth in Canada is expected to come from immigration.11

While immigration is not the only answer to replenishing Canada’s “maturing” workforce, it is a critical part of the solution.

An increasing number of Canadian employers recognize the importance of immigration for meeting their current and future skills and labour needs. For example:

Organizations that participated in The Conference Board of Canada’s 2009 Learning and Development Outlook survey reported that an average of 18 per cent of their employees were new Canadians—a proportion that is just below that of the foreign-born population in Canada, which reached 19.8 per cent in 2006.12

Almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of Canadian human resource professionals who participated in the 2007 survey of talent-sourcing practices conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management and the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations indicated that their organizations had “increased efforts to recruit and retain” immigrants and foreign workers, and 24 per cent said that they recruited international students pursuing degrees in Canada.13

The Benefits of Culturally Diverse Hiring Practices

Employing a culturally diverse workforce is no longer just the “right thing to do.” In today’s economy, it makes good business sense: employers who open their doors to international talent can gain competitive advantage over those who do not. Hiring immigrants, new Canadians, or temporary foreign workers can provide Canadian businesses with such benefits as:14

- expanded access to talent, knowledge, and skills base;
- potential links to new global and domestic markets and business opportunities; and
- fresh perspectives and diverse points of view leading to enhanced innovation and creativity.

Immigrants Are a Source of Knowledge and Skills

Immigrants bring a wealth of experience, skills, and knowledge to Canadian businesses. Recent immigrants, for example, are more than twice as likely as Canadians to have a university degree.15 In 2007, 48.6 per cent of Canadian immigrants reported having significant skill levels in the professional, managerial, skilled and technical, and intermediate and clerical occupation categories.16

Employers who open their doors to international talent can gain competitive advantage over those who do not.

Businesses that hire culturally diverse talent are better positioned to meet skills and talent shortages facing some sectors of the economy, particularly in occupations where the domestic labour supply is scarce or difficult to attract. Those organizations that develop an “immigrant-friendly” reputation have the potential to increase their

---

14 Watt, Krywulak and Kitagawa, Renewing Immigration, pp. 2–3.
The Conference Board of Canada

supply of talent and skills in the long term—whether they are seeking highly skilled immigrants with recognized credentials and work experience, or lower-skilled workers. Immigrant workers can also become an employer’s “pipeline” to previously untapped sources of international talent. Like other Canadians, immigrants are engaged in a web of social networks that they often use to pass on information about job opportunities and welcoming workplaces.17

IMMIGRANTS ARE A SOURCE OF NEW AND EXPANDED BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Immigrants can also help expand their employer’s customer base and increase business opportunities at home and abroad. Many new Canadians possess language skills, business connections, and cultural sensitivities that can be used to help some Canadian employers connect with customers and potential clients in their employees’ native countries and extended communities.18 Hiring a Chinese hydrogeologist, for instance, has allowed Rescan Environmental Services Ltd., a medium-sized Vancouver company, to expand its business to China.19

Immigrant workers can become an employer’s “pipeline” to untapped sources of international talent.

A culturally diverse staff can also help domestic businesses better address the needs of a multicultural clientele. Ensuring that an organization’s workforce reflects the diversity of its customer base goes beyond the practical ability to conduct business in multiple languages—it also helps create confidence and trust between a company and those whom it serves. According to Rose Patten, Senior Executive Vice-President at the Bank of Montreal, creating a workforce that mirrors the client communities has helped BMO better understand its customer needs.20

Culturally diverse sales and marketing teams can help employers become more sensitive to the cultural norms that exist in international marketplaces. Many multinational corporations leverage the global skills of their internationally trained employees to ensure a “cultural fit” between their products and local market needs. At IBM Canada, for example, immigrant employees screen product ideas for cultural compatibility, review product language to eliminate jargon, translate documentation, and conduct cross-cultural user testing.21

Culturally diverse sales and marketing teams can help employers become more sensitive to the cultural norms that exist in international marketplaces.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY BRINGS INNOVATION AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

Immigrants bring innovative ideas and diverse points of view to existing business practices. Companies that hire diverse talent have the potential to improve their performance by drawing upon different types of knowledge, experiences, and perspectives. For example, in 2007, the Xerox Research Centre of Canada (XRCC) and Leger Marketing conducted a nationwide survey of 1,000 working Canadians and found that 77 per cent of them believe that cultural diversity “creates a stronger Canadian business landscape” and contributes to business success.22 Fifty per cent of respondents said that exposure to different cultures bolsters creativity and innovation. Hadi Mahabadi, Vice-President and Manager of XRCC, noted that “the findings validate an approach that has been the

17 Research has shown that ethnic networks play a crucial role in determining where immigrants live and work in Canada. See Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada [hereafter LSIC]: Process, Progress and Prospects, pp. 11–13.
19 Conference Board interview with Chen Yaming, Rescan Environmental Services, June 26, 2009.
21 IBM [online], http://hireimmigrants.ca.
22 Xerox Newsroom. Canadians Name Diversity as Key Ingredient. This national survey was conducted by Leger Marketing between July 17 and 31, 2007.
linchpin of Xerox Canada’s innovation success for decades: finding the most talented and innovative research professionals from around the world and bringing them together under one roof.”

Today, immigrants make up 50 per cent of the Centre’s staff, whose scientists average 1.5 patents per year. And in 2006, the Centre was awarded its 1,000th U.S. patent, with three of its top performers—each surpassing the 100 patent mark—being skilled immigrants.

A number of diversity studies also support these findings. In a 2005 survey of more than 300 human resource professionals, conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 34 per cent of respondents from companies appearing on Fortune magazine’s list of “Top 100 Companies to Work For” said that tapping into the talents of employees with diverse backgrounds helped their organizations increase innovation. There is also some anecdotal evidence suggesting that diverse, team-driven workforces at IBM and DuPont have helped these companies develop new ideas and increase revenues.

And while it is often difficult to identify strong links between diversity programs and financial performance, a 2005 study by Stanley Slater, Robert Weigand, and Thomas Zwirlein on the business case for diversity found that, on average, organizations “with a strong commitment to diversity outperform their peers.” In particular, the study found that the top 50 “diversity organizations” in the United States:

- had a median difference in their net profit margins of +2.7 per cent, per year, over their matching counterparts; and
- had higher median returns on equity (between 2.5 and 6 per cent) than their counterparts every year.

23 Xerox Newsroom. Canadians Name Diversity as Key Ingredient.
25 TRIEC, “Collaborative Programs for Immigrant Employment.”
26 Lockwood, Workplace Diversity.
27 Cowan, Hugget, and Parris, Report on Diversity, p. 5.
29 Ibid.
The Challenges of Integrating Into Canadian Workplaces

Chapter Summary
- Many immigrants and international talent (including temporary foreign workers) find it difficult to enter the labour market at a level commensurate with their education and skills.
- Immigrants and talented individuals from abroad continue to face age-old barriers: a lack of Canadian work experience; difficulty in getting foreign qualifications and international experience recognized; language barriers; differences in workplace culture; lack of workplace integration and diversity programs; and discrimination.
- Canadian businesses need to understand and act on barriers that discourage or inhibit immigrants from gaining or retaining meaningful employment.

Although today’s immigrants are more educated and skilled than ever before—for example, in 2007, 37 per cent of working-age immigrants had a university degree compared with just 22 per cent of working-age Canadian-born people—their labour market outcomes are less satisfactory than previous immigrant cohorts or the Canadian-born population.¹ Today, immigrants entering the Canadian labour face persistent difficulties in finding employment. In 2006, for example, the unemployment rate among recent immigrants was 6.6 per cent higher than that of the Canadian-born population (11.5 per cent compared with 4.9 per cent).²

A growing number of recent immigrants to Canada are finding it difficult to enter the labour market at a level commensurate with their education and skills. According to Statistics Canada, “the proportion of immigrants with a university degree in jobs with low educational requirements (such as clerks, truck drivers, salespersons, cashiers, and taxi drivers) increased” during the period 1991 to 2006. And even after living 15 years in Canada, “immigrants with a university degree are still more likely than the native-born to be in low-skilled jobs.”³

Underutilizing immigrants’ skills can result in lost productivity, a misuse of resources, a greater burden on social programs, lower tax revenues, and a less attractive image of Canada abroad. In 2001, Jeffrey Reitz estimated

1 Grant and Yang, “Immigrants Take Brunt of Recession, Recover Less Quickly.”
2 Ibid. The incomes of recent immigrants also take longer to catch up to those of native-born Canadians. For example, in 2005, recent male immigrants earned 63 cents for each dollar earned by Canadian-born men, down from 85 cents in 1980. For more information see: Statistics Canada, “Earnings and Incomes of Canadians Over the Past Quarter Century”; and Hawthorne, “The Impact of Economic Selection Policy,” p. 5. Canada fares poorly in terms of labour market outcomes for recent immigrants compared with most other immigrant-receiving nations.
3 Statistics Canada, “Immigrants’ Education and Required Job Skills.”
that “foreign-educated immigrants earned $2.4 billion less than native-born Canadians with formally comparable skills, because they worked in occupations that were below their skill levels.”4 The Conference Board has estimated that the annual costs of unrecognized learning for visible minorities in 2001 ranged between $2.2 billion and $3.4 billion.5

**Lack of Canadian work experience remains one of the most serious problems for immigrants in finding work.**

Many of the barriers that immigrants face also prevent businesses from reaping the socio-economic benefits of having a talented, multicultural, and productive workforce. For these reasons, businesses should take an interest in understanding and addressing the barriers immigrants face when seeking employment.

**SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS INTO CANADIAN WORKPLACES**

A number of systemic barriers continue to hinder immigrants’ access to the Canadian labour market and the ability of Canadian businesses to effectively utilize their skills, knowledge, and abilities. The most common challenges for immigrant job seekers include the following: a lack of Canadian work experience; the inability of businesses to recognize foreign credentials, qualifications, and international work experience; language barriers; differences in workplace cultures; the lack of workplace-based integration and diversity programs; and discrimination in the workplace.

**DISCREPANCIES IN RECOGNIZING FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

Considering the expanding global pool of skilled workers with training, many Canadian employers and regulatory bodies seek to mitigate risks by hiring or licensing only those candidates with “recognizable” educational and professional backgrounds. (See box “The Challenges of Credential Recognition.”) As the educational level and professional aspirations of Canadian immigrants

---


5 Benimadhu, “Valuing Diversity,” p. 13. This estimate was developed by Bloom and Grant, *Brain Gain: The Economic Benefits of Recognizing Learning and Learning Credentials in Canada*. It is important when interpreting this estimate to note that not all visible minorities are immigrants and that not all immigrants are visible minorities.

---


5 Benimadhu, “Valuing Diversity,” p. 13. This estimate was developed by Bloom and Grant, *Brain Gain: The Economic Benefits of Recognizing Learning and Learning Credentials in Canada*. It is important when interpreting this estimate to note that not all visible minorities are immigrants and that not all immigrants are visible minorities.

---


7 From 2001 to 2005, Statistics Canada conducted the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) to better understand how new immigrants adjusted to life in Canada and what factors helped or hindered their adjustment process. Approximately 12,000 landed immigrants were interviewed at 6-month, 2-year, and 4-year intervals after arriving in Canada between October 1, 2000, and September 30, 2001. For more information on the LSIC, see: www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDS=4422&lang=en&db=imd&adm=8&dis=2.


increase, so too does the number of hurdles they have to overcome to obtain recognition of their qualifications.\textsuperscript{10} For example:

- Over 44 per cent of organizations participating in the Conference Board’s 2005 Diversity Survey indicated that barriers to hiring individuals with foreign credentials and international work experience existed in their organizations. The most commonly cited barriers included an inability to properly evaluate foreign credentials and foreign work experiences, the lack of Canadian work experience, and inadequate language skills.\textsuperscript{11}

- Participants in Statistics Canada’s LSIC identified the transferability of foreign qualifications or international experience as the second-most serious problem related to labour market integration (after the lack of Canadian work experience).\textsuperscript{12}

**Many workplaces use industry-specific jargon that can be difficult for immigrants to master.**

**LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

The ability to communicate effectively is a factor that affects every aspect of an immigrant’s experiences in a new country, but nowhere is it more important than in finding and keeping a job. For example:

- Statistics Canada’s LSIC study found a clear connection between immigrants’ language skills and labour market participation rates; 52 per cent of immigrants aged 25 to 44 years who could speak English or French were employed at the time of the survey, compared with only 33 per cent who had no knowledge of either official language.\textsuperscript{13}

**The Challenges of Credential Recognition**

Many immigrants find the credential recognition process in Canada to be complicated, time-consuming, and at times expensive. While there are a variety of assessment services available in Canada, the lack of a standardized approach to credential assessment continues to challenge new Canadians and their employers. It also limits the value of the assessments (e.g., many credential assessments are not portable across provincial and territorial borders) and can impede immigrants’ entry to the labour market.\textsuperscript{1} This is especially true of the regulated professions, which are governed by provincial bodies that have established complex (and often different) criteria for assessing the credentials of foreign-trained professionals.

The accounting profession in Canada, for example, has more than 30 bodies regulating access to the profession across the provinces and territories. Internationally trained and educated tradespeople are particularly hard hit when it comes to foreign credential recognition. Standards and licensing requirements vary from country to country, while some countries have nothing in place at all. Some tradespeople may have trained on, or worked with, different technologies or pieces of equipment, affecting their ability to obtain the necessary Canadian licence.

**DIFFERENCES IN WORKPLACE CULTURES**

While the culture of each Canadian workplace tends to vary, there are some common workplace qualities that lend themselves to a “North American culture” of work (e.g., professional etiquette, attire, code of conduct).

---

\textsuperscript{10} Because the qualifications of many internationally educated immigrants are not recognized, some newcomers to Canada face the additional burden of having to get their credentials, qualifications, and work experiences validated.


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 28. Six months after their arrival in Canada, 22 per cent of immigrants cited the lack of language skills as the greatest obstacle to employment. This proportion fell to 15 per cent after the respondents had spent two years in Canada (Statistics Canada, *LSIC: Progress and Challenges of New Immigrants in the Workforce*, p. 10).
However, what is regarded as “normal” in one culture may be considered inappropriate in another. Differences in workplace cultures can present a significant challenge for new Canadians, especially immigrants from conservative or hierarchically organized cultures. (See box “Workplace Culture.”)

Because of these differences, many risk-averse employers avoid hiring candidates without Canadian work experience. For example, a recent Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) report argues that, for many employers, the Canadian experience requirement is not as much about technical knowledge as it is workplace socialization, including mastery of the social etiquette prevalent in Canadian workplaces. As most employers strive to minimize uncertainty and risk in hiring, they frequently screen out candidates who are presumed to have an insufficient understanding of “Canadian ways,” even if they possess formal qualifications.

**Differences in workplace cultures can present a significant challenge for new Canadians.**

There is also a growing recognition that language proficiency is closely linked to a broader set of communication skills that enables individuals to integrate effectively into Canadian workplace teams. Many immigrants who can speak English or French still find it difficult to “fit in” because they misunderstand the nuances of a language (e.g., humour, slang), or they lack the cultural knowledge necessary to effectively use non-verbal signals (e.g., gestures and body language; sense of personal space; display of emotions; tone of voice). Unlike pronunciation and grammar, these skills can be highly cultural and difficult to learn without help. One solution to this problem might lie in integrating language instruction with other types of training, including teaching the “soft skills” that can help immigrants find employment. Some Canadian immigrant-serving organizations have already adopted this model. (See Chapter 3.)


**Workplace Culture**

The notion of “workplace culture” has many aspects, including non-verbal communication styles, attitudes to authority, gender relations, and career growth expectations. It also includes workplace social etiquettes, such as greetings and introductions, workplace dress and decorum, corporate and personal gift-giving practices, and codes of conduct during meetings and negotiations. For example:

- Many newcomers experience culture shock when they begin their first job search in Canada. Immigrants from India, China, or some South American countries, for example, tend to compose their resumés differently from what most Canadian companies would see as the “norm.” They typically emphasize their education rather than work experience, and use a writing style that is viewed as too formal or “flowery” or that downplays their accomplishments. Many first-time job seekers also include information that is considered “inappropriate” in Canada, such as age, gender, place of origin, citizenship, or marital status.

- Differences translate into workplace behaviours that follow culturally specific rules. Some immigrants may avoid direct eye contact in workplace conversations, address people by formal titles even when invited to use first names, have difficulty speaking about their achievements, or they may find it challenging to make their career plans known to management. Such behaviours may seem “odd” or “unusual” to Canadian managers and employers who have little or no cross-cultural experiences—perhaps negatively impacting an immigrant’s chance of securing employment.

For more information, see Laroche and Rutherford, Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees, pp. 13–26.

**LACK OF WORKPLACE INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY PROGRAMS**

Although immigrants constitute a growing proportion of the Canadian workforce, Canadian organizations are not doing enough to facilitate their workplace integration. For example:

- Only 12 per cent of businesses in Ontario—the province with the highest proportion of immigrants—provide periodic diversity training to their staff.16

16 Balthazard and Mongodin, Corporate Diversity Assessment 2007, p. 11.

Find this report and other Conference Board research at [www.e-library.ca](http://www.e-library.ca)
Canadian employers fall short of their U.S. counterparts when it comes to cultural awareness training for managers. Only 33 per cent of organizations in Canada (48 per cent in the U.S.) provide training to their managers and supervisors to help them understand cultural issues that may arise when working with foreign-born employees.\(^{17}\)

Many Canadian organizations fail to follow through on stated diversity-related initiatives.

According to the Conference Board’s 2009 Learning and Development Outlook survey of more than 200 Canadian organizations:\(^{18}\)
- 9 per cent of organizations employing new Canadians assessed the specific learning needs of their new hires;
- 22 per cent of organizations employing new Canadians indicated that they were unsure whether their training, learning, and development (TLD) activities were specifically geared toward new Canadians; and
- 33 per cent of organizations employing new Canadians indicated that they had no particular TLD activities in place to address the specific needs of new Canadians.

Table 1 identifies the top learning and development needs of new Canadians, including upgrading language skills (speaking, oral comprehension, and writing skills); adjusting to Canadian workplace cultures, norms, and ethics; and settling into Canadian life.\(^{19}\)

While Canadian organizations have a strong “commitment” to diversity, their actual performance on diversity-related measures (e.g., integrated strategic plans, investments in diversity-related activities and initiatives) is mediocre—indicative of a gap between organizational policy and performance.\(^{20}\) Many Canadian organizations fail to follow through on stated diversity-related initiatives. More needs to be done to translate stated commitments into concrete actions.

**DISCRIMINATION**

Although Canada has made substantial progress toward becoming an inclusive society, discrimination still occurs in Canadian workplaces. For example:\(^{21}\)
- In a 2006 international workplace survey completed by Kelly Services Inc., target characteristics of workplace discrimination included age (15 per cent), race (10 per cent), gender (8 per cent), and disability

---


\(^{18}\) Hughes and Campbell, *Learning and Development Outlook 2009*, pp. 37–38. The survey defines “New Canadians” as temporary foreign workers, international students, and “individuals born outside Canada who have obtained, or are in the process of obtaining, permanent residency status or Canadian citizenship.”

\(^{19}\) Ibid., pp. 37, 63. Survey respondents included professionals involved in establishing/implementing training, learning, and development (TLD) strategies in their organizations (including executives, senior management, TLD specialists, human resources advisors and generalists).

\(^{20}\) Cowan, Huggett, and Parris, *Report on Diversity*, p. i.

\(^{21}\) While discrimination can be based on a variety of factors other than racial or ethnic origin (e.g., age, gender, sexual orientation), race remains one of the leading grounds for discriminatory practices.
(1 per cent).22 Because the majority of Canadian immigrants belong to visible minority groups and most visible minority individuals in Canada are foreign-born, racial discrimination and anti-immigrant attitudes have become two sides of the same coin.

- The widening employment gap between visible minorities and other Canadians suggests that non-Caucasian immigrants do not enjoy the same access to work opportunities as their Caucasian counterparts. While the workforce participation rate for the general population in 2001 stood at 80 per cent, the rate for visible minorities lagged at 66 per cent.23

The issue of discrimination is complex. First, immigration experts do not always agree on what exactly constitutes discrimination, in part because it is difficult to measure separately from other employment barriers faced by immigrants (e.g., foreign credential recognition, language issues). For instance, rejecting a job candidate on the basis of poor language skills may be viewed as a reasonable decision by some analysts but may constitute discrimination for others. Second, discrimination can take disguised forms, making it hard to discern or prove. While insufficient education or work experience may often be the formal reason for rejection, in reality some of these decisions may be motivated, intentionally or unconsciously, by cultural factors, such as one’s “foreign” appearance or accent.

While the workforce participation rate for the general population in 2001 stood at 80 per cent, the rate for visible minorities lagged at 66 per cent.

While direct discrimination based on race or culture is becoming less prevalent in Canadian workplaces, its more veiled expressions still remain. A recent study found that many Canadian recruiters screen out resumés simply on the basis of “foreign-sounding” names. University of British Columbia researchers found that “job applicants with English-sounding names have a 40 per cent greater chance of getting interviews than those with Chinese, Pakistani, or Indian names”—even when the exact same resumés (except for the name change) were used. These findings indicate that a name that suggests “foreign” origin may be a significant disadvantage for new Canadians looking to enter the job market.24

Many Canadian recruiters screen out resumés simply on the basis of “foreign-sounding” names.

THE CHALLENGES BUSINESSES FACE WHEN INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL TALENT AND IMMIGRANTS INTO THEIR WORKPLACES

Just as there are challenges and hurdles that immigrants face when integrating into Canadian workplaces, so too are there challenges that businesses face when considering implementing “immigrant-friendly” practices, including:25

- the costs associated with properly assessing immigrant skills and international work experience;
- the financial and human resource investments needed to integrate international talent and immigrant workers into an organization (particularly dealing with language, communication, and cultural diversity issues);
- the time it takes to properly integrate immigrants into a workplace environment;

22 The survey collected the views of nearly 70,000 people from 28 countries, including more than 10,000 people in Canada. See: Kelly Services Inc., Workplace Discrimination the Biggest Hurdle for Older and Younger Canadians.

23 Galabuzi, Canada’s Economic Apartheid, p. 16.


25 Public Policy Forum, Bringing Employers Into the Immigration Debate, pp. 6–12; Taras, “Integrating Immigrants Into the Workforce Takes Time;” Institute for Work and the Economy, The Integration of Immigrants in the Workplace, pp. 12–13; and, Government of Alberta, Integrating Skilled Immigrants Into the Alberta Economy, p. 16.
• the ability to manage and deal with a culturally diverse workforce in order to address and overcome cultural issues, misunderstandings, and differences that may arise between international talent and other employees (e.g., some male immigrants may be uncomfortable working for women supervisors); and
• the ability to successfully address the needs of both immigrants and employers through workplace-based attraction, integration, and development initiatives.26

For immigrants, success occurs when they are given a fair opportunity to develop and grow in order to achieve a level of self-sufficiency (professionally, socially, and economically); for employers, success occurs when employees add value to the economic performance of a business and are able to function efficiently, effectively, and safely.

Employers can play a critical role in helping newcomers overcome the challenges they may face when trying to enter the Canadian labour market. However, conventional business-thinking prompts most employers to take a risk-averse approach to recruiting human capital, preferring to hire and promote people who are similar to those already working for them. Even a company that is prepared to hire internationally trained applicants may not possess the knowledge or resources required to assess their educational credentials, to upgrade their professional language skills, or to go the extra mile to ensure their integration into the workplace.

In this chapter, we profile immigrant-friendly practices that businesses have adopted in order to improve their organizational capacity and performance and to enhance the integration of immigrants into their workplaces. In doing so, employers get the skilled employees—and added benefits of hiring immigrant employees—that contribute to their success, and immigrants get fair-paying jobs commensurate with their skills and experience.

Working with a variety of stakeholders—including federal and provincial governments, immigrant settlement and employment agencies, credential assessment services, institutions of higher learning, professional regulatory bodies, and non-profit organizations—Canadian employers have introduced a number of effective practices to help them, and immigrants, succeed.

These practices fall along an Immigrant Engagement and Employment Continuum (see Table 2), which is made up of three distinct yet interdependent stages:

- Stage 1: attraction and recruitment practices;
- Stage 2: integration and development practices; and
- Stage 3: retention practices.

**Chapter Summary**

- Many Canadian businesses need to seek out additional support from community and government stakeholders and to collaborate with them to maximize the potential and performance of immigrant employees.
- “Immigrant-friendly” businesses reach out to new Canadians by practicing expanded recruitment methods, supplying immigrant job seekers with information and training through community organizations, and providing help with workplace socialization through bridging and mentoring programs.
- “Immigrant-friendly” businesses recognize foreign qualifications by using assessment services of professional credentials or through in-house competency tests, assist immigrants with the credentialing process in occupations requiring Canadian credentials, and implement culturally sensitive recruitment and screening practices.
Stage 1: Immigrant-Friendly Attraction and Recruitment Practices

Leading Canadian businesses understand that attracting immigrant talent means creating and marketing an organizational brand that focuses on inclusion. If an organization is seen as one with a culture that values and respects diversity, at all stages of engagement—inclusive recruitment practices, culturally sensitive training and mentoring, and credential recognition services—it will have a much greater chance of drawing recruits from diverse backgrounds than organizations with seemingly less “friendly” cultures.1 (See box “Immigrant Engagement and Employment Continuum: Stage 1—Attraction and Recruitment Practices.”)

1 Baklid et al, Business Critical, p. 23.

Table 2
Immigrant Engagement and Employment Continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant-Friendly Attraction and Recruitment Practices</td>
<td>Immigrant-Friendly Integration and Development Practices</td>
<td>Immigrant-Friendly Retention Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expand recruitment methods beyond standard practices.</td>
<td>• Offer workplace mentoring programs.</td>
<td>• Promote cultural awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implement culturally sensitive screening practices.</td>
<td>• Provide professional language and communication skills training programs.</td>
<td>• Support affinity groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide information and pre-employment training to immigrant/international job seekers through community organizations.</td>
<td>• Support and encourage the achievement of their professional goals and objectives.</td>
<td>• Provide cultural diversity training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Offer bridging and mentoring programs to immigrant/international job seekers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Engage executive support for diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help obtain recognition of foreign qualifications through credential service agencies or in-house competency tests.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide assistance for immigrants/international job seekers to acquire credential papers/documents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Immigrant Engagement and Employment Continuum: Stage 1—Attraction and Recruitment Practices

- Expand recruitment methods.
- Implement culturally sensitive screening practices.
- Provide information and pre-employment training to immigrant/international job seekers through community organizations.
- Offer bridging and mentoring programs to immigrant/international job seekers.
- Help obtain recognition of foreign qualifications through credential service agencies or in-house competency tests.
- Provide assistance for immigrant/international job seekers to acquire credential papers/documents.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.
EXPAND RECRUITMENT METHODS

In today’s business world, traditional recruitment and selection practices do not always result in attracting the best employees. Job ads in mainstream media, walk-ins, referrals, employment agencies, and word of mouth are no longer sufficient methods of reaching a broad spectrum of international candidates. Companies that succeed in attracting diverse talent leverage the resources and expertise of recruitment agencies.

Recruitment Through Agencies and Networks Providing Employment Services to Newcomers

Immigrant-friendly businesses are leaders in engaging and working with existing immigrant recruitment agencies and employment networks. Today, increasing numbers of Canadian organizations see the advantages of such an approach and look to immigrant-serving agencies as a method of identifying international talent and immigrant job seekers and matching them with jobs commensurate with their skills and training. Not only do these agencies create and maintain databases containing resumés of internationally trained professionals interested in applying for job vacancies, many of them also have programs in place to assist new Canadians search for meaningful job opportunities (e.g., workshops on résumé writing and interview techniques). (See box “Promoting Immigrant Labour Market Integration Through Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships.”)

Companies that succeed in attracting diverse talent leverage the resources of recruitment agencies.

A case in point is Skills International—an Ontario-wide searchable Internet database of internationally educated professionals who have been pre-screened and deemed job-ready by employment advisors and community agencies. Employers can search the database using various criteria (e.g., skills, education, experience) to find candidates that best match their current job requirements.

Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) is the first bank in Canada and one of the first employers in the country to have integrated the Skills International database into its internal web-based recruitment management system. When CIBC recruiters post a position to the system, they need to make only one click to post the job to the Skills International database. Skills International candidates apply directly to CIBC through its recruitment management system.²

Along with Skills International, “immigrant-friendly” employers in Canada’s National Capital Region use the Ottawa Job Match Network (OJMN), which is administered by World Skills, a non-profit organization.

² Canada’s Top 100 Employers, “Best Employers for New Canadians 2008, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce/CIBC”; Kile, “Passion for Helping Immigrants Rewarded.”
established in 1997 by the coalition Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI) to provide job search assistance to Ottawa immigrants. (See box “Ottawa Job Match Network: Connecting Employers With Skilled Immigrants.”) Many companies in the Ottawa–Gatineau region have used OJMN services to recruit from the immigrant talent pool.

Another promising job-matching model for immigrant professionals has been developed by Upwardly Global, a San Francisco-based non-profit agency with other offices in New York and Chicago. Upwardly Global provides job-search training and employment and mentoring services for skilled immigrants in the United States, and has partnership agreements in place with a number of large employers, including JPMorgan Chase, Deloitte, and Pepsi Bottling Group. (See box “JPMorgan Chase: Tapping Into Global Talent.”) Under these partnerships, Upwardly Global guarantees a certain number of pre-screened, job-ready candidates to its employer partners, and in turn, employers commit to hiring a certain number of skilled immigrant candidates. According to Anne Kirwan, Managing Director of Upwardly Global for the Bay Area, immigrants have had success in finding employment with small and medium-sized businesses and non-profit organizations.

Ottawa Job Match Network: Connecting Employers With Skilled Immigrants

The Ottawa Job Match Network (OJMN) is a partnership between LASI World Skills, Algonquin College, the National Capital Region YMCA-YWCA, and Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO). Launched in 2008 and funded by the Government of Ontario, the OJMN connects 33 local employers— all partners with HIO—to a skilled and diverse pool of pre-screened candidates who have completed job-readiness training through World Skills workshops and programs. When a job order from an employer comes to the OJMN, it is matched with active resumés from the OJMN database. In May 2009, the database included up to 4,000 job-ready, pre-screened candidates. To be placed in the database, candidates cannot have any Canadian work experience.

During its first year of operation, the OJMN matched nearly 60 immigrants to skilled jobs in the Ottawa region. It is common practice for companies to hire immigrants as interns first and then offer them full-time employment. Some companies, including TD Bank, send recruiting teams to conduct interviews at the World Skills office.


JPMorgan Chase: Tapping Into Global Talent

JPMorgan Chase is a financial services company that caters to the needs of millions of individuals across the U.S. and many corporate, institutional, and government clients around the world. By partnering with Upwardly Global, the company reinforces its corporate commitment to attracting and retaining international top talent.

JPMorgan Chase has realized significant benefits from partnering with Upwardly Global in three areas: education, employee engagement, and talent sourcing. Upwardly Global has helped JPMorgan Chase “train its staff on cross-cultural interviewing and hiring techniques, engage employees as volunteers to mentor Upwardly Global candidates, and hire talented immigrant professionals into the firm.”

As a result of its partnership with Upwardly Global, JPMorgan Chase “has improved its cross-cultural recruiting efforts by implementing effective techniques for screening and interviewing immigrant professionals.” The company has also boosted its employee volunteerism by supporting immigrant professionals to re-establish and build their careers. Finally, through its partnership with Upwardly Global, JPMorgan Chase has developed a “pipeline” of immigrant professional talent. “Our business leaders are focused on building a great company through diversity. I can’t think of a better partner than Upwardly Global to help us do just that,” says Martha Gallo, JPMorgan Chase Executive Vice-President.


Along with general employment services for immigrant professionals, occupation-specific programs are also becoming more prevalent. The Engineering Matching and Placement Program (E-MAP) in British Columbia, for example, provides job-matching services for internationally trained engineers (ITEs), connecting them

---

3 Conference Board interview with Anne Kirwan, Upwardly Global, May 22, 2009.
with manufacturing firms in the province. Developed by the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME) and the Society of Internationally Trained Engineers of British Columbia (SITE BC), E-MAP was established in 2006 as a pilot project with funding support from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada’s Foreign Credential Recognition Division. The program’s staff (consisting of two people) maintains a database of ITEs, which employers can access when a vacancy becomes available. Once candidates are invited by the employer to apply for a particular position, E-MAP staff guides them through the screening process, providing support in areas such as resumé writing and interview preparation. The program does not offer any general job-search training for immigrants who are not applying for specific positions.

E-MAP has been particularly valuable to employers looking for skilled engineers.

Since early 2006, approximately 40 manufacturing companies in British Columbia—mostly small and medium-sized businesses—have used E-MAP to connect with immigrant job seekers. Nearly 10 companies have hired two or more employees through the program. Importantly, this indicates that employers find the service effective and that the immigrant employees hired are competent. Overall, the program has helped 58 internationally trained engineers find employment in B.C.’s manufacturing sector. This program has been particularly valuable to those employers looking for skilled engineers.

Until recently, most federally and provincially funded job-matching programs operated primarily from the supply side of the labour market by working with immigrants to improve their employability but leaving it to the job seekers themselves to find employment. The OJMN and E-MAP initiatives exemplify an encouraging trend among Canadian immigrant-serving agencies: focusing on the demand side first by working with employers to identify the required occupational profiles and available job vacancies, and then assisting interested immigrants with the application and interview process.

Recruitment Through Career Fairs

In an era of online recruiting, career fairs are no longer a widely used method of recruitment for most businesses. But even though relatively little hiring may be done at such fairs, they still retain their importance as venues where employers and prospective job candidates can meet and talk face-to-face. As Chandra Williams of TD Bank remarked, job fairs give potential applicants the “people connection” that they will not get from corporate careers websites. In addition, many large job fairs offer information sessions and workshops where immigrant job seekers can receive first-hand knowledge of different organizations that may help them make a better employment choice.

In an era of online recruiting, career fairs are no longer a widely used method of recruitment for most businesses.

Canadian financial institutions are among the organizations that continue to use job fairs as a means of reaching out to immigrant talent. CIBC attends a number of career fairs such as the New Canadians, Aboriginals, and Minorities Job Fair and the Just Jobs Hiring Fair in Toronto to advise and collect resumés from new Canadians looking for jobs. The bank also partners with ACCES Employment, a non-profit organization that works with immigrant job seekers in the Greater Toronto Area. Specifically, it organizes recruitment events for the graduates of Financial Connections, a three-week training program for internationally trained finance specialists.

5 Conference Board interview with Chandra Williams, TD Bank, May 21, 2009.
6 Canada’s Top 100 Employers, “Best Employers for New Canadians 2008. Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce/CIBC.”
The Bank of Montreal, in partnership with ACCES, hosts career fairs at its Toronto office and Institute for Learning training facility. During the fair, a panel of BMO employees provides an overview of the organization’s history and operations, and new Canadian BMO employees describe their job search experiences. Immigrant job seekers also participate in networking and interviewing sessions, ask questions about career opportunities at the bank, and learn about the organization’s hiring process.\(^7\)

**Advertising Through Ethnic Media**

Posting job advertisements with ethnic community associations or ethnic media is another way in which successful Canadian businesses have tapped into the pool of skilled and talented immigrant and international talent. For many new Canadians, ethnic media outlets remain a significant source of information, even after several years spent in Canada. A 2006 survey of immigrants’ media use in Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver revealed that “Chinese and South Asians are particularly heavy consumers of ethnic media, with three quarters of the respondents in each group reporting having accessed one ethnic radio, TV, or newspaper” in the week before the survey.\(^8\)

For many new Canadians, ethnic media outlets remain a significant source of information.

Job advertising through ethnic media is practiced most widely by immigrant-owned businesses catering to an ethnically specific clientele. Community service organizations located in Canada’s largest cities are also beginning to enter the ethnic advertising market. The Toronto Police Service and Toronto Community Housing Corporation, for example, post their job advertisements in ethnic media outlets as a means of increasing the diversity of their workforce, and to better reflect the community’s ethnocultural profile. For financial services providers (such as Vancity, a Vancouver-based credit union), reaching out to ethnic communities through media resources is also a way to expand their customer bases among the city’s multicultural population.\(^9\) Although this method of advertising requires at least a basic knowledge of Canada’s ethnic media landscape and may involve some translation expenses, more Canadian businesses may wish to consider it, particularly as the international and domestic competition for talent intensifies.

**CULTURALLY SENSITIVE RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING PRACTICES**

The adoption of culturally sensitive screening techniques can go a long way to eliminate misunderstanding and disappointment resulting from cross-cultural misperceptions, possible communication barriers, and different ways of using language. Immigrant-friendly organizations have developed a range of tools and techniques to help recruiters evaluate candidates’ skills despite communication difficulties that may arise during interviews. A large selection of resources on cross-cultural interviewing—developed based on the experiences of the leading employers of immigrant talent—is available at hireimmigrants.ca, an online project of ALLIES. (See box “Cross-Cultural Interviewing Resources.”)

---

**For many new Canadians, ethnic media outlets remain a significant source of information.**

---

Cross-Cultural Interviewing Resources

hireimmigrants.ca is an online resource managed by ALLIES (Assisting Local Leaders with Immigrant Employment Strategies), a project of Maytree and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation. It provides employers with tools and resources—including a cross-cultural interviewing tool, human resources e-tips, webinars, workshops, and cultural competence videos—designed to help them better understand the role of cultural differences in the employee selection process.

The Cross-Cultural Interviewing Tool was developed by Upwardly Global, a U.S.-based organization that promotes the employment of internationally trained professionals.

hireimmigrants.ca also features instructional videos on cross-cultural interviewing and “e-tips,” which can be received by subscribing to the project’s mailing list.

Sources: www.hireimmigrants.ca; www.upwardlyglobal.org/.

---

\(^7\) Canada’s Top 100 Employers, “Best Employers for New Canadians 2009: BMO Financial Group.”

\(^8\) Keung, “Advertisers Must Reach Out to Ethnic Community.”

\(^9\) Canada’s Top 100 Employers, “Canada’s Best Diversity Employers 2009: Vancity.”
Xerox Canada is a company that has long practiced a “culturally sensitive” approach when interviewing job candidates. Jenny Johnston, Xerox Canada recruiting manager, offers a number of tips on cross-cultural interviewing that have helped her organization’s recruiters reduce any cultural bias in the hiring process:

- In the opening minutes of an interview, inform candidates about your organization’s commitment to diversity, leadership development, and mentoring.
- Ask probing questions if necessary (e.g., if the candidate is hesitant to speak about his or her accomplishments).
- Do not guess—ask for clarification, if necessary.
- Listen carefully; do not allow accents to influence your perceptions.
- Interpret intonations and body language correctly. People from other cultures may use them differently.
- Use clear communication styles (e.g., sequence your questions, control your accent, avoid using jargon or slang).10

**Many immigrants have greater difficulty communicating via telephone than in person.**

**Telephone Interviews**

Immigrant-friendly businesses recognize that there are several drawbacks to a telephone interview. For instance, many immigrants have greater difficulty communicating via telephone than in person, since they cannot use gestures and facial expressions as cues. In addition, “foreign” accents and intonations tend to be amplified in a telephone conversation, which may negatively affect interviewers’ perceptions of foreign-born candidates. A large U.S. company that had made telephone interviewing its standard practice decided to go back to face-to-face interviews when it discovered that many qualified Latino immigrants were being screened out because of their accents.11 When absolutely necessary to resort to a telephone interview, immigrant-friendly businesses should make sure that their interviewing teams are trained in cross-cultural communication techniques. Sending questions to the candidate in advance of the telephone interview is a practice often used by these companies.

**Cultural Awareness Training**

Immigrant-friendly businesses provide their recruitment personnel with training in cultural awareness to help ensure that qualified candidates are not overlooked due to cultural and other biases. Many large organizations today require their hiring managers and recruiters to complete some form of bias-free interview training program.12 Other organizations integrate cross-cultural interviewing modules into their general training programs in an effort to increase their recruiters’ awareness of different forms of diversity.

Immigrant-friendly businesses provide their recruitment personnel with training in cultural awareness.

Immigrant-friendly businesses also look to reduce cultural bias during the interview process by leveraging the cultural knowledge and foreign language skills of existing employees. To avoid communication difficulties interfering with the assessment of a candidate’s technical skills, some companies make an effort to have at least one member on the interview panel who speaks the candidate’s first language.13 Not only are international job applicants more comfortable when interviewed by immigrants—because “immigrants tend to empathize with you more”—it also signals to the potential new hire that the company supports and promotes cultural diversity.14

Companies that recruit for highly technical positions should consider the approach adopted by Iris Power Engineering, a small company in Mississauga, Ontario, with approximately 70 employees. It takes a skills-based approach to interviewing instead of the more traditional

11 [Conference Board interview with Anne Kirwan, Upwardly Global, May 22, 2009.](http://hireimmigrants.ca)
12 See, for instance, Canada’s Top 100 Employers, “Canada’s Best Diversity Employers 2008: Vancity.”
13 [Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Take a Look at What’s Working, pp. 6–7.](http://hireimmigrants.ca)
one based on conversation. During the initial screening stage, recruiters ask job candidates to take tests that are more relevant to a position (for instance, assembler applicants would demonstrate their soldering skills, and sales applicants would give product presentations). This approach enables the company to focus on the essential skills of a job rather than solely on the technical skills requirements. It also reduces barriers that new Canadian applicants might encounter in a traditional interview process.¹⁵

An increasing number of corporations are partnering with local immigrant-serving agencies in holding job search workshops for new Canadians.

To maximize the effectiveness of culturally diverse hiring, some larger immigrant-friendly organizations in Canada have hired a dedicated human resource specialist to oversee the recruitment of internationally trained employees. St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto, for example, is one of the first Canadian organizations to have established such a position within its human resources department in early 2009. Duties include:

- managing organizational programs that support internationally trained employees;
- forecasting future hiring needs;
- serving as a contact person for immigrant employees; and
- collecting and sharing best practices in culturally diverse hiring.¹⁶

A smaller immigrant-friendly company, i3DVR International—a manufacturer of digital video technologies in Toronto, Ontario, with a staff of 78—chose to appoint an internationally trained specialist to one of the existing human resources positions. Doing so has enabled the company to better understand the challenges faced by immigrant job applicants and minimize cross-cultural bias during the screening process.¹⁷

INFORMING AND TRAINING IMMIGRANT JOB SEEKERS

An increasing number of corporations are partnering with local immigrant-serving agencies in holding job search workshops for new Canadians, which offer general and industry-specific information and advice. Often these sessions also include hands-on coaching on résumé writing and preparing for an interview. By participating in these workshops, immigrants gain practical knowledge of the recruitment process in specific industries and companies, while employers use them to gauge the prospective employee pool, form connections with potential employees, and get a first-hand understanding of the barriers faced by immigrant job seekers. For example:

- Christie Digital, a medium-sized corporation that produces video projection technology, works with the New Canadian Program in the Waterloo Region to organize general orientation and information sessions for immigrants looking for employment. (See box “The New Canadian Program.”) The company also conducts mock interview workshops for New Canadian Program participants. Every three months, Christie Digital attends networking breakfasts sponsored by the New Canadian Program and the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN). At these breakfasts, held at the Kitchener City Hall, human resources employees from Christie Digital hold informal meet-and-greet sessions, collect résumés, and conduct short interviews with those interested in working for the company. In addition,

The New Canadian Program

Established in 1992 by the Waterloo-Region District School Board, the New Canadian Program provides participants with in-class sessions about how to market their skills to employers and the Canadian workplace generally, and then facilitates unpaid work placements with local businesses. The work placement opportunities help participants build their experience base while offering employers a chance to assess the on-the-job performance of internationally trained professionals and recent immigrants at no (or very little) cost. Reports indicate that 74 per cent of unpaid placements eventually lead to a permanent position for these internationally trained and educated professionals.


¹⁵ http://hireimmigrants.ca. “Iris Power.”
¹⁶ Conference Board interview with Kate Wilson, St. Michael’s Hospital, June 3, 2009.
¹⁷ http://hireimmigrants.ca. “i3DVR.”
the company participates in employer panels organized by the New Canadian Program, in which small groups of employers describe their hiring practices to immigrant job seekers.18

- Focus Corporation (an Alberta-based company specializing in engineering, geomatics, and project planning and management services) partners with Directions for Immigrants (a government-funded career services centre affiliated with Calgary’s Bow Valley College) to provide employment presentations to internationally trained job seekers. Focus informs workshop participants about the types of qualifications it looks for in prospective employees. The company also offers advice on how to apply for jobs at Focus and how to prepare for job interviews.19

- CIBC provides immigrants with information and pre-employment training through its Connection to Employment workshops delivered in partnership with the Toronto YMCA. It has also developed an innovative web portal, Newcomers to Canada, which contains information and resources about applying for work at CIBC. By visiting this portal, new Canadians learn about foreign credentials assessment, language training, immigrant-serving organizations, and mentoring and internship opportunities available through Career Bridge and TRIEC’s Mentoring Partnership.20 These programs have proven valuable to CIBC and to the immigrants who have participated in them.

ASSISTING IMMIGRANTS WITH WORKPLACE SOCIALIZATION

Immigrant-friendly businesses understand the importance of enabling internationally trained individuals or recent immigrants to gain meaningful Canadian workplace experience.

While pre-employment coaching, workshop training, and access to labour market information are important tools that help prepare newcomers for entry into the Canadian workforce, nothing can replace practical work experience. Such exposure is typically provided through bridging or mentoring programs. Both types of programs are typically administered by non-profit organizations or institutions of higher learning, and involve the active participation of employers. Employers that take the initiative to support and provide opportunities for internationally trained individuals and recent immigrants before they are hired stand to gain the most.

New Canadians can choose from a growing number of bridging programs.

Bridging Programs

Bridging programs are designed to facilitate the entry of skilled immigrants into the Canadian workplace without having to duplicate their home-country education in Canada. While definitions of the term often vary, a recent comprehensive study of Canadian bridging programs defined them as “any program that helps immigrants fill education gaps or other professional requirements, provides immigrants with cultural and/or workplace orientation, and/or helps immigrants find work that makes use of their skill set and former training.”21

New Canadians can choose from a growing number of bridging programs. One that has seen success is Career Bridge, which acts as a liaison between immigrant job seekers who are looking for work and employers with internship opportunities who are looking for qualified candidates. (See box “Career Bridge: Bridging Gaps in the Greater Toronto Area.”) Most bridging programs are administered by non-profit organizations, immigrant-serving agencies, or institutions of higher learning. While the content, structure, and funding sources of these programs can vary, they can be grouped into two broad categories:

- programs that focus on general workplace skills (e.g., job search techniques, workplace communication, networking); and

---

18 Canada’s Top 100 Employers, “Best Employers for New Canadians 2009: Christie Digital.”
19 Canada’s Top 100 Employers, “Best Employers for New Canadians 2009: Focus Corporation.”
20 Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, “Job Search Resources for Newcomers to Canada.”
21 Public Policy Forum, Improving Bridging Programs, pp. 5–6. This study contains the most complete inventory of Canadian bridging programs as of late 2007.
occupation-specific programs that concentrate on helping immigrants enter a particular occupation, including regulated professions (e.g., engineering, accounting). These programs usually provide occupation-specific language training and assistance in obtaining Canadian licensure or professional designation.

Most bridging programs include classroom-based training (delivered by immigrant-serving agencies or institutions of higher learning) and paid or unpaid internships (work placements) in positions that match the trainee’s occupational profile. Working for several months in a Canadian organization allows internationally trained job seekers to get their first exposure to the Canadian workplace and to apply their skills to practical work situations.

For some trainees, participation in a bridging program can open the door to full-time employment. While these programs provide no guarantee of full-time employment with the host organization, many companies end up hiring their interns. Regardless of the outcome, participation in a bridging program appears to increase an intern’s chances of finding permanent employment matching his or her skills. Approximately 80 per cent of the graduates of the Work in Nova Scotia (WINS) program, operated by the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) in Halifax, find meaningful employment within three months of graduating, and 50 per cent are hired by the same employer that provided the original work placement opportunity.22

Mentoring Programs
Mentoring programs link immigrant job seekers on a one-to-one basis with experts in their field, who act as mentors, helping the newcomers become familiar with Canadian workplace culture, master the professional jargon, and establish professional networks. Mentoring programs increase an intern’s chances of finding permanent employment.

Career Bridge: Bridging Gaps in the Greater Toronto Area

The Career Bridge program, launched in 2004, is one of Canada’s largest bridging programs targeting skilled immigrants from different occupational backgrounds. Offered by Career Edge, a non-profit organization that operates in Toronto and Vancouver, the program has managed more than 1,000 paid internships for internationally qualified professionals and offered “meaningful” mid-level work experiences to launch their careers in Canada. The program screens the education and training credentials of internationally trained candidates, as well as their experience and language skills, then places them in a “pool” from which potential employers can recruit for paid internships of four months to one year.

Not only does Career Bridge provide immigrant professionals with an opportunity to obtain Canadian work experience and develop their skills in a workplace that matches their qualifications, it also enables host organizations to gauge a candidate’s suitability before making a commitment to hire.

Active organizations that use the program include TD Bank, RBC, Deloitte, CIBC, Bell Canada, and St. Michael’s Hospital.

Since 2003, TD Bank’s Toronto office has hosted 54 Career Bridge interns. Approximately half of them have remained with the organization as permanent employees.

In 2006, Bell Canada employed 91 Career Bridge interns. According to a testimonial by a Bell Canada vice president, “You don’t get that kind of participation without delivering the desired benefits and results. [Career Bridge] has given us a terrific talent pool from which to attract full-time resources.”

St. Michael’s Hospital uses Career Bridge to train non-clinical immigrant professionals. Since 2005, the organization has mentored 27 career bridge interns and 11 have been hired as employees.

is a particularly common practice in professional occupations (e.g., accountants, human resource specialists, engineers, nurses), although it is also used in the trades. Mentors are usually selected on a voluntary basis from an organization’s most experienced staff.

Some of the most successful immigrant mentoring programs in Canada are delivered under the auspices of regional immigrant employment councils. The structure of these programs is largely modelled after The Mentoring Partnership, the first program of this kind, which was launched in 2004 by TRIEC. The councils work with their corporate partners to recruit mentors, while their community partner organizations screen and recruit job-ready, skilled immigrants as “mentee” candidates. The mentees spend a specified number of hours with their mentors over a period of several months. Under TRIEC’s program, mentors are expected to spend a total of 24 hours over four months in consultation with the mentee, which can take place in person, over the phone, or by e-mail.

"Speed mentoring" facilitates “speedy professional interactions” between employers and immigrant job seekers.

Like bridging programs, mentorships do not necessarily lead to employment with the host company; however, many companies subsequently hire their mentees to full-time positions. According to Elizabeth McIsaac, executive director of TRIEC, up to 80 per cent of Mentoring Partnership participants find work in their field. She believes that the success of The Mentoring Partnership has “captured the imagination of HR professionals” and helped change employer attitudes to hiring immigrant talent. The program has been embraced by several multinational corporations, including Deloitte, KPMG, and TD Bank Financial Group. (See box “The Mentoring Partnership at TD Bank.”)

"Speed mentoring" is another form of mentorship that is quickly gaining popularity among Canadian businesses and other stakeholders involved in promoting immigrant employment. (See box “Speed Mentoring: Networking in a Fast-Paced Environment.”) Modelled after speed dating, this process of mentoring facilitates “speedy professional interactions” between employers and immigrant job seekers. Speed mentoring sessions usually consist of a series of brief one-on-one conversations between immigrant mentees and a group of mentors representing one or more employers. Each mentee is given 10 to 15 minutes to ask questions and obtain their desired information before moving on to the next mentor at the ring of a bell. Speed mentoring events enable newcomer participants to gather a variety of information, perspectives, and opinions within a short period of time, establish a number of professional contacts, and hone their ability to network in a time-sensitive environment.
In today’s global economy, education has become an internationally marketable commodity.

Immigrant-friendly businesses recognize the advantages of using professional credentials assessment services. Not only do they have expert knowledge of international educational systems, they are also able to compare international credentials with their Canadian equivalents. In Ontario, for example, many businesses assess the credentials of their internationally trained candidates through World Education Services (WES), a not-for-profit credential assessment agency. Currently, WES has assessment tools in place to evaluate the education credentials in 74 countries. Its Automated International Credential Evaluation System contains key details (e.g., admission requirements, program length) for more than 14,500 credentials worldwide, grade conversions for more than 1,800 international grading systems, and the contact details and status of more than 43,000 international institutions. Some of WES’s largest Canadian clients include Dofasco, General Motors, IBM, KPMG, Magna International, CIBC, and RBC.27
Smaller employers also use WES to evaluate the credentials of their internationally educated job applicants. For instance, NoAb BioDiscoveries, a small medical research firm in Mississauga, requests that all internationally trained job seekers get their credentials assessed through WES before applying for a company position. Using professional credential assessment services allows businesses to better understand the skills and experience of potential job candidates. At the same time, it ensures that all international applicants enter the selection process on an equal footing—a “win-win” situation for both businesses and potential new hires.

The Government of Canada has launched a number of initiatives to assist immigrants and employers evaluate foreign credentials.

Some businesses have developed in-house tools and skills assessment processes, which they use instead of, or in addition to, external credentials assessment services. For example, the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) recognizes foreign degrees on par with Canadian ones as long as the candidate is able to demonstrate the required skills and knowledge level. BDC verifies foreign educational credentials through a third-party agency, which also conducts reference checks. The corporation then assesses the skills and knowledge of all its job candidates through a standardized test. According to Cecile Cournoyer, BDC’s Director of Talent Management, the lack of Canadian work experience or minor skills gaps revealed during the test do not mean that an applicant will be disqualified provided the individual can demonstrate a sound overall knowledge of commercial banking. Using its in-house skills assessment model, BDC has recently hired a number of internationally educated employees without Canadian work experience—and has been satisfied with the results.29

In recent years, the Government of Canada has launched a number of initiatives to assist immigrants and employers evaluate foreign credentials. For example:

- The Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO), within Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), provides stakeholders with information and referrals to credentials assessment services and regulatory bodies that grant professional designations and licences in specific occupations.30
- HRSDC’s Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) works “with provincial/territorial governments, licensing and regulatory bodies, sector councils, employers, and many other groups” to “improve the integration of internationally trained workers into the work force and society” and to “facilitate the recognition of international qualifications so that internationally trained workers may better contribute to Canada’s economic and social development.”31
- Since January 2009, HRSDC has been working with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and other stakeholders to create a common Pan-Canadian Qualification Recognition Framework, which aims to speed up and standardize the assessment and recognition process of foreign credentials in Canada.32

Through the Government of Canada’s Economic Action Plan, $50 million will be invested in the next two years to develop the framework.33

Given that the economic cost of not recognizing the credentials and skills of Canadians (particularly recent immigrants) is estimated at between $4.1 billion and $5.9 billion each year, it is critical for businesses, industries, and sectors of the Canadian economy to address this issue.34

---

30 Foreign Credentials Referral Office website.
31 Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, “Overview: Foreign Credential Recognition.”
32 White, “Foreign Credential Recognition in Canada.”
33 Canada’s Economic Action Plan, “Foreign Credential Recognition.”
34 Bloom and Grant, Brain Gain.
ASSISTING IMMIGRANT EMPLOYEES OBTAIN CANADIAN CREDENTIALS

In regulated professions, internationally trained professionals must obtain a Canadian professional designation or licensure in addition to their home-country qualifications. Requirements for entry into these professions “may vary from one province to another” and usually include “examinations, a specified period of supervised work experience, language competency, etc.” Recognizing that the complexity and length of this process are often challenging for immigrants, a growing number of Canadian employers are helping their internationally trained employees to obtain Canadian credentials. They provide information and advice on the credentialing process, help the employees prepare for licensure exams, and cover the cost of additional training needed to obtain Canadian equivalencies.

A growing number of Canadian employers are helping their internationally trained employees to obtain Canadian credentials.

Christie Digital is one example of a corporation with a strong commitment to helping immigrants obtain Canadian credentials. “We probably take education and credentialing more seriously than many other companies,” says Karen Hiltz, Human Resource Manager at Christie. “Although we do not always require our immigrant employees to have Canadian professional designations, we encourage them to go through the credentialing process because it is good for their own career.” The company has a tuition program, which fully subsidizes the cost of any training or exams that may be required in order for the new Canadian employees to obtain a P.Eng. accreditation or to receive another professional designation. Also, Christie provides financial support to any employee who pursues a graduate degree.

Multinational professional services firms, which transfer large numbers of accountants and other professionals through internal mobility programs, have developed some of the most effective models of helping immigrant employees obtain Canadian accreditations. KPMG, for instance, enrolls its internationally trained accountants in the same program that it offers to newly hired Canadian university graduates working toward their Chartered Accounting (CA) accreditations. The company fully reimburses the cost of CA equivalency courses and examinations for its new employees.

It can take an internationally educated nurse up to two years to get accredited in Canada.

For internationally trained medical professionals, the process of getting accredited in Canada can be particularly challenging. According to Kate Wilson, Corporate Staffing Manager at St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto, it may take an internationally educated nurse (IEN) up to two years to complete all the required steps. To help IENs overcome credentialing barriers, St. Michael’s partnered with Maytree and HRSDC in 2001 to establish the Creating Access to Regulated Employment (CARE) Centre. The main goal of CARE is to assist IENs in preparing their Canadian exam and to provide them with “soft skills” training for the Canadian workplace. Nurses who join the CARE Centre can:

- learn more about the role of nursing in Ontario’s health system;
- take exam review courses;
- gain practical experience in health care settings through “job shadowing”;
- build professional networks;
- receive advice and guidance on job search and career building; and
- build occupation-specific language skills.

35 Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, “Assessment and Recognition of Credentials for the Purpose of Employment in Canada.”


38 Conference Board interview with Kate Wilson, St. Michael’s Hospital, June 3, 2009.

39 Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses, “How the CARE Centre Helps Nurses Educated Outside Canada.”
Since 2001, the CARE Centre has trained more than 1,000 IENs with great success. As of 2006, 80 per cent of IENs participating in CARE had passed the licensure exam on their first attempt. This proportion is significant, as the previous pass rate without CARE was 34 per cent. In addition, the Centre also provides bursaries from a special trust fund to those IENs who cannot afford college training.

St. Michael’s works closely with CARE and provides its specialists with workshops on a number of topics, such as the interview and selection process.

For some internationally trained professionals, it may be possible to begin the credentialing process prior to arriving in Canada. Doing so could reduce the wait time to begin work once they are here. In industries and fields where knowledge and skills have a “shelf life” (e.g., engineering, science, technology-intensive fields), it is imperative that lengthy delays in credential assessments are avoided. The implementation of this process, however, requires close collaboration between employers and regulatory bodies.

Businesses that initiate their own credential recognition programs or that make use of current initiatives have the potential to benefit from the skills and knowledge of skilled immigrants and to be recognized as “immigrant-friendly” organizations. A promising model has recently been developed by Professional Engineers Ontario, the provincial regulatory body for the engineering profession. It launched a program that allows international applicants to initiate the credentials assessment process prior to arriving in Canada. Under this program, internationally trained engineers who have satisfied all licensing requirements except for their Canadian work experience receive a provisional licence that allows them to work in Ontario.

---


41 Conference Board interview with Kate Wilson, St. Michael’s Hospital, June 3, 2009.

Adopting culturally diverse recruitment practices is only a first step in creating an “immigrant-friendly” organization. The true mark of a company's success in utilizing immigrant/international talent is how well it integrates, develops, and retains its new Canadian employees. To get the maximum return on investment by hiring diverse talent, employers need to ensure that their immigrant employees achieve a level of comfort that allows them to be productive, supports their professional development, and encourages them to make a long-term commitment to an organization.

**Stage 2: Immigrant-Friendly Integration and Development Practices**

Leading Canadian employers of international talent support, develop, and retain their internationally trained and immigrant employees by offering mentoring programs, developing effective workplace language and communication skills, and encouraging individuals to realize their full potential. (See box “Immigrant Engagement and Employment Continuum: Stage 2—Integration and Development Practices.”)

**Assisting Immigrant Employees with Workplace Integration**

All newly hired employees face the challenge of adjusting to a new workplace environment that in some cases may be very different from their previous
experiences. This process is usually more difficult for immigrants than for native-born employees, since they must also adapt to a different national culture. While it is reasonable for the hiring organization to expect its new Canadian employees to take the first step and remain active learners, the adaptation process may be jeopardized without a helping hand from the employer. Immigrant employees who come from different countries and cultures with no previous Canadian work experience may need the most assistance integrating into the workplace.

Newcomers often have different training and integration needs than those of their Canadian co-workers.

Workplace Mentoring
Mentoring is a common and effective way of helping new employees adapt to a new workplace (known as “on-boarding”). Many companies pair their new hires with more experienced staff members, who are referred to as “mentors,” “coaches,” or “buddies,” depending on the organization. They are selected on a voluntary basis and are expected to provide one-on-one training and guidance to their mentees.

Mentoring can be a formal program, with a training plan and a detailed schedule of activities, or it may be an informal coaching relationship between a new employee and a more experienced co-worker. According to the Conference Board’s 2009 Learning and Development survey, informal coaching networks and affinity groups ranked as the most common activity offered to new Canadian employees (18 per cent of respondents). Seventeen per cent of respondents said their organizations had a formal “buddy” system in place.1 (See Table 3.)

Leading employers of immigrant talent recognize that newcomers often have different training and integration needs than those of their Canadian co-workers and may thus require different forms of mentoring. Deloitte, for instance, complements traditional workplace mentoring with the “information buddy” or “I-buddy” system designed specifically for international hires. Although I-buddies may also provide some job-related coaching, they act primarily as cultural informants, helping their mentees overcome settlement challenges (e.g., opening a bank account, obtaining a driver’s licence) and learn more about life in Canada. Over time, many buddy relationships at Deloitte have grown into personal friendships.2

Table 3
The Learning and Development Activities of New Canadians, 2008
(per cent; n=204)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement of informal coaching networks or affinity groups</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal buddy system</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External English as a Second Language (ESL)/French as a Second Language (FSL) training</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to help other employees understand diversity</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house ESL/FSL training</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to help new Canadians integrate into Canadian life</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1 Hughes and Campbell, Learning and Development Outlook 2009, p. 38.
2 Conference Board interview with Frances Wilson, Deloitte and Touche, July 9, 2009.
Professional Language and Communication Skills Training

Today, immigrants in Canada have a variety of opportunities to improve their communication skills and to learn basic professional terminology used in their industry sector or occupation. Much of this training is delivered by community organizations, school boards, institutions of higher learning, and professional regulatory agencies through the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) program funded by CIC. The goal of ELT is “to provide job-specific language training to help newcomers find and keep jobs that match their skills and qualifications.”

Many ELT programs are linked with other ways of helping immigrants find employment, such as bridging, mentorship, and work placement programs.

Today, immigrants in Canada have a variety of opportunities to improve their communication skills.

A number of Canadian employers—particularly those working with internationally trained professionals and skilled workers—partner with external training providers, such as university- or college-based language programs, to provide occupation- or sector-specific language training to their new Canadian hires. Sixteen per cent of organizations that participated in the 2008 Learning and Development Outlook survey reported providing external language training to new Canadian employees, while only 10 per cent said that they offered in-house training. Not only do they send their own employees for external training, many of Canada’s leading employers of immigrant talent also sponsor these training programs and/or participate in their development. (See box “TD Bank: Building a Multicultural Workforce Through Language and Soft Skills Training.”)

Many Canadian universities and colleges have developed language training modules that can be customized to the needs of a particular occupation or industry sector and, in many cases, delivered in the workplace. Engineering firms are among the most common users of these programs. Associated Engineering Group Ltd., for example, a company with 14 offices between British Columbia and Ontario, partners with Vancouver Community College to deliver customized language training to its new Canadian employees. “We and some other companies worked with the college to develop a language program specifically designed for technologists and engineers,” says Lianna Muh, the company’s manager of business development.

Depending on the requirements of the job, language training may emphasize oral or written communication skills. Rescan, for instance, invites University of British Columbia instructors to deliver on-site written skills development training for its internationally educated scientists. Individual training sessions are held at the end of the workday, and the costs are covered by the

---

3 CIC, “Enhanced Language Training Initiative: Formative Evaluation.” From 2003 to 2007, CIC funded 253 ELT projects in 140 different locations. It is estimated that there are approximately 5,500 ELT participants in the provinces. The most common occupations of participants are engineers, pharmacists, dietitians, and nutritionists.

4 Hughes and Campbell, Learning and Development Outlook 2009, p. 38.

5 Winston, “Diverse Staff Gives Company an Edge.”
As previously mentioned, many employers and training experts now recognize that effective communication is not limited to language proficiency but is part of a broader set of cultural communication skills, which include networking ability, public speaking skills, intonation and body language, workplace etiquette and attire, and many other elements. For instance, even when immigrants speak English well, they do not always realize the importance of professional networking for finding employment in Canada, nor do they possess the networking techniques that would be recognized as the “norm” in a Canadian workplace. To upgrade the soft skills of their new Canadian staff, employers can use quality external programs such as the Workplace Communication in Canada (WCC) program at Ryerson University’s Chang School of Continuing Education. Funded by the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada, WCC offers three course streams designed for immigrant professionals with different levels of cultural communication skills and different responsibility levels within their organizations.

Employees tend to leave an organization if they see limited professional growth opportunities.

Helping Internationally Trained Professionals and Immigrants Achieve Professional Goals

Retention and professional development are two closely linked concepts. Employees tend to leave an organization if they see limited professional growth opportunities, or if they feel that their accomplishments are not sufficiently appreciated or recognized.

Culturally distinct employees are more likely than their Canadian-born co-workers to hit a “glass ceiling” when trying to move up the organizational hierarchy. It is common for managers to see Canadians as having better soft skills, such as verbal and non-verbal communication, teamwork, leadership, and decision-making. In North America, these skills are considered more important in an effective leader than is technical knowledge. As a result, immigrants from cultures that emphasize technical skills often find themselves passed over for promotion. Visible minority immigrants tend to fare the worst of all newcomers. “In the federally regulated private sector, for instance, the representation of members of visible minorities increased in all occupational groups” between 2001 and 2007; however, their representation among senior management remained significantly below what would be expected given their numbers.

Even small companies can implement on-site language training, provided there is executive support.

While most Canadian organizations prefer to utilize external language and communication skills training programs, immigrant-friendly businesses tend to offer a range of customized in-house training courses to their immigrant employees. As demonstrated by Robinson Paperboard Packaging, a small Mississauga firm where immigrants make up most of the workforce, even small companies can implement on-site language training, provided there is executive support. When company president Steve Wilkie realized that his employees’ lack of English skills was a major cause of Robinson’s poor safety record, he hired an instructor to deliver customized ESL training on site. The instructor used the company’s safety manuals and other related documents as teaching aids. As a result of the program, Robinson was able to drastically reduce time lost due to accidents as well as increase employee morale and improve management–employee relations.

6 Conference Board interview with Nicholas Freeman, Rescan Environmental Services, June 17, 2009.
7 Conference Board interview with Nava Israel, July 16, 2009. The program was formerly known as Professional Communication for Employment (PCE).
8 Conference Board interview with Steve Wilkie, Robinson Paperboard Packaging, March 2009.
9 Magder, “Passed Over for Promotion,” p. 23.
It is important that an organization keeps investing in the development of its immigrant employees and does not limit its assistance to the “on-boarding” phase. At the same time, according to Nava Israel, manager of Ryerson University’s WCC program, it would be a mistake to see new Canadians as “people with some kind of special development needs.” A more effective way of helping an organization grow and develop is to recognize that “all employees in an organization need to grow together.”

At KPMG, a global leader in professional services, the leadership development process includes maintaining a “pipeline” list of employees who have the potential to be promoted to partner status within three to five years. The company regularly reviews the list to ensure that certain groups, such as visible minorities (primarily immigrants) and women, are well represented. KPMG makes sure that these and other under-represented groups receive the mentoring and support needed to increase their leadership potential (e.g., communications and soft skills training). Immigrant-friendly businesses, like KPMG, recognize the merit in investing in their employees.

There is much that international talent can do for themselves to develop their skills.

External career development training is becoming an increasingly common way of helping immigrant employees grow. In recent years, the number of organizations offering such training has seen a substantial increase. Some of them target specific workforce groups, such as women or visible minorities. A popular choice for many companies is Inroads, a non-profit organization that helps prepare talented minority youth for professional careers in business and industry. Partnering with Inroads has allowed companies like Procter & Gamble and Deloitte and Touche to provide quality leadership development training for their most promising visible minority employees.

IBM Canada has achieved the same goal by sending its management employees of Asian descent for training with the Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. (LEAP), a U.S.-based, non-profit organization that builds leadership capacity among North Americans of Asian and Pacific backgrounds. LEAP offers several leadership development programs, including the Senior Managers Leadership Forum, an interactive 2.5-day program “designed to prepare senior-level Asian and Pacific Islander managers to assume the next level of management and acquire skills to meet the challenges of executive leadership.”

Other ways of assisting immigrant employees in achieving professional goals include:

- creating career management courses specifically geared to the needs of new Canadian employees;
- making sure that new Canadian employees receive more comprehensive and frequent feedback than other employees;
- emphasizing the importance of professional networking and professional association membership;
- providing additional support to the managers of immigrant employees (e.g., train them in leading culturally diverse teams); and
- providing targeted training and development opportunities for new Canadian employees, especially with a view to developing their soft skills.

While this report focuses on what employers can do, there is much that international talent can do for themselves to develop their skills, opportunities, and careers. (See box “What Immigrants Can Do.”)

---

11 Conference Board interview with Nava Israel, July 16, 2009.
15 Laroche and Rutherford, Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting, pp. 277–278.
What Immigrants Can Do

Immigrants need to take responsibility for their own careers. Here are some ideas that may help them to succeed.

GATHER INFORMATION
- Find out about career and job opportunities and settlement services before arriving in Canada. A good resource is the Government of Canada’s Working in Canada Tool—an online service that helps “newcomers” identify suitable job opportunities in different locations across Canada. See www.workingincanada.gc.ca/welcome.do?lang=en.
- Seek out information about standards and educational qualifications recognized and required for entry into Canadian professions and trades.

TAKE TRAINING ABROAD
- Enrol in Canadian college programs offered overseas to prepare for entry into Canadian jobs upon arrival.
- Take English or French language training overseas to prepare for the Canadian job market.

MARKET “KNOW-WHO” AND “KNOW-HOW”
- Market connections (“know-who”) as well as skills and expertise (“know-how”) to employers as the basis for contributing to business performance.
- Profile knowledge of other languages as a potential asset in selling into targeted Canadian and foreign markets.

GET WORK EXPERIENCE
- Get Canadian work experience—any is better than none.
- Find a mentor who can help make the most of any workplace experience and increase the transferability of skills and learning to other work contexts.


STAGE 3: IMMIGRANT-FRIENDLY RETENTION PRACTICES

BUILDING A CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION

A company’s success in retaining immigrant talent also depends on its ability to develop an organizational culture that respects and encourages cultural and other forms of diversity. Many large organizations integrate activities that target new Canadian employees in their overall corporate diversity strategies, which also include programs designed to assist a variety of other under-represented groups, such as visible minorities, women, mature and Aboriginal workers, and sexual minorities. Leading Canadian employers of international talent retain their employees by promoting diversity throughout an organization, and ensuring support from leaders, executives, and managers. (See box “Immigrant Engagement and Employment Continuum: Stage 3—Retention Practices.”)

Immigrant Engagement and Employment Continuum: Stage 3—Retention Practices
- Promote cultural awareness.
- Support affinity groups.
- Provide cultural diversity training.
- Engage executive support for diversity.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

PROMOTING CULTURAL AWARENESS WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

For an organization to be functional and productive, immigrant employees should be willing and able to learn the fundamental norms of the Canadian workplace, even if it requires some cultural adjustments. However, organizations looking to benefit from a multicultural workforce should be prepared to change as well. Most of all, they should learn to see cultural diversity as an asset, not a hindrance or “necessary evil,” and learn to accommodate reasonable cultural or religious needs of their immigrant employees. The most effective approach to cultural diversity is not to “uphold the Canadian standard” but to focus on increasing the cultural literacy of all employees regardless of their ethnic background so that they can begin to understand and appreciate their own culture and those of their co-workers.

Canadian chartered banks and large professional service companies such as Deloitte and KPMG have been among Canada’s corporate leaders in promoting cross-cultural

16 “Organizational culture” is defined here as a set of formal rules and informal ways in which an organization functions.

understanding and awareness within their workplaces. They foster employees’ knowledge and appreciation of different cultures by:

- creating Intranet-based multicultural calendars to avoid scheduling important meetings on major cultural holidays;
- celebrating multiculturalism days, when employees are encouraged to wear traditional clothing and feature ethnic food, music, and art; and
- creating “reflection rooms” that can be used for prayer, meditation, or other spiritual needs.18

**Encouraging the creation of affinity groups is a popular way to foster organizational inclusiveness.**

Building cross-cultural awareness and respect in an organization does not always require substantial resource allocations or strategic planning. Even the smallest company, for instance, can follow the example of i3DVR and organize collective meals where employees can learn about one another’s cultures by sharing ethnic food.19 Or consider the example of Wardrop Engineering, a medium-sized consulting firm with 12 offices located across Canada. Its workforce represents 58 countries and speaks 39 languages. To accommodate the religious needs of its Muslim employees, Wardrop’s management at its Mississauga office encourages them to attend a nearby mosque and make up work later in the day.20

**Supporting Cultural Affinity Groups Within Organizations**

Encouraging the creation of affinity groups—also called “employee resource groups” or “people’s networks”—that bring together employees sharing a common cultural background is becoming another increasingly popular way to foster organizational inclusiveness. Established in 2008, the Canadian Asian Network at Deloitte’s Toronto branch provides peer support and assistance to employees of Asian background, who constitute about 83 per cent of the company’s visible minority staff. The network assists its members with professional development activities, oversees workplace relations initiatives, and offers a mentorship program.21 Similar initiatives have also been implemented at RBC, General Electric, HP Canada, and Procter & Gamble—all recognized as some of Canada’s leading diversity employers.22

Affinity groups enable people from the same cultural group to share information, form social networks, and discuss their experiences, challenges, and successes in adapting to the new cultural environment. Participants at the managerial level can serve as an informal resource for junior-level employees, who can leverage the knowledge of their more senior peers to build personal career development strategies.

**At Deloitte, cultural diversity content is integrated into all new-employee orientations.**

**Providing Cultural Diversity Training**

Many organizations today provide cultural diversity orientation and/or training to management and/or the entire staff, finding it an important means of building an inclusive workplace environment. At Deloitte, for instance, cultural diversity content is integrated into all new-employee orientations. Performance evaluations for Deloitte managers include an assessment of their ability to manage diverse teams, and cultural competency is embedded in the Milestone Program, a mandatory training module for all newly promoted Deloitte employees.23

---

18 TD Bank Financial Group, “Diversity in Our Workplace”; Taggart, “Beyond Diversity.”
19 See, for instance, http://hireimmigrants.ca, “i3DVR.”
21 Conference Board interview with Frances Wilson, Deloitte and Touche, July 9, 2009.
23 Conference Board interview with Frances Wilson, Deloitte and Touche, July 9, 2009.
However, formal diversity training programs tend to be more common in larger organizations, which have the financial and human resources support needed to implement and run such initiatives. Large organizations (those with 500 or more employees) are more than twice as likely as small and medium-sized organizations to provide diversity training to managers and supervisors.24 Unfortunately, Canadian organizations are not doing too well in terms of implementing diversity training programs. They must do more if they are to address the needs of immigrants and maximize their full potential. (See “Lack of Workplace Integration and Diversity Programs” in Chapter 2.)

Formal diversity training programs tend to be more common in larger organizations.

ENGAGING EXECUTIVE SUPPORT FOR DIVERSITY

While specific models of promoting cultural diversity may vary, support from the executive team remains critical for the successful implementation of “immigrant-friendly” practices. Organizations with top management that views diversity as a strategic priority often achieve the best results in creating a work environment that welcomes people of various cultural backgrounds. A number of large organizations, such as KPMG, have achieved executive-level engagement for diversity initiatives by creating a corporate diversity council or diversity advisory board, which develops the company’s diversity strategies and goals. (See box “Building Cultural Diversity Awareness at KPMG.”) The implementation of these diversity activities at the company level is the responsibility of national diversity directors or senior managers in charge of talent development.25

 CHAPTER 5

Conclusion: Improving the Bottom Line by Building an Immigrant-Friendly Organization

Chapter Summary

- Some Canadian organizations have made progress in reducing the barriers that stand in the way of immigrants’ labour market integration, but more remains to be done.
- Cultural diversity is no longer only a matter of employment equity. It also has the potential to improve a company’s bottom line.
- Organizations looking to benefit from immigrant talent can learn from the approaches used by others, but they should adapt programs and practices that meet their own needs.

Many of today’s immigrants and internationally trained professionals arrive with a range of knowledge and skills, connections to global markets, cultural insights, and innovative perspectives. Canada’s competitive position depends, to a great extent, on how well it accommodates and leverages this immigrant talent.

In recent years, Canada has made some progress in reducing the barriers that stand in the way of immigrants’ labour market integration. But more remains to be done. The earnings gap between recent immigrants and Canadian-born individuals has not diminished, despite the growing skills and education levels of new Canadians. And many immigrant professionals still struggle to transfer their qualifications to Canadian equivalents without facing the need for retraining.

Facilitating immigrants’ access to the workplace is a multi-stakeholder effort. Non-profit organizations (such as TRIEC and other regional immigrant employment councils), settlement agencies, universities and colleges, and different levels of government have a role to play in connecting immigrants with Canadian workplaces and helping them to realize their potential. But the work of these organizations will be diminished if Canadian employers do not adjust their business practices to reflect the increasing cultural diversity and international makeup of Canada’s workforce.

Many immigrant professionals still struggle to transfer their qualifications to Canadian equivalents.

Culturally diverse hiring is no longer just a question of corporate social responsibility. Many employers across Canada have moved away from an equity-centred approach to one that is more business-centred—linking workplace diversity to an improved bottom line.
This report highlights some of the “immigrant-friendly” practices, models, and approaches that are being used in Canada’s immigrant-friendly businesses. (See Table 4.) Companies in Canada and elsewhere can use these models and approaches to improve their access to human capital and maximize their productivity through better integration of immigrant talent. For example, Steam Whistle Brewing, an independent company located in Toronto, is considered a leader in attracting skilled immigrants, recognizing their qualifications, and helping them to obtain Canadian credential recognition. By hiring immigrants, Steam Whistle has broadened its access to skilled workers and has benefited from increased productivity. The company’s current director of marketing is a Sri Lankan native; and in the five years he has been with the company, he has overseen growth of 130 per cent. Steam Whistle’s “immigrant-friendly” practices have also contributed to the company’s outstanding employee retention rate, which presently stands at 90 per cent.

It is important that effective practices developed by others be adapted to the needs and capabilities of each particular company. For instance, some of the approaches discussed here may work equally well for both large and small employers, while others require financial investments and human resource capacity that may not be available in smaller organizations. Approaches that are effective in integrating immigrant professionals in regulated occupations may not be necessary or suitable in organizations and industry sectors that have few or none of these occupations.

Building an organization that welcomes international talent and immigrants requires the engagement of and support from top management. Regardless of the approaches or models that a given organization may adopt, it is imperative that they become ingrained in the organizational culture and corporate governance structure rather than being dependent on the expertise and leadership of “informal” diversity champions. Most importantly, building an organization that welcomes international talent and immigrants requires the engagement of and support from top management. This will set the tone for the entire staff and ensure that culturally diverse practices become part of the corporate strategy.

1 TRIEC, “Collaborative Programs for Immigrant Employment: 2007 Immigrant Success Award Winners.”
Table 4
Summary of Immigrant-Friendly Business Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activity/Program</th>
<th>Some Leading Organizations</th>
<th>Outcomes and Impacts</th>
<th>Possible Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expanding recruitment methods</td>
<td>Recruit through agencies that provide employment services to newcomers</td>
<td>CIBC, MDS Nordion, Wardrop, Bell Alliant</td>
<td>Provides access to qualified job seekers who have been pre-screened and are job-ready</td>
<td>Quality of candidate pool may vary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruit through career fairs</td>
<td>CIBC, TD Bank, BMO</td>
<td>Enables recruiters to meet face-to-face with potential job candidates</td>
<td>May be less suitable for regulated professions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advertise through ethnic media</td>
<td>Toronto Community Housing, Toronto Police Services, Catholic Children’s Aid Services of Toronto</td>
<td>Increases the reach of recruiting efforts and ensures a larger pool of candidates</td>
<td>May require translation of job postings; requires knowledge of ethnic media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruit directly from abroad by using PNP, or recruit TFWs and move them to permanent residency</td>
<td>CAE, Maple Leaf Foods, CAE, Maple Leaf Foods, CAE, Maple Leaf Foods</td>
<td>Provides direct access to a broad spectrum of international talent</td>
<td>Requires substantial investment and HR resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial policy dictates whether TFWs can use the PNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A number of provinces do not have well-developed PNPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing culturally sensitive recruitment and screening practices</td>
<td>Train recruiters in cross-cultural interviewing</td>
<td>Xerox Canada, Nexen, BDC</td>
<td>Sensitizes recruiters to cross-cultural differences</td>
<td>Requires financial resources and HR capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Include current immigrant employees on interview teams</td>
<td>Nanowave</td>
<td>Helps interviewers better understand cultural differences and overcome communication difficulties</td>
<td>Immigrant employees with relevant cultural backgrounds may not be available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct technical skills testing in lieu of, or in addition to, traditional conversation-based interviews</td>
<td>Power Engineering, Replicon</td>
<td>Allows recruiters to look beyond language difficulties and focus on the key skills</td>
<td>Suitable only for certain occupations and position types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informing and training immigrant job seekers</td>
<td>Partner with immigrant service providers to hold information and coaching sessions for newcomers</td>
<td>Christie Digital, TD Bank, BMO</td>
<td>Helps connect with potential employees, gauge the workforce pool, and better understand the challenges faced by immigrants</td>
<td>Requires management buy-in and time commitment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(cont’d)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activity/Program</th>
<th>Some Leading Organizations</th>
<th>Outcomes and Impacts</th>
<th>Possible Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assisting immigrants with workplace socialization</td>
<td>Become a host organization for an external bridging or mentoring program</td>
<td>TD Bank, CIBC, Christie Digital, Deloitte, ERCB, KPMG, Manulife, St. Michael’s Hospital, TransCanada</td>
<td>Increases a company’s human capital by offering permanent jobs to the best interns and mentees</td>
<td>May involve financial contribution from the employer; permanent hiring requires position availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisting immigrant employees with workplace integration</td>
<td>Introduce workplace mentoring or a “buddy” program</td>
<td>Deloitte, Wardrop, Rescan, St. Michael’s Hospital</td>
<td>Increases organizational efficiency and improves morale by helping employees adjust to the workplace more quickly</td>
<td>Mentors and “buddies” must be willing to commit time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing foreign qualifications</td>
<td>Use professional credentials assessment services</td>
<td>NoAb BioDiscoveries, SaskEnergy, Toronto Transit Commission</td>
<td>Ensures the quality of credentials assessment; creates the same “playing field” for all candidates</td>
<td>Assessment criteria may vary significantly among credential assessment agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop in-house tools to assess competencies</td>
<td>BDC</td>
<td>Enables the employer to speed up the hiring process while accessing a large talent pool</td>
<td>Requires human resources and a good knowledge of international post-secondary education systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisting immigrant employees obtain Canadian credentials</td>
<td>Provide employees with information and advice on the credentialing process</td>
<td>Deloitte, KPMG</td>
<td>Facilitates the credentialing process</td>
<td>Requires the knowledge of the credentialing landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help employees prepare for licensure exams</td>
<td>St. Michael’s Hospital</td>
<td>Improves productivity by allowing employees to maximize their professional potential</td>
<td>Requires human resources capacity or partnership with external agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cover the cost of additional training and provide time off work</td>
<td>Wardrop, Christie Digital, KPMG, Island Hearing Services</td>
<td>Helps retain talent by demonstrating the company’s commitment to assisting staff</td>
<td>Requires financial resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(cont’d)
**Table 4 (cont’d)**
Summary of Immigrant-Friendly Business Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activity/Program</th>
<th>Some Leading Organizations</th>
<th>Outcomes and Impacts</th>
<th>Possible Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing language and communication skills training</td>
<td>Provide on-site language training or subsidize the cost of attending external language programs</td>
<td>CAE Wardrop Robinson Packaging Focus Corporation</td>
<td>Employees maximize their productivity potential</td>
<td>Organizations must have sufficient financial resources and/or facilities; language training providers must be locally available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrol employees in external soft-skills training programs</td>
<td>TD Bank BMO</td>
<td>Improves workplace communication, manager/employee relations, and increases immigrant employees’ leadership development potential</td>
<td>Organization must be willing to commit financial resources to pay training provider and compensate employees’ training time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping new Canadians achieve professional goals</td>
<td>Set targets for including new Canadians and visible minorities in the organization’s career development programs</td>
<td>KPMG</td>
<td>Ensures that potential leaders’ pools reflect the diversity of the workforce</td>
<td>Possible resistance to the “special treatment” of certain groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use external training providers to develop immigrant talent</td>
<td>IBM Canada Deloitte</td>
<td>Provides employers and trainees with professional training programs</td>
<td>Requires financial investments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a culturally inclusive organization</td>
<td>Promote cultural diversity awareness through diversity training, multicultural activities, and accommodating employees’ cultural needs</td>
<td>TD Bank Deloitte KPMG BMO i3DVR BDC Ernst and Young</td>
<td>Helps create a welcoming workplace for culturally different employees; opens the organization to different ideas</td>
<td>Financial and human resources may be required; mandatory diversity training not always effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support affinity networks/employee resource groups</td>
<td>GE RBC HP Canada Procter and Gamble</td>
<td>Helps immigrant employees get support from their peers</td>
<td>Time resources are required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage executive support for cultural diversity; create a corporate diversity council</td>
<td>RBC Deloitte KPMG TD Bank</td>
<td>Ensures that diversity initiatives are part of strategic goals</td>
<td>Time and financial resources are required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Cont’d)
| Table 4 (cont’d)  
Summary of Immigrant-Friendly Business Practices |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sources: This summary has been compiled from the analysis of company case studies from hireimmigrants.ca, Conference Board interviews, and effective practices implemented by approximately 70 award-winning organizations from the following three competitions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Best Employers for New Canadians (2008–09)</strong>—a competition managed by the editors of Canada’s Top 100 Employers in partnership with ALLIES, a joint initiative of Maytree and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, to recognize the nation’s best employers for recent immigrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Immigrant Success Awards (2007–08)</strong>—an award program of the Toronto Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) that recognizes employers and individuals in the Greater Toronto Region that are leaders in recruiting, retaining, and promoting skilled immigrants in the workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Canada’s Best Diversity Employers 2009</strong>—a competition managed by the editors of Canada’s Top 100 Employers in partnership with BMO Financial Group and the diversity consulting firm TWI, which recognizes employers across Canada that have exceptional workplace diversity and inclusiveness programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A

Listing of Select Resources and Tools for Employers

Employers’ Guide to Hiring Immigrants and International Students in Newfoundland and Labrador
This booklet provides relevant information to guide employers throughout Newfoundland and Labrador in the process of including immigrants and international students in their recruitment and selection strategies.

Employer’s Guide to Integrating Immigrants into the Workplace
A quick reference resource, developed by Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO), this guide provides information about and insight into the key challenges faced by employers when hiring skilled immigrants.

Employer’s Roadmap to Hiring and Retaining Internationally Trained Workers
This online tool was created by the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) for employers, human resources professionals, recruiters, and managers in small to medium-sized enterprises interested in hiring internationally trained workers.

Global Talent Website
From this site, employers in the London area can link to an online guide, Global Talent: Hiring Immigrants Makes Good Business Sense, which provides them with advice and recommendations on tapping into the international talent pool. The guide and its equivalent for immigrants, Global Talent: A Newcomers Guide to Finding Work in the London Region, were compiled with the help of dozens of regional employers, recruiters, newcomers, and workers.
- www.globaltalent.ca

hireimmigrants.ca
This website is an online resource managed by ALLIES (a project of Maytree and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation) that was established by the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) in 2005. The site contains a number of online tools to assist employers in recruiting, hiring, integrating, and promoting immigrants, as well as a large inventory of best practices from Canadian companies.
- www.hireimmigrants.ca

Hiring and Retaining Skilled Immigrants: A Cultural Competence Toolkit
This guide contains suggestions and resources for human resources practitioners and hiring managers to assist them in the process of hiring and retaining skilled immigrants. The ultimate goal is to increase organizational diversity and help resolve the shortage of skilled workers.
- www.workbc.ca/Docs/Hiring_Retaining_Skilled_Immigrants_BCHRMA_Guide.pdf

Find this report and other Conference Board research at www.e-library.ca
Hiring Immigrants Makes Good Business Sense
Created by the Niagara Workforce Planning Board in collaboration with the Niagara Immigrant Employment Council (NIEC), this guide is aimed at employers in the Niagara region.
- www.ntab.org/userfiles/file/Hiring%20Immigrants%20Publication-web%20version%20FINAL.pdf

Making Connections: A New Model of Mentoring for Internationally Trained Professionals
Based on its experience in a three-year pilot project, St. Michael’s Hospital wrote this guide to assist other organizations in setting up and implementing their own mentoring programs. This how-to manual provides best practices, concrete strategies, approaches, and resources.
- www.hireimmigrants.ca/fr/pdf/MakingConnections.pdf

Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees
Written by cross-cultural specialists Lionel Laroche and Don Rutherford (2007), this reader-friendly book discusses the challenges faced by immigrants in looking for employment in Canada and the United States, and makes recommendations for employers and immigrant job seekers on overcoming these challenges.

Skills International Online Database
This database provides access to a pool of pre-screened “job-ready” internationally trained professionals for companies in Ontario.
- www.skillsinternational.ca

A Strategic Business Decision: Hiring Internationally Trained Individuals
The Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Council (WRIEN) prepared this resource guide for Waterloo region employers.

The Workplace Development Toolkit
Created by SISO (Settlement and Integration Services Organization), an immigrant service agency in the Hamilton area, this toolkit provides employers with useful information, tools, and resources for hiring internationally trained workers. Included is advice on recruitment, selection, hiring, orientation, retention, and promotion.
- www.thetoolkit.ca/EN/Home.aspx
Bibliography


+ **Executive Networks**  
Exchange Ideas and Make New Contacts on Strategic Issues

+ **e-Library**  
Access In-Depth Insights, When You Need Them Most

+ **The Niagara Institute**  
Develop Leaders of the Future With Interactive and Engaging Leadership Development Programs

+ **The Directors College**  
Canada’s University-Accredited Corporate Director Development Program

+ **Custom Research**  
Tap Into Our Research Expertise to Address Your Specific Issues

+ **Customized Solutions**  
Help Your Organization Meet Challenges and Sustain Performance

+ **e-Data**  
Stay On Top of Major Economic Trends

+ **Conferences, Seminars, and Workshops**  
Learn From Best-Practice Organizations and Industry Experts