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The business case for diversity

The face of our workforce is changing

Census data from 2001 shows that immigrants represented almost 70% of the total growth of the labour force over the previous decade. Statistics Canada predicts that by 2011, immigration could account for virtually all of our country's labour force growth.

To succeed in the future, Canadian businesses will need to hire immigrants to meet workforce needs. Companies that can increase the diversity of their workforce today will be prepared as our country begins to rely on immigrants to fuel both population and workforce growth.

An Aging Population

- ↑ The Canadian government estimates that, by 2015, approximately 48% of the working population will be between the ages of 45 and 64, compared to 35% in 2004.
- ↑ 46% of baby boomers – those born between 1946 and 1966, are close to their retirement or pre-retirement years.

Here are some of the reasons Canada's population and its workforce are undergoing a seismic shift that will affect every employer:

- Aging baby boomers are moving toward retirement.
- Lower birth rates are leading to fewer young people entering the workforce.
- Demand is increasing for more highly educated and skilled workers.

For London region employers these demographic and workforce changes have already had impact:

- Attracting and retaining skilled workers is more difficult than in the past.
- Job vacancies take longer to fill.
- The traditional methods for attracting skilled employees are no longer working.

As these demographic and workforce shifts have accelerated, there has been another change. Increasing numbers of skilled immigrants are coming to Canada and entering the workforce. Many employers have already discovered and are tapping into this valuable pool of talented workers. In the coming years, these individuals – who we refer to as Global Talent – will play a major role in our regional workforce.

Businesses that depend on their ability to attract and retain a productive and resilient workforce, must prepare themselves to hire more newcomers and become an employer of choice for an increasingly diverse workforce.

The good news is that many of the changes you make to attract and retain newcomers to Canada, will also strengthen your ability to attract all workers.

*Annaliza Arriola,
an Administrator at
Trudell Medical International*



1. The business case for diversity

Fulfilling Canada's promise

We make an unspoken promise to newcomers that Canada is a land of opportunity. Immigrants are allowed entry based on a point system that favours those with high levels of education and skills. Consequently, newcomers assume that the same qualities and experiences that allowed them to come here will be respected and in demand by employers. They believe that if they are educated, skilled and willing to work hard, they will quickly find meaningful employment.

The reality is that many newcomers do find career success here, but the path is often longer and more complicated than it needs to be. Many immigrants who are well educated, skilled, experienced, eager and prepared to work, remain unemployed or underemployed for far too long.

That's what Global Talent is all about – meeting the workforce demands of employers, while fulfilling Canada's promise to newcomers.

2005 Immigration to Canada

- ▲ In 2005, a total of 262,236 new immigrants landed in Canada, an 11% increase over 2004. Over 140,000 came to Ontario. 60% of immigrants landed in the economic class, 24% in the family class, and 14% were refugees.

— Citizenship and Immigration Canada,
The Monitor, 2006 Issue 2

"At WIL Employment Connections, we work with many individuals who we know will be truly outstanding employees for the right company.

We also believe it is important to be authentic, to tell employers the truth. We don't say – these people are ready for anything. Instead we say – take the time to get to know this person, allow them to understand your work culture and gain confidence: then get ready, because you're going to have a great employee!"

— Susan Koning
WIL Employment Connections

"For many employers, the focus will have to be on educating managers on the business case for hiring newcomers. 3M provides diversity training for all managers. We also offer managers tips on how to conduct interviews that level the playing field for all applicants, such as recognizing international work experience and credentials, and looking at transferable skills."

— Phyllis Retty
Country Leader for Human Resources
3M Canada



From Trudell Medical International (left to right) – Joseph Arriola, Quality Technologist; Annaliza Arriola, Administrator; Mitchell Baran, CEO; George Ryan, Director of Operations

Truly International

Trudell Medical International

While the “International” in this highly successful London company’s name refers to the fact that Trudell Medical International (TMI) does business in over 90 countries, it could also refer to its workforce. Almost 50% of the manufacturing workers at Trudell are immigrants.

Kathy Estok, Director of Human Resources at TMI says, “We place great value on our workforce here, and our internationally trained workers are an integral part of that. Because they are also experiencing success here, they often refer friends and family members to work here as well.”

The company works hard to promote and capitalize on its diverse workforce:

- The language skills of international employees are put to work in customer service as well as manufacturing.
- TMI offers diversity training for employees and has built a culture that is respectful of all workers regardless of whether they work in the plant or in the office.
- The company is family oriented and encourages social events that celebrate diversity, such as an international potluck. When an employee becomes a Canadian citizen, a celebration and cake allow the important event to be shared with coworkers.

Estok says, “The appreciation our workers have for the way they are treated comes back to us many times over in productivity.”

TMI doesn’t require excellent English skills for manufacturing roles but rather focuses on a worker’s personal communication style and commitment to quality on the job.

“Our workers need to be able to check each other’s work and point out problems. It’s important that they are willing to listen, to learn and to help each other.”

Having such a diverse workforce does offer challenges. For instance, on occasion employees can become uncomfortable when they don’t understand what is being said by a group of workers who speak another language.

Estok says the company encourages people to voice their concerns in ways that lead to a better understanding. She says open communication is key to creating a respectful, productive and enjoyable work atmosphere.

“We have monthly communication meetings to let our employees know how business is going, about significant orders, and to let them see the big picture. The things we do to create a good atmosphere for those of our workforce who are newcomers, helps create a stronger workplace for all employees.”



McCormick Canada President and CEO, Keith Gibbons, and Milorad Bjelica, Receiving

Fueling growth McCormick Canada

It is a time of growth at the London home of McCormick Canada. Finding workers to fuel the growth at the international company that produces spices and seasonings, can be a challenge, even if your company is a household name.

According to Human Relations Manager, Lynn Thibodeau, "The days of putting an ad in the paper, especially when you need 30 people fast, are behind us."

Companies like McCormick are discovering they have to take a new approach to hiring, including holding job fairs where applicants are pre-screened and using temporary agencies to fill short-term gaps.

"Our workforce is more highly skilled than it once was. We have an increased need for mechanical abilities and computer skills. Our people are now part of a high performance team. Workers also need to be flexible, as projects and equipment can change with a product line."

Internationally trained workers, such as Milorad Bjelica, are helping to keep the company competitive. Milorad, a former teacher and writer who came to Canada from Montenegro just a few years ago, is young, enthusiastic and grateful for the job. His wife Anica, a molecular biologist, continues studies at The University of Western Ontario and they have a baby on the way.

Milorad came to McCormick Canada through a "temp" agency and started by working as a line service person. In mid 2006, he became a full-time employee and moved to the receiving department.

Milorad encourages employers to offer newcomers a chance to prove themselves with a trial working period.

Thibodeau agrees more employers should open their doors. "It's clear that international workers have a lot to offer in changing times."

1. The business case for diversity

What are the facts about immigration in the London region?

Immigration data from the 2006 census was not available at the time of publication, but samples of information from the 2001 census and from other sources provide an interesting snapshot of immigration in our region.

Total immigrant landings – About 3,100 immigrants came to Middlesex County/London area in 2005. That is up more than 60% over 2001, when 1,956 immigrants came to Middlesex.

Country of origin – The top country of origin for immigrants arriving in Middlesex County in 2005 was Colombia, followed by China, the United States, India, and Lebanon.

Top native languages – The top five native languages spoken by new immigrants coming to Middlesex County in 2005 were Spanish, Arabic, English, and Chinese.

Age of immigrants – In 2005, the largest proportion of immigrants was 17 years of age and younger (approximately 29%). About 25% were aged 25-34.

Education – Almost one third of immigrants arriving in Middlesex County between 2001 and 2005 came to Canada with a university degree.

Where immigrants land – Middlesex County was the 6th most popular intended destination for immigrants to Ontario. Essex County was the 8th most popular destination. The top five destinations in Ontario were Toronto, Peel, York, Ottawa and Hamilton.

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

"I would encourage companies to give these people a chance. Our experience shows they are well educated, have a strong work ethic, are eager and grateful for opportunities and want to prove themselves. Many are mature workers who have new ideas and experience to bring to the table. You won't be disappointed."

— Tricia Gill, HR Manager
Gamma-Dynacare Medical Laboratories

1. The business case for diversity

What is the business case for diversity?

Here are five ways that diversity will make your business stronger, especially when it is achieved by hiring internationally trained global talent.

1. Global talent can help solve your skill shortage. Your company needs highly motivated, skilled workers. The greater your pool of workers, the better your chance of finding that next great employee.
2. It makes good business sense to have a workforce that is representative of your customer base and your community.
3. Global talent brings fresh ideas and new approaches. Employers are often pleasantly surprised to discover that newcomers bring innovative ideas and a broad range of experiences that put their company ahead of the pack.
4. Global talent allows you to compete globally. The language skills of newcomers and their understanding of international markets and cultures can open doors.
5. Newcomers can be very loyal employees. Pay them fairly, offer opportunities for advancement and they will bring great commitment to their work. Your retention rate could improve, saving money on recruiting and training costs.

Hiring immigrants is certainly a 'nice' thing to do – creating opportunities for people hoping to build a better life. You will also meet some very interesting people with life stories that will amaze you. But the business case is strong enough to convince most employers that there is no better time than now to diversify their workforce.

Best Practices

3M Canada tracks employees who speak second or third languages and calls on them when needed. If a person who speaks Hindi phones to place an order from half way around the world, an employee who also speaks Hindi may assist in making the client feel welcome.

Trudell Medical, which now ships to 90 countries, has had great success recruiting global talent. They estimate over 50% of their workforce are newcomers, including some who work in customer service, talking to clients around the world.

How London Region Employers Describe Their Global Talent

- ✓ Skilled and well educated
- ✓ Dedicated
- ✓ Hard working
- ✓ Appreciative of opportunities offered
- ✓ Positive attitude
- ✓ More flexible in the shifts they work
- ✓ Willing to put their foreign language abilities and global knowledge to work



EK3 Chief Financial Officer, Paula Kaye, and Joseph Eze, Quality Assurance Manager

Recruiting the best EK3

Borrowing a slogan from a large grocery chain, an EK3 manager jokes, “We search the world for the best.”

EK3 is making its mark nationally and around the world, creating and selling the technology that allows digital merchandising, also known as narrowcasting. The innovative technology is most visible these days on overhead screens at Tim Hortons that entice you with video of irresistible temptations.

EK3 employees (about 45 of them) are from around the world – Nigeria, Saudia Arabia, Russia, China, Israel and others – although many of the international workers have actually come to EK3 through The University of Western Ontario. A partnership with UWO has created an EK3 Innovation Lab at the Thompson Engineering Building at Western.

With its roots in engineering, and research and development, EK3 requires highly skilled workers

with expertise in very specific areas. Along with some home-grown talent, many of those professionals are global talent.

“I don’t think it’s overstating it to say the diversity here makes us richer,” says EK3 Chief Financial Officer, Paula Kaye, who also manages the company’s Human Resources function. “Our culture is one of creativity and collaboration. People have to get along well and share ideas. That’s where innovation and growth come from.”

“There’s also a sense of family here. Many of our workers have young families. We celebrate new babies, birthdays and although we’re getting a bit big for it now, backyard barbeques are not unheard of.”

EK3 has not actually needed to recruit from out-of-country. Particularly with Western as a partner, there is a lot of international talent right here in the London region!