

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



Truly International

Trudell Medical International

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

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."