

3. Building an international workforce

How can a company interview to increase diversity?

Begin with a fair process that recognizes that international candidates may perform differently in interview situations than non-immigrant candidates.

Total objectivity by those performing interviews is almost impossible to achieve. Most recruiters and interviewers work hard to avoid bias, but studies prove that even the most open-minded among us are inclined to make assumptions based on appearance and behavior that may not reflect reality. By recognizing our biases, we can avoid discriminating based on those conscious or unconscious preconceptions.

"I tell my friends that if you don't make a strong impression in an interview, you're done. I also think that sometimes interviewers mistake people who are quiet for people who are not smart."

— A London newcomer

Here are some tips:

- ✓ If you have a panel of interviewers, try to make sure that the group reflects some degree of diversity. At the least, those conducting the interviews should receive training in cultural diversity.
- ✓ Be aware that the way Canadians use words can be very different from the way they are used in other cultures. Avoid using colloquialisms and metaphors such as, "stumbling blocks, hitting a homerun or jumping through hoops." These may hold no meaning for many people from other cultures.
- ✓ Body language also varies greatly from culture to culture, so it pays to be aware of some of those differences, for example:
 - In some cultures, it is considered disrespectful to look directly at an interviewer, as it is a challenge to authority. What may appear to you to be shyness or lack of confidence may actually be a sign of respect.
 - Conversely, what you may perceive as overt boldness or vanity, may be a respected approach and attitude in some cultures.
 - Some cultures place a high value on team-work, while others stress an individual's ability to stand out from the crowd.

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- ✓ Work to limit your judgement to the answers provided, rather than allow yourself to be heavily influenced by every facial expression, posture, eye contact and other body language.
- ✓ Use behavior-based interviewing techniques that focus on past behaviour rather than theoretical situations. For instance, instead of asking “What would you do if...” you could ask, “Tell me about a time when you...”.
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions that invite descriptive answers, rather than those that can be answered with a yes or no answer.
- ✓ Develop specific criteria for evaluating candidates and apply them consistently.
- ✓ Ask the same questions of all candidates so that each can be evaluated fairly.
- ✓ Make sure you give credit for international experience, rather than diminish its importance. That experience may help you compete regionally in what is an increasingly multicultural marketplace, or it may help you go global!

*Li Chang Chen,
Engineering at
Trojan Technologies*





Peter Cuddy, Director and Almas Goher, Production Worker at Touché Bakery

A common purpose: success!

Touché Bakery

Touché Bakery Director, Peter Cuddy, can tell you a story about each one of Touché's 15 employees. He's proud of the men and women who work for them, and grateful for the hard work they do to make Touché run smoothly. Touché products, including high quality biscotti, meringues and cookies are sold in some of the best bakeries and specialty stores in Ontario and as far away as the southern United States.

Since Touché was brought to London in 2004 by Peter and his partner Allan Swartz, the company has hired workers recruited through the Job Connect program at the London Unemployment Help Centre, including newcomers. Job Connect is a provincially funded program designed to link

willing employers with workers who wish to gain employment and experience.

Peter says, "We see a real sense of purpose. We believe that the commitment of our employees comes from feeling comfortable, feeling like they are part of a family working toward a common purpose. Some of the people here have faced great struggles in their lives, are from impoverished backgrounds or have had a life consumed by violence or conflict."

"The individuals who work here, work very hard," he says. "We give staff a lot of latitude here, and they respect it. There's tremendous respect among all of us, for our differences, and for what we have in common."