



# Orientation, Retention and Promotion

## A Guide for Building Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces for New Immigrant Workers

A Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Demonstration Project

Developed by DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society and PEERs Employment and Education Resources

With funding from the Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development

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**Printed in 2011**

### **More Information, Resources and Tools**

The information, resources and tools held within this guidebook, are a starting point for employers wishing to successfully embrace cultural diversity within their workplace. For more information and additional resources, please visit the website [www.getintheknow.ca](http://www.getintheknow.ca) developed within this project by DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society. This employer and community resource contains a comprehensive inventory of tools, current articles, websites and community resources and supports all related to aspects of immigrant workforce integration.

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**DIVERSEcity**  
community resources society

## Introduction

### ***Why is it important for employers to work to improve their ability to orient, retain and promote new immigrant workers?***

Much has been said and written about BC's looming labour shortages. Prior to the recession, many occupational sectors experienced difficulties filling their human resource demands. The construction, tourism, transportation, energy and health sectors struggled to fill their labour needs. According to a Bank of Canada 2010 Business Outlook Survey, in 2008 these shortages were a major concern to nearly 40% of employers.

(Source: Bank of Canada, Business Outlook Survey, January 2010, page 3).

By June of 2010, Canada had recouped 97% of the jobs lost in the recession and experienced the largest job gain since 1975. Yet our aging population and surging retirement rates will result in unprecedented job vacancies. The BC Business Council predicts over one million job openings in BC alone over the next 12 years. (Source: Business Council of BC, One Million Jobs, 2010) A low birth rate combined with stiffer international competition for employees means BC employers must look to the province's immigrant population to fulfill vacancies at all levels. Indeed, government officials predict that all Canada's labour force growth will soon come from immigration.

In the words of Canadian Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, Perrin Beatty: "We need to expand Canada's labour force if we want the Canadian economy to continue to grow."

Currently, Canada welcomes approximately 250,000 new immigrants each year. Nearly 45,000 come to BC. Reports indicate that these numbers are inadequate to meet growing workforce demand. Work is being done right now to improve immigration policies in order to speed up the process and better meet the specific labour needs of business.

The vast majority of immigrants to BC are well educated. Nearly 75% have some type of post-secondary education such as trades tickets, diplomas, degrees and doctorates. The demand for these workers is worldwide, which means that Canada is in competition with other first world countries for workers, both skilled and unskilled.

In a global economy, workers have choice; they will select their new country based on where they will be welcomed and where they see the strongest prospects for employment, career development and success. If employment and career growth are too difficult, individuals will not immigrate to BC or will not stay. It has been estimated that nearly 40% of "skilled" immigrants return to their native countries within 10 years of arrival.

To attract and retain workers, it is essential that BC employers provide new immigrants with work environments that are inclusive and supportive. Throughout the province's history, the multicultural workforce has been a major economic force. To continue to attract and improve retention of new immigrant workers, policies related to recruitment, training, career development and staff management must be continuously reviewed. Different cultures, communication and work styles need to be better understood.

The information, tools, tips and resources contained within this guide focus on the orientation, retention and promotion of new immigrant workers. This guide was designed to build from the toolkit developed by the BC Human Resources Management Association entitled: "Hiring and Retaining Skilled Immigrants". For more information about recruiting and hiring, you can view this toolkit at:

[www.bchma.org/pdf/itguide.pdf](http://www.bchma.org/pdf/itguide.pdf) or you can visit, [www.getintheknow.ca](http://www.getintheknow.ca)

"The 'perfect storm' has been created by an aging workforce, a declining 15-24 year old new entrant pool and stiff international competition for talent. Strong economic growth over the last five years has increased the skills gaps in B.C. Small businesses are particularly vulnerable when trying to deal with the impacts of labour shortages."

Source: Labour Supply Strategies for Small Businesses in British Columbia, June 2007

[www.coalitionbcbusiness.ca/reports.htm](http://www.coalitionbcbusiness.ca/reports.htm)

## Benefits of a Culturally Diverse Workforce

Much of BC's economic success can be attributed to the hard work, innovation, skills, knowledge and experience of immigrants. Organizations with culturally diverse workforces site the following benefits.

### **Reduction in Skill Shortages**

Internationally educated and experienced candidates increase the talent pool offering employers more hiring choices and fill BC's need for workers

### **Access New Markets and Customers**

A culturally diverse staff will assist you to identify new customers and their product and service needs

### **Access International Markets**

Companies with culturally diverse staff may use the languages, expertise and cultural knowledge of their staff to expand business

### **Stronger Referral Network**

Organizations with diverse workplaces have access to larger numbers of new employees through increased individual referrals

### **Improved Customer Service**

Staff teams that include members that speak multiple languages and understand cultural differences improve customer service and cross-cultural business success

### **Expertise and Experience**

Fresh thinking enhances overall staff skills and brings new solutions, advanced use of technology, and new perspectives resulting in new opportunities, products and profitable business strategies

### **Dynamic / Successful Workplace**

Culturally diverse staff teams increase learning and sharing making the workplace more inviting and fulfilling for all staff

### **Reduced Cost / Increased Success for International Projects**

Familiarity with different social and business cultures reduces training costs and can avoid lost business by adapting quickly, reducing risks and circumventing errors

## Recruitment and Hiring of New Immigrant Workers

The tools, tips and strategies found in this guide will assist you in orienting, retaining and promoting new immigrant employees into the workforce. Naturally, the successful integration of new immigrant workers begins with understanding the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce and with employing successful hiring practices. The British Columbia Human Resources Management Association (BC HRMA) has developed a toolkit to support the recruitment and hiring of new immigrants. The toolkit can be found at: [www.bchrma.org/pdf/itiguide.pdf](http://www.bchrma.org/pdf/itiguide.pdf)

The following summarizes the recruiting and hiring steps recommended by BC HRMA.

### **Step 1: Advertising the Job**

To access the pool of skilled immigrants in BC and Canada you need to know where they are, what they read and who they connect with. Consider advertising in ethnic newspapers, connecting with employment agencies that serve various immigrant groups or asking for referrals within your own organization. Placing additional languages in your ad or on your website communicates that your organization values diversity and encourages applications.

### **Step 2: Screening the Applications**

Don't let unusual responses cloud your judgement. Cultures have different approaches to cover letters and résumés. Raise your awareness of these differences to better understand job applicants. A candidate with an atypical resume may actually be the most skilled. Why let him or her go because of it? Assessing credentials is a complex and important step. Use the resources in the BC HRMA Guide to learn more about how to check up on international qualifications or equivalencies.

### **Step 3: Interviewing and Testing**

Use plain language and be open to different cultural responses. Interviewers often make decisions quickly and are more influenced by body language and tone than specific words. You could be ruling out the best candidate because you are misinterpreting their communication style.

### **Step 4: Reference Checking**

Reference letters may need translation. If there is no local work reference, consider using a character reference instead. The Internet has made it easier to check out university or higher education qualifications and there are a number of agencies within Canada that can provide guidance on how to check.

### **Step 5A: Offering the Job**

Use plain language in your offer. Newcomers to Canada will appreciate an offer letter with clear details about expectations. Having found your ideal candidate, you don't want to lose them through unclear communication.

### **Step 5B: Giving Feedback**

If the candidate is unsuccessful and your organization policy supports it, then providing a couple pieces of useful feedback will go a long way to ensuring a positive experience. Consider indicating to the candidate which courses, qualifications or areas of improvement would support them to be successful next time.

### **Step 6: Ensuring Success in the Workplace**

Attracting and selecting a skilled immigrant to work for your organization is a valuable investment. The diversity of thought and potential for innovation that is created has been shown to have a positive impact on organizational success. It is important to look after your investment by effectively integrating your candidates into your workforce. This requires conscious work to support the new candidate and to educate and support your existing work group.

## Preparing the Workplace

Most employers simply want to hire the best candidate for the job and will state that they don't care whether that person is a new immigrant or not. So why then should employers spend time preparing the workplace for new immigrant workers?

As discussed in the previous section, there are many real and compelling reasons to hire immigrants, but employers must recognize that new immigrants to Canada, regardless of their skill level, occupation or experience will have some cultural, workplace behaviour and practices, or communication differences that will require an adjustment mainly for the individual, but also for the employer and existing employees. Spending some time in advance to understand some of these cultural differences will not only ease the integration of the new employees, but perhaps more importantly, better prepare the whole organization for success.

### Develop an Understanding of Related Definitions and Terms

In working with or managing staff from various cultural backgrounds, there can often be uncertainty or even apprehension about things such as cultural discrimination, workplace racism, stereotyping or even basic cultural differences. Managers and colleagues may struggle to determine whether a miscommunication or misunderstanding is related to a cultural difference. And if it is, they might wonder how to address these issues without appearing discriminatory or racist. A better understanding of related terms and definitions will enhance understanding of multiculturalism in the workplace and create a better ability to discuss and share differences and concerns.

**Visible Minority** – is a person who is visibly not one of the majority cultural group. In 2006, more than five million Canadians identified themselves this way. The latest census data shows that British Columbia has the highest proportion of visible minorities in the country. Yet it is important to recognize that much of BC's "visible minority" population was born and raised in BC and that they have varying, or, in some cases, no connection to their ancestral culture; they are simply "British Columbian or Canadian." For this reason, this guidebook refers to the orientation, retention, and promotion of "**new immigrants**".

**New Immigrants** – are individuals who have arrived to Canada as permanent residents within the last 10 years. Between 1996 and 2006, more than 348,000 new immigrants arrived in B.C. (*Facts and Figures 2009, Stats Canada*)

**Culture** – is the beliefs, values, behaviours and material objects that shape an individual's identity and his or her way of life. An understanding of culture provides a base for learning, understanding and acceptance as you work with more individuals from an increasing number of cultures. Multiculturalism stresses mutual respect and acceptance of cultural differences.

### What makes one culture different from another?

Language	Manners	Customs	Philosophy	Education
Values	Accent	Work Ethic	Architecture	Music
History	Literature	Technology	Dance	Appearance
Geography	Religion	Hobbies	Traditions	Food
Gender Roles	Industry	Politics	Sports	Behaviours
Natural Resources	Parenting Styles	Dress / Fashion	Art / Esthetic	Superstitions



Over five million Canadians identified themselves as a member of a visible minority group in the 2006 Census, accounting for 16.2% of the total population. This was an increase from 2001 where visible minorities accounted for 13.4% of the total population.

Of the provinces, in 2006 British Columbia had the highest proportion of visible minorities, representing 24.8% of its population, followed by Ontario at 22.8%.

2006 Census Data

**Racial Stereotypes** – are preconceived concepts or ideas about a racial or cultural group. Whereas a cultural trait is a belief, value, or behaviour shared by many people, racial stereotypes imply that all individuals from a racial or cultural group are the same. Stereotypes are often used in a negative or prejudicial manner whether intentionally or unintentionally and can be harmful to workplace relations.

**Example:** “All people from China are good at math.”

This is incorrect, and even though seemingly positive, it is harmful to other cultures by implication and to those from Chinese extraction that are not strong in math. If this stereotype is applied, it is likely a “Chinese person” will be asked to solve the accounting problem at work. If they could not, or if this task was difficult, there would be surprise; people might say – “You’re Chinese, this shouldn’t be difficult for you.” In truth, this statement has left no room for individual differences and has led to judgment or “prejudgment” – which is prejudice. Stereotyping may affect hiring, delegating, morale, promotion and wage reviews negatively.

**Racism** – is thoughts, words, attitudes or actions that criticize people due to race, colour or culture. Racism can be used by any group against any other race, colour, culture or cast. Often racism includes “racial slurs”, jokes, graffiti, threats or violence.

**Example:** Choosing who to hire for a job or who to rent an apartment to, based on race or culture are two forms of racism that are difficult to see.

The following two definitions have been taken from the International Labour Organization’s Global Report: The New Face of Discrimination and Inequality in the World of Work ([www.ilo.org/wow/Articles/lang--en/WCMS\\_082633](http://www.ilo.org/wow/Articles/lang--en/WCMS_082633)):

**Discrimination** – is treating people differently because of characteristics that are not related to their merit or the requirements of the job including race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction and social origin. Discrimination at work is a violation of a human right that results in a waste of human talents, with detrimental effects on productivity and economic growth, and generates socio-economic inequalities that undermine social cohesion and solidarity.

**Different Treatment versus Discrimination:** Treatment based on levels of productivity, individual merit, talents, knowledge and skill are fair and efficient. Also, meeting the special needs of some individuals and making sure that they have equal opportunities is not discriminatory and is known as affirmative action.”





## Develop Cultural Diversity Related Policies

The development of company policies, vision statements, mandates, missions and goals are all elements of strategic planning – a process that is complex and time consuming. Providing tips towards the development of a strategic plan is beyond the scope of this guidebook. However, as the cultural diversity of our workplaces and communities continues to grow, it is imperative that policies related to multiculturalism, anti-racism, stereotyping, communication, hiring, interviewing, performance reviews, and promotion and succession be reviewed and included. Not only will the inclusion facilitate and support your management team and the individuals you choose to hire and retain, but you will have clearly demonstrated the value and importance your organization places on cultural diversity within the workplace and community.

A good starting point is to review the policies, vision statements, mandates, missions and goals of large organizations and businesses. It may not be possible for your business to adopt all that a large organization like Scotiabank or Safeway has taken on. However, these and others can stand as examples and provide you guidance as your organization moves forward.

If you are planning to develop related policies, an excellent resource is the Conference Board of Canada's Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities. This guide can be found at:

[www.conferenceboard.ca/documents.aspx?did=1198](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/documents.aspx?did=1198)

Once developed, your new policies should be widely shared within the company and measures should be taken to hold managers and employees accountable.

### Safeway: Diversity Makes A World of Difference

"Diversity, like ingredients, make a world of difference. Those of us who work at Safeway come from all walks of life. We have a team comprised of people from all races, religions and ethnic backgrounds. They bring to the workplace a variety of styles, abilities and skills. I am proud of our diversity. Without a diverse team, we could not make Safeway the best company in our industry."

Steve Burd, Chairman, President and CEO

[www.safeway.com/IFL/Grocery/Workplace-Diversity](http://www.safeway.com/IFL/Grocery/Workplace-Diversity)

### Our Commitment to Diversity

At Safeway, we feel that our team should reflect the diversity of the people who shop in our stores. That is why we are pleased that Fortune magazine has recognized our dedication to hiring and promoting qualified people from all backgrounds. Our team brings you the quality and service that you expect from Safeway every day.

### Diversity Advisory Boards

We benefit from the skills, ideas and talents of employees serving on the Diversity Advisory Boards. Each major operating area has an active Diversity Advisory Board which meets on a regular basis since there are actually multiple DABs. The shared mission of our Diversity Advisory Board is:

- We recognize, celebrate and benefit from the uniqueness of each employee and customer.
- We value, respect and support these differences in our workplace.
- We strive to reflect this diversity in the communities we serve.

## Scotiabank's Vision

### Belief

Diversity represents the unique contributions that employees bring to the workplace. By respecting the distinct perspectives of each employee, Scotiabank continues to grow as a flexible, dynamic organization. Inclusion offers a way to leverage each employee's contribution to maximize business performance for employees, and for Scotiabank.

### Goal

To build a competitive advantage through an inclusive culture that celebrates the talent diversity. To use this advantage when attracting and retaining talented employees, in providing exceptional service to the customers, and in partnering with the communities. Diversity is one of the organization objectives on the Balance Score Card.

### Commitment

Scotiabank Group is committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive and accessible workplace for all its employees.

[www.scotiabank.com/cda/content/0,1608,CID844\\_LIDen,00.html](http://www.scotiabank.com/cda/content/0,1608,CID844_LIDen,00.html)

### Employment Equity

Scotiabank is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible workplace for all diverse employees. Scotiabank strives to engage a diverse workforce that reflects the communities in which it operates. In Canada, Scotiabank will strive to achieve appropriate representation for all designated groups by the year 2013.

[www.scotiabank.com/cda/content/0,1608,CID12989\\_LIDen,00.html](http://www.scotiabank.com/cda/content/0,1608,CID12989_LIDen,00.html)

Depending on how “state” or “country” is defined, there are between 193 – 250 countries.  
[www.wisegeek.com/how-many-countries-are-there-in-the-world.htm](http://www.wisegeek.com/how-many-countries-are-there-in-the-world.htm)

### Percentage of Population Born Outside of Canada

BC – 27%  
Richmond – 57%  
Burnaby – 50%  
Vancouver – 45%  
Surrey – 40%  
Coquitlam – 40%  
North Shore – 35%  
Abbotsford – 26%  
Langley – 18%  
Maple Ridge – 17%

Source: 2006 Census

### Top 10 Sources Countries of Immigrants to BC in 2008

1. China – 9,900 (23%)
2. India – 5,474 (12%)
3. Philippines – 4,997 (11%)
4. South Korea – 2,903 (7%)
5. USA – 2,655 (6%)
6. UK – 2,521 (5%)
7. Taiwan – 2,090 (5%)
8. Iran – 1,278 (3%)
9. Japan – 601 (1%)
10. Singapore – 592 (1%)
11. Other Countries – (28%)

Source: Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration, 2009

## Research to Understand the Communities that Your Company Serves

Canada and BC welcome new immigrants from every country in the world and immigrant communities in BC are growing rapidly. This presents big opportunities for employers and business. New immigrants constitute a pool of potential employees as well as new markets, clients and customers. Having an understanding of the cultural diversity represented within your communities and neighbourhoods you serve is good for business.

In 2008, for example, 43,950 new immigrants arrived in BC from 180 different countries. Of these:

- 35,000 came to the Lower Mainland
- 63% are of working age (25 – 64)
- 52.4% hold a university degree or higher
- 22% hold a college or trade certificate (Source: 2006 Census)

The government of BC analyzed Census data and compiled profiles of cultural diversity and immigrant populations for almost every community in BC. These profiles can be found on the Provinces' WelcomeBC website at:

[www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/communities/facts\\_trends/index.page?WT.svl=TopNav](http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/communities/facts_trends/index.page?WT.svl=TopNav)

In addition, many municipal governments and other organizations have compiled similar data by community and, in some case, by neighbourhood. To view an example of detailed community and neighbourhood cultural diversity data, visit [www.getintheknow.ca](http://www.getintheknow.ca)

For even more information about the immigrant populations living in your community, contact the immigrant serving organizations in your area. Immigrant serving organizations exist in many BC communities. These organizations provide language and career services to new immigrants and many provide staffing assistance to employers. Some even have services to support immigrant workforce integration. Perform a web search for Immigrant Serving Organizations (include your community) to see what is available.

## Understand Common Cultural Differences

We know that different cultures have different beliefs, customs, foods and ways of thinking. Beyond language, these differences can sometimes make understanding each other difficult. In some workplaces, many different cultures work side by side. Staff, managers or team leaders may ask, **“How can I possibly learn everything there is to know about all cultures?”** The answer is we can't know everything, but the more you know, the better able you will be to relate. If you don't understand and value all members of the group, how can you hope to successfully work with, motivate or supervise your culturally diverse staff teams?

Different people will value their roles in the organization differently. They may have varying ideas about how they can make a contribution and how they may want to be recognized for it. What motivates one worker might completely bother another. For example, rewarding someone with a pat on the back when he / she is unfamiliar with being touched; an individual treated in this manner may become uncomfortable, upset and less productive.

Understanding what beliefs, values or behaviours are shared by a cultural group may help us communicate. However, it is important to remember that cultural traits are not true for every member of a cultural group. Also, note that one country does not mean one culture. China, for example, has 56 named cultures as well as innumerable subcultures.

## Common Cultural Differences that Cause Misunderstandings in the Workplace

Cultural Trait	Potential Challenge <i>In some cultures...</i>	Possible Solution
Leadership / Authority	...hierarchical leaders make decisions without explanation and expect all to follow, lean towards micromanagement, often will not admit problems	<b>Explain</b> how leadership in Canada looks less hierarchical and the input of individuals from an organization or team has greater value and is considered beneficial – here success is achieved by a whole and capable team
Teamwork	...staff is expected to be assigned tasks and are not expecting to take responsibility / ownership for the completion and success of the project	<b>Tell</b> employees their knowledge, experience and participation is valuable and you will ask them for it and need them to share their ideas and work as a team
Time	...five to ten minutes does not matter; to others one hour either way does not matter; to others being exactly on time is extremely important	<b>Clarify</b> expectations related to timeliness / punctuality; be clear about the consequences of a meeting delay or of the deadlines in your schedule / work plan; note that lateness is not necessarily a sign of laziness
Personal Space	...individuals have less need for or awareness of personal space	<b>Explain</b> the importance of personal space; “arm’s length” is comfortable for most North Americans
Collectivism and Individualism	...success and failure of an individual are measured by the accomplishments of the group ... the individual and their accomplishments are deemed more important than those of the team or group	<b>Recognize / discuss</b> the importance of the accomplishments of the team but emphasize that individual effort is important and will be recognized
Gender Equality	...males hold most or all of the dominant / leadership roles	<b>Explain</b> to your staff that Canada’s human rights laws demand genders be treated equally and that poor or inappropriate treatment of women will not be tolerated
Demonstrating Emotions	...body language, facial expressions, voice volume / pitch, silence, or very demonstrative physical behaviour mean different things	<b>Be cautious</b> in interpreting emotion / expression; smiles and laughter may indicate embarrassment or discomfort, not agreement and delight
Saving Face / Reputation	...“face” or ego and dignity can be negatively impacted by a lack of attention or by criticism	<b>Balance</b> your criticism with public and private praise; attend to all of your staff equally
Fact vs. Opinion Giving	...opinion is seen as important as fact and opinion may be communicated as fact to persuade people to accept an idea; employees may interpret opinion as fact	<b>Communicate</b> the facts as facts and opinion as opinion; clarify to ensure the distinction
Superstitions	...superstition guides behaviour	<b>Note</b> superstitions and try to work with people that are resistant due to superstitions; ask for more information
Asking For Help / Giving Help	...asking for help indicates failing or looking bad, and offering to help can be seen as being critical of someone’s abilities	<b>Encourage</b> people to ask for help and watch to see if new workers are overwhelmed with work; be sure to validate a person’s work before offering help while affirming your confidence in them
Problem Solving	...individuals are unfamiliar with making decisions and getting involved with problem solving; dealing with a problem may be interpreted as blame	<b>Communicate</b> with your employees that you plan to make them think so they can resolve problems themselves
Dress / Grooming	...workplace attire is different	<b>Share and discuss</b> the norms within your organization regarding dress and grooming; be accepting of difference and accommodate if possible (i.e. health and safety are not at risk)
Food	...food and eating habits are very different; different cultural groups find some foods offensive for religious or other reasons	<b>Communicate</b> the dietary needs of all members of your staff to avoid offense. Be aware of dietary needs if providing a meal.
Familial Relationships	...family responsibility and loyalty may be extremely important	<b>Be respectful</b> of the need for your staff to consult family before making big decisions or when negotiating time off
Adherence to religion	...religion and adherence to holy days and times is critical	<b>Obtain an understanding</b> of “special days” and work to accommodate; explain clearly when accommodation is not possible

Adapted from:

Living and Working in a Multicultural Society, Jody Johnson for the Burnaby School District  
 Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees, Lionel Laroche  
 Chinese Cultural Guide, [www.cgsrc.ca/images/pdf/chinese\\_cultural\\_guide\\_final.pdf](http://www.cgsrc.ca/images/pdf/chinese_cultural_guide_final.pdf)

## Improve Communication

It is estimated that more than 130 different languages are spoken in BC homes. As immigration continues to grow, so will linguistic diversity and communication challenges. The following tips will improve workplace communication.

### 1. Use Plain English – To ensure workplace communication is working for all:

- Speak and write in short sentences;
- Use simple and commonly used words; avoid “big” words and jargon when possible;
- Utilize clear headings;
- Use tables and lists to simplify complex material.
- Review and apply “plain language” to all workplace print and web materials, such as:
  - Job postings / descriptions
  - Orientation materials / employee handbooks
  - Advertising and promotional brochures and posters
  - Health and safety manuals
  - Training and policy manuals
  - Workplace Signage
  - Emails, company forms, memos
  - Instructions for operating equipment

For more tips on “plain language” go to:

[www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/quickreference/checklist.cfm](http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/quickreference/checklist.cfm)

### 2. Be Conscious of the Difference Between Communication Skills and Language Skills –

Language skills are defined by an individual’s vocabulary, an accurate accent and the ability to follow the rules of grammar. Good communication is defined by the ability to give and receive a message. Some of the best communicators have less than perfect language skills.

### 3. Enunciate Clearly –

Enunciation means pronouncing a word clearly. For example, “What do you want to do?” can become “Whaddywannado?” For a new English speaker, this simple question may not be understood.

### 4. Avoid Using Idioms, Slang and Abbreviations and Acronyms –

Typically these are very difficult to understand for English as a second language speakers. An idiom is a colourful expression often with historical, untraceable or very interesting origins. Slang is not only unprofessional, but it is generational and usually developed to exclude. Acronyms are often sector or topic specific and difficult to follow even for native speakers new to an environment. Abbreviations and or email / texting language is also very difficult for newcomers to understand and should be avoided. Some examples:

Idioms	Slang	Acronyms	Abbreviations
it’s raining cats and dogs	bummer	CRA	Etc.
that cracked me up	sweet	HST	btw
not playing with a full deck	cool	SME	Diag.
as cool as a cucumber	kill	PMP	Intl
burn the candle at both ends	hammered	SOS	K



5. **Use the Written Word as Often as Possible** – Many people who speak English as a second language have a larger reading and writing vocabulary than a speaking and listening vocabulary. Many newcomers have studied English, some for many years, and have had very few chances to practice speaking and listening. To enhance understanding, provide supporting documents prior to meetings, handouts to support oral presentations and written instructions.
6. **Replace “yes / no” Questions with “Open-ended Questions”** – Ask a “yes / no” question and you will often only get a “yes” or a “no”. To obtain more meaningful answers and information and improve communication overall, try to use more open ended questions. Some examples:

Yes / No Questions	Open-ended Questions
Do you understand?	What other information can I give you?
Does that make sense?	What do you think?
Is that clear?	How do you think we should start?
Do you have any questions?	What other questions do you have?

7. **Increase Understanding Through Good Questions** – Encourage asking questions to get clarification. Clearly express that asking for a word to be defined or a concept clarified is a good thing to do. Avoid confusing tag questions like, “It’s a nice day, isn’t it?”
8. **Choose Your Humour Carefully** – Humour can improve rapport and improve communication. However, it does not always translate well across language and culture. If you are not sure that your humour will be appreciated, resist the temptation. If you do share a joke or humorous anecdote, be sure to check that it has been understood as intended. If it hasn’t been understood, be ready to explain.
9. **Allow for Silence** – Pauses are often needed in order to allow listeners operating in a second language to digest what has been said and to prepare to respond. Many people, especially many North Americans, are uncomfortable with silence of any length. Learn to become a little more comfortable with a second or two of processing time.
10. **Learn to Correctly Pronounce Names** – The most important word in any language is an individual’s name. Taking the time to learn to say an unfamiliar name correctly will make people feel valued and respected.



## Build Employee Awareness and Interest in Cultural Diversity

As your workforce becomes more and more culturally diverse, supporting your staff to build awareness and interest in cultural diversity will become more and more important. Increased understanding and appreciation will build stronger work teams and better morale. The following are a few easy-to-adopt activities.

**1. Post or email daily or weekly quotes** related to cultural diversity. A few examples:

- Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness. **Ola Joseph**
- I cannot, and will not judge, by what my eyes may see. For the skin on a man shall not reveal his true identity. **Robert M. Hensel**
- Life lies in diversity, not in monotony. **M.K. Soni**
- We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race. **Kofi Annan**
- When you learn something from people, or from a culture, you accept it as a gift, and it is your lifelong commitment to preserve it and build on it. **Yo-Yo Ma**

Adapted from "The Cultural Diversity Yearbook", S.U.C.C.E.S.S., pages 11-18, 2009. For more examples, go to: [www.embracingdiversity.ca/icebox/CulturalDiversityYearbook.pdf](http://www.embracingdiversity.ca/icebox/CulturalDiversityYearbook.pdf)

**2. Post or email articles or links to videos, news and events** that inspire discussion of and engagement in cultural diversity.

**3. Review your training, orientation, promotional and other print and electronic materials and publications** to be sure that the residents of the communities you serve are represented in the photos you are using.

**4. Consider celebrating the cultural diversity within your workplace.** Some suggestions:

- Hang flags representing the countries of origin of your employees and / or customers
- Mark the countries of origin of your employees or customers on a map of the world
- Celebrate or mark the cultural holidays of your employees and / customers.

## Consider Becoming a Cultural Diversity Award Winner

Some of the country's most successful companies know that their success has depended on workplace cultural diversity and supporting the integration, training and development of new immigrant workers. We reviewed the best practices of local and national cultural diversity award winners – the following are a few examples of orientation, retention and professional development practices your organization might adopt. To view a more comprehensive list, visit [www.getintheknow.ca/best-practices](http://www.getintheknow.ca/best-practices)

## Retain, Develop and Promote New Immigrant Hires

- Provide onsite ESL training language instruction.
- Promote career advancement by paying for courses that added to an employee's skill set, e.g. technical writing and computer classes.
- Support career development by sponsoring memberships to professional associations.
- Provide financial support for new immigrants' career development.
- Provide training to senior employees on how to assist new immigrant develop career plans.

Find more examples at:

[www.getintheknow.ca](http://www.getintheknow.ca)

or at

[www.embracingdiversity.ca/icebox/CulturalDiversityYearbook.pdf](http://www.embracingdiversity.ca/icebox/CulturalDiversityYearbook.pdf)

## Develop a Culturally Friendly Workplace

- Host monthly company luncheons and holiday events, enabling employees to practice their English and build relationships with their peers.
- Regularly update equity policies, recruiting processes and training procedures to ensure that diversity initiatives remain current.
- Provide diversity awareness training to all employees.
- Provide staff training on communication in a culturally diverse workplace.

## Provide Work Experience Opportunities for Internationally Trained Professionals

- Provide practicums to internationally trained professionals.
- Engage in employment mentoring programs with a focus on supporting internationally trained professionals.

## Help New Canadian Employees Adjust to the Canadian Workplace

- Provide peer mentoring, skills development and feedback opportunities.
- Provide sector specific English language training.
- Subsidize the cost of ESL training outside the workplace for new Canadian employees.
- Hold lectures and workshops to help new Canadian employees (and their spouses) adjust to Canadian work culture.
- Establish diversity network / affinity groups for employees from various cultural backgrounds.

## Ensure Senior Management Support

- Hire to ensure cultural diversity at the management level.
- Create a campaign / advisory / committee on issues related to cultural diversity in the workplace.
- Participate on national or local Diversity Advisory Boards / Committees.



## Local and National Cultural Diversity Awards You May Want To Apply For

### Cultural DIVERSEcity Awards

[www.dcrs.ca/index.php?page=awards&section=awards](http://www.dcrs.ca/index.php?page=awards&section=awards)

These awards recognize those businesses in Surrey, Delta and White Rock communities that have excelled in successfully implementing culturally diverse initiatives into their workplaces.

### Fraser Valley Cultural Diversity Awards

[www.abbotsfordcommunityservices.com/our-programs/immigrants-multicultural/cultural-diversity-awards](http://www.abbotsfordcommunityservices.com/our-programs/immigrants-multicultural/cultural-diversity-awards)

The Fraser Valley Cultural Diversity Awards Ceremony recognize the best practices of Fraser Valley organizations, initiatives and businesses in recognizing the diversity of our community.

### Provincial Nesika Awards

[www.embracebc.ca/embracebc/community/nesika\\_awards/index.page?WT.svl=LeftNav](http://www.embracebc.ca/embracebc/community/nesika_awards/index.page?WT.svl=LeftNav)

The Provincial Nesika Awards honour and celebrate British Columbia's cultural diversity and indigenous communities.

### Best Employers for New Canadians

[www.canadastop100.com/immigrants/](http://www.canadastop100.com/immigrants/)

This award is managed by the editors of Canada's Top 100 Employers in partnership with ALLIES. This special designation recognizes the nation's best employers for recent immigrants.

## Orientation, Retention and Promotion – Tips and Strategies for Employers

The contributions new immigrant employees can make to a workplace are tremendous. Although a solid “on-boarding” or orientation plan is important to have in place for all new employees, it is absolutely critical for new immigrant workers.

Orientation or “on-boarding” can be understood best if one imagines boarding a ship from a dock, where a hand is extended from a member of the crew (employer) and one hand is extended from the passenger (new immigrant hire). A firm grasp is shared by both as the “on-boarding” takes place with a pull (employer) and a step up (new immigrant hire) while onlookers from the ship (staff) and the dock (family/friends of new immigrant hire) look on with great interest. In essence, everyone is involved.

You have selected this new employee because he or she is qualified for the position. But it is important to remember that although capable to do the work, many elements of the workplace and its culture may be unfamiliar. The following pages provide “checklists” to guide you in supporting your new employees to get started on the right track, adjust to their new surroundings and to prepare current staff to be good hosts. These may seem like simple things. However, both new immigrants and native-born Canadians have common stories about not being given a thorough orientation to their new company, its staff and the expected responsibilities. Even though both groups may feel somewhat anxious, newcomers tend to experience a much higher level of stress. *Adapted from Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees, Lionel Laroche Ph.D, 2006*

Beyond orientation, the following “checklists” will support successful retention and provide guidance related to career planning and the promotion of new immigrant employees. It is true that the greatest responsibility to learn and adjust to the new workplace rests mostly on the employee. It is also true, however, that a few efforts from the employer can make the investment to hire and transition an even greater success for both parties.

The checklists found on the following pages were developed with input and direct contributions from employers, business associations, community service providers, and human resources experts. In addition, the developers of this guide conducted extensive research and drew upon decades of experience working with employers, workforce integration initiatives and new immigrants to B.C.



It has been estimated that 80% of workplace success depends on the new hire and 20% on the employer.



## Prior to the First Day: Preparing to Welcome the New Immigrant Employee

Many employers identify the selecting and hiring of new staff as the most important decision they make. To ensure the success of your decision, particularly with new immigrant employees, a little work in advance can go a long way towards ensuring successful workplace integration and a smoother entry into the workplace for your new employee. Even small steps and pieces of information can help set appropriate expectations and build confidence for your new employee. Consider the following suggestions:

### 1. Prepare a “Welcome Packet” for your new immigrant hire

- Create an acceptance or congratulation letter that includes information on what to expect on their first day including hours, breaks, where and who to report to and dress code information.
- Provide print and web links to pertinent company information.
- Provide directions to work and /or a map, parking information and, if appropriate, supply a parking pass.
- Extend an invitation to their spouse to attend the “First Day” orientation.
- Include an invitation to call prior to their first day with any questions.

### 2. Assign and prepare a sponsor/mentor/buddy for the new immigrant hire

- Assign someone and prepare them to be the new immigrant hire’s “sponsor / mentor / buddy”. Although not necessary, consider selecting someone who shares the same culture and may have experienced some of the same challenges.

### 3. Make arrangements for the appropriate office/desk/workspace set up

- Prepare the new immigrant hire’s work area, personal item storage, and ensure that all required / passwords and security codes are enabled (office / parking entry, computer, email, phone, voice mail, etc.); have someone prepared to explain all of these in detail – these processes / procedures may be new.

### 4. Contact pertinent staff and departments about the arrival of a new staff member

- Advise current staff of the arrival of the new immigrant hire and their roles and responsibilities.
- Share that the new immigrant hire may have questions and a requirement for additional support in the early days.
- Set up payroll and personal information gathering processes; schedule time so that the payroll person can answer any questions the new immigrant hire might have.

Any efforts you make to prepare for a successful “First Day” will be time well spent and result in a quicker transition to productivity and success for the newcomer and their impact on the organization.

Inviting the spouse to attend the orientation has great benefit for their knowledge of the workplace and to offer at-home support

Adapted from *Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees*, Lionel Laroche Ph.D, 2007. page 89



People new to Canada may have very little idea what to expect in the business culture and office norms. They have been brought up and trained in a completely different system. As scary as it sounds, their expectations about your workplace could have been developed by what they have seen on North American television. Needless to say, you will want to help them know what to expect.

Adapted from *Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Culturally Different Employees*, Lionel Laroche Ph.D, 2007. page 88

Some employers provide time off for culturally significant events and holy days and provide quiet space for prayer  
*Diversity at Work*, HR Council for the Non-Profit Sector  
[www.hrvs-rhsbc.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-cultural.cfm](http://www.hrvs-rhsbc.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-cultural.cfm)

## The First Day: An Orientation Checklist

Like any new employee, it is important to provide a thorough orientation to their new job and workplace. It is a good idea to set aside at least a few hours for orientation on the first day. Many of the recommendations below will be a part of the orientation you provide all employees. It is important to remember as the orientation is provided that new immigrant employees may have more questions, a greater need for detail, and require more time than their Canadian-born peers. Some areas to consider including in your orientation are:

### 1. Company Introduction

- Provide company information, description of different departments, a staff and / or organizational chart.
- Provide access to or copies of organizational policies, safety and security procedures.
- Share information about the existence of a cultural diversity committee or any cultural diversity policies, in-house resources or toolkits; consider printing and sharing "Orientation, Retention and Promotion – Tips and Strategies for New Employees" of this Guidebook.
- Share information about any appropriate networking or affinity groups.

### 2. Working Environment

- Review hours of work, breaks and expectations around punctuality and absences from work.
- Explain how IT and administrative supports function within your workplace environment.
- Tour the facilities: kitchen, washrooms and other common spaces and explain expectations for their use.
- Explain access and use of supplies and clerical support, if appropriate.

### 3. Job Expectations

- Ensure that new immigrant hires are introduced to their direct manager(s), mentor / sponsor / buddy and others they may get direction from as well as their team members.
- Explain the interactions expected with staff, management, suppliers and clients.
- Review the job description and any unwritten duties and / or expectations.
- Clarify how their performance will be evaluated and the details of the probation period.
- Explain the wage structure, commissions, incentive pay, expenses, benefits, payroll deductions, etc.

### 4. Training and Development

- Provide an overview of any training plans / practices available to them within the organization.
- Explain how and when any technical orientation / training may take place.
- Be prepared to answer questions about your workplace and discuss differences in work culture and practices.
- Explain the support their mentor/sponsor/buddy may provide, but also explain your expectations for both sides in this relationship.

### 5. Checking In

- Ask about religious or cultural requirements related to work or time off.
- Provide an opportunity to ask questions about the company, roles and responsibilities.
- Provide an opportunity to share concerns or ask questions about life outside of work.

## The First Week: Settling In

For any new immigrant hire, there is a lot of information to take in during the first days and weeks. For someone who is new to the Canadian workplace, it is very likely some areas will require further interpretation, explanation, and clarification. New immigrant employees may not require much additional time, just remember that much of the workplace culture may be very different for them.

A few things to check in on:

### 1. The Day After Orientation

- Let it be known that you anticipate questions related to their duties and workplace norms.
- Check in to reinforce support and ask how things are going on a regular basis.
- Observe their behaviour during breaks and renew introductions to staff, if necessary.

### 2. Throughout the week

- Choose a coffee break (or two) to sit down and discuss work and non-work related topics.
- Look for opportunities to provide casual support or discuss differences you've observed.
- Check in from time to time to ensure the new immigrant hire is connecting with their mentor / sponsor / buddy.
- Check in with workplace supervisors to support their effort to ensure new immigrant hires are transitioning into the workplace.

### 3. Make Inquiries and Document Areas for Improvement and Praise Related to

- Work Quality
- Relationships / Teamwork
- Communication
- Overall Integration in the Staff Team

### 4. Arrange a Meeting For the End of The First Week

- Give feedback but consider that some cultures will receive the feedback more negatively than meant or, alternatively, interpret feedback more neutrally than intended.
- Discuss each area of work performance and make plans in writing for improvement where necessary; present them with a copy for their use and offer your support to help them achieve established goals.
- Praise new immigrant hires for their abilities to adapt, achievements, and successes.

These suggestions are not exhaustive and may already be included within your existing orientation practices and processes or they may be more than you choose to apply. Use your discretion regarding what you will do within the setting of your company.



Researchers have estimated in a relationship it takes five compliments to balance out one criticism.

Source: Unknown

## The First Month: Working Towards Retention

Over the first month it is important to check-in regularly and informally with your new immigrant employee. Remember that although they are able to do the work, many elements of the work and the workplace culture may still be very different than what they are used to. The following checklist may be used to guide your interactions over the first month and may be used to guide a formal meeting if scheduled.

### 1. Throughout the month

- Provide performance feedback relatively often.
- Discuss their “first month” experiences and arrange formal or informal discussions about any noted workplace cultural differences.
- Check in with them on the relationship with their sponsor / mentor / buddy and other staff.
- Note areas for improvement and expectations for changed behaviour, work habits or communication.
- Consider providing an opportunity for new employees to introduce the culture of their native country at a staff potluck or as a story within your company newsletter.
- Utilize their knowledge / experience; ask for their ideas and input.



### 2. Evaluate the Relationship Between the Sponsor / Mentor / Buddy and New Immigrant Hire

- Discuss the relationship between the sponsor / mentor / buddy and the new immigrant hire - Has contact been regular enough? Are questions being answered? Is encouragement being provided? Are opportunities for professional development being discussed?
- Evaluate the outcomes of the relationship and discuss how this relationship could be enhanced or changed.

### 3. Training Plans

- Earmark areas (skill, technical, software, language, etc.) for development, training and upgrading.
- Consider providing presentations / workshops / “brown bag” discussions to help new Canadian employees (and perhaps their spouses) adjust to Canadian work culture.

### 4. Employment Evaluation

- If a new immigrant hire has not worked out, consider taking the time to conduct an “exit interview” to give them feedback on how to improve for future success.

## The First Three Months: Establishing Success

For many organizations, it is expected that an employee be “up to speed” by the end of three months; this period often marks the end of the “probationary” period. The support, training and guidance that is provided to new employees, and especially those new to the country, during these months is critical. The following includes considerations to ensure your new immigrant hires are successfully retained and are working on a career plan and next steps for professional development and advancement.

### 1. Leading Up To the Three Month Mark

- Discuss successes and areas for improvement with sponsor / mentor / buddy.
- Review punctuality, absences, work quality and overall behaviour.
- Check in with the new immigrant hire regularly during these three months.
- Ask them about their relationship with their sponsor / mentor / buddy and other staff.
- Check in with them on their cultural integration within the workplace (personal reflections and discussions, and or observation on Canadian workplace practices and expectations).
- Write down and share noted areas for improvement and expectations regarding work habits or communication.
- Continue to seek input from your new immigrant hires to benefit from their knowledge / experience and ask them if they see any opportunities or any areas the business / organization could improve on.

### 2. Training Plans Continued

- Discuss training plans and encourage your new immigrant hire to research and determine their best training options.
- Determine what professional development goals they have.
- Discuss what training and development can be provided internally or externally.
- Encourage research regarding the best training options; initiate a plan when it best suits you or once the three month probation period expires.
- Provide employees with information and advice on any credentialing processes, if necessary.

### 3. Follow Up on Cultural / Religious Needs

- Follow up on cultural / religious needs during these three months and give a further opportunity for them to state their needs or make requests. Uncertainty in a new work environment or personal privacy may cause new immigrant staff not to disclose their religious or cultural beliefs and requirements right away.
- Consider producing or providing a multi-faith calendar and ask them what days they observe; if they need time off for family/religious activities, determine if you can support these observances.

### 4. Welcome New Immigrant Hire Formally and Publicly

- Send out an email to all staff announcing the completion of probation or a formal welcome highlighting their inclusion in the company / organization.



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.

Conference Board of Canada –  
Immigrant Friendly Businesses  
[www.wpboard.ca/english/pdfs/Immigrant-Friendly\\_Businesses\\_CBC.pdf](http://www.wpboard.ca/english/pdfs/Immigrant-Friendly_Businesses_CBC.pdf)

A multi-faith calendar can be ordered from the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC at:  
[www.amssa.org/calendar](http://www.amssa.org/calendar)

# Orientation, Retention and Promotion – Tips and Strategies for New Employees

## ***Approximately 80% of the success of a new employee depends on the employee!***

Many new immigrants have done an incredible amount of research and planning to adapt to Canadian workplace expectations. To help your employees be successful in their new position, get them to read over and follow the simple tips below. For some, the following pages will serve as a review; for others, these recommendations and considerations will be instrumental in securing their success.

### **Prior to the First Day: Preparing for Your First Day at Work**

Within Canadian culture, every person must take full responsibility for his or her career and professional development. Even though there are avenues to find support and gain assistance, career success is not the responsibility of the government, service providers, career coaches, network contacts, friends, family or most of all, the employer. Career success is the responsibility of each working individual.

Here are a few things a new employee should consider doing before day one:

#### **1. The day / night before**

- Review the job requirements that were listed on the job posting or advertisement.
- Check your new employer's website to refresh your company knowledge.
- Prepare to make a great first impression; consider what you will wear and what is appropriate for your new workplace.
- Ensure that you will be early for work, not just on time; familiarize yourself with your commute, transit schedules, parking locations etc.
- Get organized for your first day. Prepare your work materials, be prepared to make notes, and if you have any questions, write them down in advance.
- Try and relax. You were selected as the best candidate for the job and your employer believes you are capable.

#### **2. Plan Ahead to Avoid Some Things**

To ensure success, here are a dozen things to avoid in the workplace:

- Workplace gossip / politics
- Absenteeism / lateness
- Dishonesty / lying
- Blaming others
- Bragging, arrogance, egotism
- Not giving input when necessary
- Doing personal business
- Personal email, social networking, cell phone calls, texting
- Inappropriate internet sites, software, games
- Keeping to yourself
- Fooling / playing around
- Unsafe work

#### **3. What are the Key Attributes BC Employers Are Looking For?**

- Accountable /Responsible
- Honest / Ethical
- Demonstrated Initiative / Self Starter
- Customer Services Oriented
- Demonstrates Common Sense
- Enthusiastic / Positive Attitude
- High Performance Standards
- Flexible / Adaptable
- Diligent / Dedicated
- Creative / Innovative

Source: 2006 Biennial Skills and Attributes Survey Report (page 9)  
[www.bcbc.com/Documents/REF\\_SS\\_2006\\_CompleteReport.pdf](http://www.bcbc.com/Documents/REF_SS_2006_CompleteReport.pdf)



#### **First Impressions:**

Within 30 seconds you can make a charming or alarming impression, according to Gloria Starr of Global Success Strategies, Inc. A communications and leadership coach and advisor, she says that people generally decide within mere seconds of meeting someone whether or not they like that person.

[www.toastmasters.org/ToastmastersMagazine/ToastmasterArchive/2010/August/Feature/BodyLanguage.aspx](http://www.toastmasters.org/ToastmastersMagazine/ToastmasterArchive/2010/August/Feature/BodyLanguage.aspx)

## The Employee's First Day: A List of Considerations

Your first day on the job will have many "firsts". A little bit of planning and forethought will help you get through the early days successfully.

### 1. The Morning of Your First Day

- Give yourself some extra time to prepare for work; your first day is an important one.
- Unless arrangements have previously been made, don't forget to pack a lunch; depending on your worksite, there may not be a canteen or anywhere close to purchase a lunch.
- Be sure to call ahead if anything unexpected happens on your way; if you have a cell phone, be sure to turn your ringer off as you arrive to the worksite.
- Bring personal identification like Driver's Licence, Social Insurance Number (SIN) and your Care Card.
- Do not bring personal items like pictures and desk top decorations on your first day.
- Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before start time.

### 2. Arrival

- Greet **all staff** with a smile and exercise good conversation skills by introducing yourself and asking "How are you today?" or "How was your weekend?"
- Choose to have a good attitude and always be positive.

### 3. Work Site Tour / Introductions

- Smile and shake hands with all staff you meet and remember or write down names.
- Remember various departments and managers.
- Take notes and ask questions as you are toured around the workplace.

### 4. Ask Questions During Orientation – Some areas that will likely be covered:

- Job description and performance measurements
- Leadership hierarchy / organizational chart and who your direct supervisor is
- Work area and materials needed
- Company policies
- Human Resources / Administration processes
- Pay and source deductions (Income Tax, Canada Pension, Employment Insurance)
- Benefits (even though they may be discussed they do not normally come into effect until the probation period of 90 days has expired)
- Special needs based on your religion, i.e. time off for significant events or religious ceremonies / celebrations and quiet space for prayer
- Support and guidance that a workplace mentor / sponsor / buddy may provide



### As you prepare for your first day on the job, ask yourself the following questions:

- What are the values that my new employer will be looking for?
- How will I demonstrate those values?
- How will my performance on the job reflect those values?



To learn about BC, Canada and Canadian culture visit:

Discover Canada, The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship  
[www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/discover/index.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/discover/index.asp)

WelcomeBC  
[www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/communities/index.page?WT.svl=TopNav](http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/communities/index.page?WT.svl=TopNav)

**Affinity Group:** a group of people having a common interest or a goal or acting together for a specific purpose: e.g. The Society of Punjabi Engineers and Technologists of BC.  
[www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

## The Employee's First Week: Settling In

There's a lot to take in on the first day on any job, but the first week is just as important as those first few hours. Be sure to look over and review all your notes and any paperwork from the first day and prepare for the upcoming week. Many things need to be kept in mind during the first week and as you adjust and get to know the new organization, business, staff, customers, suppliers, products and services.

### 1. Create Strong First Impressions

- Continue to arrive early to prepare well for your day.
- Remain professional: adhere to the dress code of the workplace and try your best to engage in workplace-appropriate communication and interactions with your new colleagues.

### 2. Relationship Building

- Work to build a relationship with your mentor / sponsor / buddy, manager and team.
- Observe and be aware of the culture of your new workplace, dress code, attitude, relationships.
- Note that your colleagues may have differing cultures, beliefs and religions; work to develop an understanding and appreciation of these differences.
- Keep a positive outlook on things - employers tend to respond better to employees who bring solutions and ideas rather than complaints and problems.

### 3. Adding Value to the Company / Organization

- Review your job description to ensure you are on the right track.
- Produce early wins by achieving your work tasks thoroughly and efficiently; do more than the minimum required.
- Come up with a solution before seeking your supervisor's advice for dealing with any situation.
- Keep current in your field or occupation; make an effort to observe trends and link your knowledge to your new work.

### 4. Network Internally/Externally

- Work to develop a relationship with your supervisor and team.
- Join a networking or affinity group if one exists; some organizations have internal networking groups; there are also numerous occupational and professional organizations that you might register with.
- Participate in lunchroom and coffee break activities and conversations; a lot of information about the company, your industry and the work in general is shared at these times. Not only that, but the people you meet through work are often the people who become your friends.
- Network with people across departments.

### 5. Communication

- Identify your communication strengths and weaknesses in context of your new job, i.e. industry or technical language barriers and cultural differences.
- Research internal and external resources to improve your communication skills.
- Consider taking notes or writing down instructions; don't hesitate to clarify your work tasks.
- If you do not understand something, ask. Questions demonstrate your interest and enthusiasm.



## The Employee's First Month: Working towards Retention

The first week was without doubt a week of adjustment, discovery and learning. Over the next few weeks you will be able to build on that knowledge and make your future work experience more meaningful to you, your team, manager and the organization.

### 1. Throughout the Month

- Be prepared to receive feedback. In order to fully adjust to your new work environment, suggestions for improvement should be willingly accepted.
- Note areas of accomplishment and ask for feedback.
- Talk with your supervisor or mentor / sponsor / buddy about the work and / or improvements you believe can be made to the organization / company; your experience could benefit your new employer.

### 2. Communication

- Keep a positive relationship with your mentor / sponsor / buddy and your supervisor and initiate feedback.
- Continue to observe and adapt to Canadian communication and culture.
- If you are experiencing difficulties with English or workplace terminology, find help to improve through local courses or support provided by local immigrant serving or organizations.

### 3. Upgrading and Training

- Research courses to increase your skills in technical areas. Check with your mentor / sponsor / buddy or your supervisor to get their opinion.
- Research and identify the Canadian or provincial credentials, certificates or licences needed for further development.

### 4. Become Self Aware of Your Performance – Have You Met the Expectations of Canadian Employers?

Canadian employers are looking for:

- |                                 |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Communication Skills         | 6. Leadership Skills      |
| 2. Analytical Abilities         | 7. Cultural Awareness     |
| 3. Computer Proficiency         | 8. Organization Skills    |
| 4. Managing Multiple Priorities | 9. Problem Solving Skills |
| 5. Interpersonal Skills         | 10. Teamwork Skills       |

Adapted from Quintessential Careers – What Do Employers Really Want?  
[www.quintcareers.com/job\\_skills\\_values.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/job_skills_values.html)

### 5. Prepare for Future Performance Reviews / Discussions

- You will likely have a formal meeting or performance review just before the end of your three-month probationary period. This first month is a good time to set goals to increase your success.
- Keep a record of your activities and achievements that have helped the organization.
- Identify relationships that should be strengthened and initiate efforts to build them.
- Itemize your personal goals and include them in your goal setting.
- Propose strategies for business challenges and offer to act on an issue that has been neglected.
- Capitalizes on your strengths and bring value added approaches, profit-making suggestions, time saving or innovative solutions for your organization.



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1. Who Does What in Foreign Credential Recognition – An Overview of Credentialing Programs and Services in Canada  
[www.councils.org/uploadedFiles/Resources\\_and\\_Publications/Publications/TASC-FCR-Who-English.pdf?n=6221](http://www.councils.org/uploadedFiles/Resources_and_Publications/Publications/TASC-FCR-Who-English.pdf?n=6221)

2. International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES)  
[www.bcit.ca/ices](http://www.bcit.ca/ices)

3. WorkBC Licensing and Recognition:  
[www.workbc.ca/job\\_seekers/finding\\_employment/licensing\\_and\\_credential\\_recognition.htm](http://www.workbc.ca/job_seekers/finding_employment/licensing_and_credential_recognition.htm)

## The Employee's First Three Months: Establishing Success

In the early months of your new job, it is important you continue to show your desire and efforts to succeed in your work while at the same time advancing your knowledge, communication and skills. Consider the following to support your career development and potential advancement.

### 1. Enhancing Workplace Communication – Some areas to consider are:

- Discuss your new work culture and offer a comparison to the work culture of your native country.
- Improve language skills if needed; try including more technical language in conversations and ask for feedback.
- Look for opportunities to improve your communication and ability to network effectively; consider taking an English course or an evening class related to your work or just for pleasure; consider joining Toastmasters.
- Get familiar with topics relating to the workplace; take a course or join an external networking or industry group.

### 2. Utilize Management Skills / Develop Leadership Abilities

- Look for opportunities to be involved in working out a complex problem and offer details and knowledge with ideas for managing change, improvement or providing a business solution.
- Work to keep time lines and demonstrate time management.
- Volunteer / seek cross-departmental projects if it does not interfere with your responsibilities.
- Look to find other ways to become involved in your workplace, i.e. participate in extra-curricular activities, offer to become a part of a committee, be part of a charity fundraising event or assist to organize an event, etc.
- Connect externally with industry groups which will keep you connected to what's happening in the industry.

### 3. Exercise Conflict Resolutions / Negotiation

- Deal with conflict by remaining unemotional and communicating with clear and direct language.
- During discussions relating to areas of your expertise, use good sound reason to negotiate your position and always work towards a solution or plan of action.

### 4. Training Planning

- Get advice from mentors and supervisors regarding your short-term and mid-term development plans.
- Obtain an understanding of the jobs / occupations held within your company and where you might advance to.
- Develop a career plan that maps out next steps for credential recognition, training, obtaining any required certification, professional networking, joining industry associations, etc.
- Research internal and external courses and resources to support your plan.
- Talk with your supervisor about support for your plan. Financing, flexible scheduling or time off might be part of the discussion.

In addition, review all previous meeting notes, action items and areas of improvement brought to your attention by your sponsor / mentor / buddy and management. Be sure to take action and to demonstrate how you have worked on these areas and the improvements as a result of your efforts.

Be prepared for some type of "First Three Month" meeting with management or your supervisor. Be ready to discuss all aspects of your work, communication, attitude, accomplishments and challenges.

## Are You On Track?

Each organization has to determine which cultural diversity practices, steps and initiatives are best for its work environment. Do staff and management need training? Does the diversity of your organization reflect the diversity of your community? Are you tapping into local, national, and international markets? These questions and many others must be answered in context of your organization's plans and circumstances. However, as you embrace cultural diversity within your workplace, it can be useful to consider the steps others have taken, and reflect on how practices could be implemented or adapted within your organization.

Only you can determine if you are on track. The following checklist is provided as a summary of some of the key steps, suggestions and activities presented within this guide. Use it to assess your cultural diversity progress, and perhaps identify some of the next steps you would like to take.

	Planned?	In Progress?	In Place?
Have you developed a policy or included cultural diversity in the development of your mission and vision statements?			
Do your staff and management have an understanding of the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce?			
Does your organization have an understanding of the cultural make up of the communities your company serves?			
Do your staff and management have a sense of some common cultural differences that may be impacting understanding and communication?			
Has your staff and management accessed cross-cultural communication training?			
Do you have a plan for effectively orienting new immigrant employees?			
Do you provide a mentor / sponsor / buddy to ease workplace adjustment for each new immigrant hire?			
Do you have a plan for assisting your new immigrant employees to access language and other training?			
Have you assisted your new immigrant employees to develop a career plan and next steps for training and development?			
Have you reviewed your print and electronic company materials for "plain language" and to ensure that your staff and customers are graphically represented?			
Have you reviewed the cultural diversity related best practices of other companies? Have you considered becoming an "award" winner?			
Have you set up ways to "celebrate" diversity?			



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