CANADIAN
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
STUDY

Waterloo Wellington

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# Table of Contents

Summary .................................................................................................................. 2  
Background ........................................................................................................... 2  
Research Procedure ............................................................................................... 3  
**Phase I: Questionnaire to Employers**  
  Background ........................................................................................................ 4  
  Program Awareness ............................................................................................. 6  
  Integration Process ............................................................................................. 8  
  General Comments ............................................................................................ 13  
**Phase II: Employer Interviews**  
  Positive Feedback About Hiring Immigrants  
    Skills ................................................................................................................ 13  
    Work Ethic ........................................................................................................ 14  
    Other Advantages ............................................................................................. 14  
  Communication: The Biggest Challenge  
    Factors Which Determine Language Requirements ......................................... 14  
    Importance of Communication Level .............................................................. 15  
    Interpersonal Comprehension ......................................................................... 16  
    Overcoming Communication Challenges ....................................................... 16  
  Integration and Cultural Differences  
    Integration Time ................................................................................................ 17  
    Cultural Difficulties ......................................................................................... 18  
    Expectations ..................................................................................................... 18  
    Structure ........................................................................................................... 18  
    Authoritarianism .............................................................................................. 19  
    Shyness ............................................................................................................ 19  
    Intercultural Socialization ............................................................................... 20  
  Advice to Businesses  
    Training Immigrants ....................................................................................... 21  
    Advice to Employers from Employers ............................................................ 22  
  Advice to Immigrants  
    Get Involved ................................................................................................... 23  
    Sell Yourself! .................................................................................................... 24  
    Advice to Immigrants from Employers ............................................................ 25  
    Advice to Immigrants from Immigrants ........................................................... 25  
  Support Recommendations  
    Services for Immigrants .................................................................................. 26  
    Services for Companies .................................................................................... 27  
**Conclusions** ...................................................................................................... 27  
Appendix A ............................................................................................................. 29  
Appendix B ............................................................................................................. 30
Summary

There is concern that new Canadians (immigrants who have been in Canada less than 5 years) are not being adequately prepared to meet the social expectations of Canadian employers due to their differing native cultural perceptions of appropriate behaviour in corporate settings. The consequences of this range from unintentionally offending non-immigrant co-workers to feeling isolated within the company. A successful cultural adaptation affects an immigrant’s interpersonal skills, level of promotion, and social life. Due to clashing cultural differences between new Canadians and the Canadian organizational culture, it is important to find out how new Canadians or Canadian employers of immigrants, or both, can be better trained in ways to increase immigrant integration into the work setting. This research project surveyed and interviewed employers to find out their experiences with the integration process of new Canadian employees. The project also surveyed new Canadians who have passed the stage of integration in Canadian businesses. These interviews will help programs that work with immigrants to modify their training programs to equip new Canadians to make a smooth transition into the Canadian organizational culture. The information will also help organizations, and community support agencies to know where modifications and/or training may benefit organizations in creating an inclusive organizational culture.

Background

The increasing rate of immigration to Canada is an example of the importance that immigrants have in our society. Although immigration rates slowed down in the early 80’s due to an economic recession, demographic projections indicate that a shortage of labour will be created when the baby boomers retire. This will inhibit the Canadian economy from maintaining growth and stability. The generation of baby boomers will retire between 2006 and 2026. However, by 2026 projections predict that there will be fewer than three people between the ages of 20 to 64 for every senior citizen over 65 (Population Studies Center, University of Western Ontario, 2000). Based on the aging rate of the labour force, many believe that to avoid the population decline, immigration must increase. Canadian industries will become increasingly reliant on immigrants to maintain economic stability.

Statistics Canada produced a report that shows the labour force activity of the immigrant population by occupation between 1996-2001. The report showed that the majority of the immigrant population in Waterloo region was working in the processing and manufacturing industry as machine operators or assemblers. Other industries in Waterloo-Wellington that employed a lot of immigrants were Professional Occupations in Natural and Applied Sciences, Elemental Sales and Service Occupations, as well as Trades and Skilled Transport and Equipment Operators. Occupations where the fewest immigrants were employed included Labourers in Primary Industry, Senior Management Occupations, Professional Occupations in Art and Culture, as well as Trades Helpers, Construction Labourers, and Related Occupations. See data in Appendix A for details.
An important definition for this paper is the term “Canadian organizational culture.” This refers to the social and organizational norms in Canadian workplaces. For example, equal respect should be given to men, women and subordinate employees. Immigrants from one country may have trouble extending as many “please and thank yous” to women co-workers because in their organizational culture, the majority of women experience discrimination in both private and public sectors. The immigrant in this case may end up in serious trouble with his boss, or as an outcast among his co-workers because he was unaware of the power that a woman has to complain against him. If this immigrant had been informed of the consequences of sexism in Canadian organizational culture, he could have been conscious of his behaviour and avoided offending anyone. The opposite problem would be a professionally-trained woman from this culture who neither contributes ideas to the boss, nor makes professional requests of her male colleagues. In a Canadian company, employees who do not offer suggestions or exercise the authority given to them can appear inadequate and be turned down for promotion.

The field of immigrant cultural adaptation has been given very little attention by social workers and psychologists, as reflected in academic journals. However, solving this complex problem of integrating different cultures will become increasingly important in Canada over the next two decades. Action is necessary to bring these two groups into a better understanding of each other for:

♦ the development of sense of community in workplaces which are becoming increasingly multicultural
♦ the increase of economic productivity in Waterloo Region, as its industries are growing and becoming increasingly reliant on foreign-trained professionals to fill in the vacuum left by retiring baby boomers
♦ the welfare of new Canadians who may be unaware of Canadian organizational norms.

Research Procedure

Phase I

Questionnaires were sent to approximately 1,000 employers in Waterloo Region. This provided an overall understanding of the primary issues and was used to develop the personal interview questions. A response rate of 4.4% was achieved; therefore, 44 surveys were obtained to draw results from. See Appendix B to read the questionnaire.

Phase II

In this phase interviews were conducted that are experience-oriented (qualitative) and informal (semi-structured) with employers of new Canadians. Interview questions were formulated based on feedback from the initial questionnaire. The interviews with employers took place privately or over the phone, are confidential and interviewees will remain anonymous in this report. Each of the 18 employer interviews lasted 10-20 minutes, and their participation was voluntary. As well, about 20 new Canadians who are currently working in jobs were involved in this phase. They were asked about their experiences integrating into the Canadian workforce and what advice they would give to immigrants.
Phase I: Questionnaire To Employers  See Appendix B for list of questions

Background – The questions below provide information on the type of employers who responded.

What sector do you represent? (Question 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Response Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forestry, fishing, mining, oil and gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade (Retail/Wholesale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, scientific and technical services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information, culture and recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and food services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These questions showed that a high percentage of the respondents were from the manufacturing sector, followed by the field of professional, scientific and technical services. The third largest group to respond was “Other”. Employers in the “Other” category identified themselves as working in automotive repair, the military, regulatory boards, and several high tech firms.

How many employees do you have? (Question 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the second question, the majority of respondents indicated that they worked in companies that had 50-500 employees. The second biggest category of number of staff was the 20-50 range. Therefore, most of the companies that responded to the questionnaire were medium-sized companies.
Which adjective best describes your organizational culture? (Question 15)

![Organizational Culture Diagram]

Most of the companies described themselves as having a flexible organizational culture compared to the minority who believed their corporate culture was more accurately described as structured. This shows that new Canadians should be prepared to work in a range of workplace cultures, although most of the time they will find Canadian corporate culture to be flexible.

Which of the following positions have you hired immigrants for? (Question 8)

![Levels Employers Hire Immigrants For Diagram]

Of the businesses that hire immigrants, the most common levels were Entry and Technical/Trades. Mid-level and professional positions were the next most common. Very few businesses hire immigrants at the managerial level.

Which is the biggest factor preventing your company from offering services such as English training classes or workforce development/cultural orientation? (Question 20)

![Factors Preventing Support For Immigrants Diagram]
The highest factors that prevented employers from offering immigrant programs or services, such as ESL, included “No need” as well as time and money issues. Factors indicated by employers who chose “Other” included “being too small a company” and “the company or the community already offers these services.” In questions 18 and 19, the majority of respondents reported not having a diversity committee (81.8%). Of the companies that do not have a diversity committee, 84.8% felt their company would not benefit from one.

**Program Awareness** - The questions below showed the type of service programs for hiring and integrating immigrants the employers used, had heard about, or had never used.

Which of the following immigrant support services have you used or are aware of? (Question 3)

![Program Awareness Chart](chart.png)

The survey showed that most of the businesses had never heard of the community support services listed, except the New Canadian Program (NCP). The service the companies use most is NCP, yet 18% have never heard of it. The remaining services all had rates of use under 10%: YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Service (YMCA), the Multicultural Center (MC), Working For Work (WFW), Focus for Ethnic Women (FEW), the Working Center (WC), and Cambridge Settlement and Integration Services (CSIS). This shows that programs that offer free services to employers in Waterloo Region are greatly under-utilized.
Which of the following subsidy or work placement services have you used or are aware of? (Question 4)

The free services of work placement programs are also underused. The programs surveyed were Target Wage Subsidy (TWS), Skills Link (SL), Job Connect (JC), the New Canadian Program (NCP), Energy Pathways (EP), and Focus for Ethnic Women (FEW). The most commonly used service by far was New Canadian Program, which was followed at a distance by Job Connect, and Target Wage Subsidy. The ‘Never heard of’ rate was the most common for every program except the New Canadian Program and Job Connect.

Which of the following credential assessment services have you used or are aware of? (Question 5)

Only two respondents have ever used any of the credential assessment services listed on the survey. More than three quarters of businesses were unaware of credential assessment services.
Which of the following English language training services are you aware of? (Question 6)

Although communication was rated the most significant factor hindering integration, few are using the English language training programs offered in Waterloo Region. The most common provider of ESL to businesses are private providers, probably because they can cater their services to businesses’ needs. However, a third of the employers have never heard of any private services. None of the businesses interviewed have ever used K-W English School even though more than half had heard of it.

Integration Process – All but two of the respondents indicated that they have previously hired immigrants. In this section of the survey information is presented regarding the experiences employers have had with new Canadians.

Would lack of Canadian work experience alone stop you from hiring an immigrant? (Question 9)

The majority of businesses said that Canadian work experience was not required of people who apply for jobs in their company.
If yes, how much experience do you feel is required before you would consider hiring? (Question 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Canadian Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months – 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the 13 employers who said that a lack of Canadian work experience would prevent them from hiring an immigrant, 8 employers agreed that 6 months to a year would be sufficient experience, 4 believed new immigrants need 1-2 years experience before they hire them, and 1 respondent thought that under 6 months would do in order for him to hire an immigrant.

In your opinion, how long does it take an average employee to be productive, or take part in your team at your workplace? (Question 13 and 14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canadian Integration Time</th>
<th>Immigrant Integration Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One week</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One month</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than 3 months</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One week</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One month</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than 3 months</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most employers felt that it took the average Canadian and new Canadian employee one month to integrate himself or herself into the workplace enough to be productive. Overall, new Canadians were judged to take longer than Canadians to integrate. Most companies that have an average integration time of one week or one month found no difference between new immigrant and Canadian integration times. In order to show individual comparisons between integration times depending on the average integration time of a native Canadian at a company, a filter was added to the data in question 13 and 14. Below are the immigrant integration times according to the amount of time the company indicated its native-born Canadian employees take to integrate into the corporate culture. The charts show that none of the employers ever predicted that the integration time of new Canadians would be less than the predicted integration time of a native Canadian.
Breakdown of Question 13 and 14

**Immigrant Integration Times When Canadian Employees Take 1 Week**

- One week: 14%
- One month: 0%
- 3 months: 0%
- Longer than 3 months: 86%

**Immigrants Integration Time when Canadian Employees Take 1 Month**

- One week: 6%
- One month: 0%
- 3 months: 11%
- Longer than 3 months: 83%

When the average integration time for a Canadian is one week, a vast majority of the employers said that the immigrant integration time would be one week too.

When the average integration time for a Canadian is one month, most employers believed it would take the same amount of time for a new Canadian to integrate.

**Immigrant Integration Time When Canadian Employees Take 3 Months**

- One week: 10%
- One month: 0%
- 3 months: 46%
- Longer than 3 months: 54%

When the average integration time for a Canadian is three months, a slight majority of the employers said that immigrants would require more time to integrate.

If you have hired immigrants, have you experienced any difficulties in integrating them as new employees to your workplace? (Question 11)

**Employers Who Observed Difficulties**

- No: 78%
- Yes: 22%

The vast majority of respondents reported that they have never experienced difficulty integrating new Canadians at their workplaces.

If yes, were the difficulties related to: (Question 12)

**Responsible for Integration Difficulties**

- New employee: 22%
- Existing employees: 0%
- Both: 55%
Of the group of employers who indicated that they had experienced difficulties integrating new Canadians into the workplace, two respondents attributed the problems to the new employee. The other five employers saw the difficulty as a joint problem between existing employees and the new immigrant employee. None attributed the difficulties exclusively to their existing workforce. In the comments section of this question, respondents indicated that the problems they have encountered when hiring new Canadians are due to communication barriers when working with other staff or customers, or understanding manuals and instructions. Two of the nine comments indicated problems due to the culture change, including issues such as relations between men and women or personal hygiene.

In your experience with immigrants in your workplace, please rate how often you find the following statements true. (Question 17)

1. Immigrants are harder working than others.
2. Immigrants are more motivated to learn than others.
3. Immigrants have difficulty understanding instructions.
4. Immigrants do not communicate problems.
5. Immigrants do not ask questions.
6. Immigrants do not mix well with others.
7. Immigrants do not contribute suggestions.

When employers were asked to rate, based on their experiences, how true seven statements about immigrants’ productivity was, the majority chose the “Sometimes” range for every statement. This shows that employers experience a range of situations with immigrants, and there is no stereotype that new Canadians can fall under. The ratings for the two positively worded statements: “Immigrants are harder working than others” and “Immigrants are more motivated to learn than others” were high, which shows that in many cases employers feel immigrants have a better work ethic than Canadian employees.

The next three statements asked questions about communication difficulties with immigrants. They were “Immigrants have difficulty understanding instructions,” “Immigrants do not communicate problems,” and “Immigrants do not ask questions.” The vast majority believed these statements were true sometimes or frequently, but rarely always. This shows that
employers should prepare to encounter communication difficulties when hiring immigrants. About one third rated these statements to be frequently true.

The last two statements in the chart looked at social factors that may influence integration based on employer experiences. The statements were “Immigrants do not mix well with others” and “Immigrants do not contribute suggestions.” The survey showed that the general consensus is that these statements are sometimes true. There was also a general even balance between those who said the statements were never true and those who said they were frequently true, although the slight lean was on “Frequently” for both statements. None of the respondents answered “Always” true for either statement. This shows that there can be no set expectations regarding a new Canadian’s social integration, which may depend on factors such as their native culture, language ability and personality characteristics.

Which of the following reasons do you feel affects the ability of immigrants to effectively integrate into your workforce? (Choose all that apply) (Question 16)

The results of this question summarize the percentages of employers who encounter different issues with new Canadian hires. Unanimously, communication was the most common factor that affects the ability of immigrants to effectively integrate into business culture. The second and third most common factors were shyness and cultural differences. A quarter of the respondents reported that relations with co-workers hindered integration and that immigrants have a tendency not to socialize interculturally. Attitude, work ethic, and relationship with supervisors were chosen as hindrances by less than one fifth of the employers. The least significant factors chosen were manners and dress code deviations. The respondents who chose “Other” identified that staff misunderstanding new Canadian hires hindered their ability to integrate.
General Comments

Several respondents included comments and suggestions at the end of the survey. One employer stressed that, based on his experiences, “Immigrants make much better workers than second generation Canadians. They are more willing to pitch in and help when needed and do not have a ‘that isn’t my job’ attitude.” Another company said that our survey had been too general to group all new immigrants in one category since he or she found that the problems his or her company faces with immigrants depend on the immigrant’s nationality. The third comment made expressed a concern over sub-cultures forming from ethnic groups that tend to speak their native languages with each other at the workplace. As well, an employer commented, “The main difficulty we have found when hiring a new Canadian is that they have not been able to get ramped up fast enough. Not only are they learning the job itself, but also Canadian business culture, language skills, etc. [but that] when we have had the opportunity to offer a placement, it has worked out very well.”

Phase II: Employer Interviews

The employer interviews provided a lot of information which can help immigrants and employers. The interviews were roughly based on the following questions:

1. How many immigrants work at your company? What are the positive aspects of hiring them?

2. What are the challenges you have faced with new immigrant staff or when hiring immigrants? Did you experience any cultural differences in new Canadians’ behaviour? Did it affect their productivity?

3. How have you overcome these challenges? Do you think you were sufficiently prepared to overcome these challenges? What extra support would you recommend, if any? What advice do you have for businesses as they increase the number of immigrant employees?

4. What advice do you have for immigrants before they enter the Canadian workforce?

Positive Feedback About Hiring Immigrants

Skills

There are skills that some immigrants bring that employers are unable to find among Canadians. One employer admitted that her company “recruits employees from overseas or NCP because immigrants bring skills that we need.” Another employer who recruits locally often finds that immigrants are the best qualified. He says “When you sit down and talk to somebody you can understand pretty well what their capabilities and credentials are. I don’t need to see Canadian experience to recognize them as a valuable employee…I end up getting a very good deal because generally speaking they’ll have worked in five star restaurants, or hotels around the world whereas Canadians have only worked at Swiss Chalet or Subway down the road.” He explained that because of the positive image that Canada holds internationally, we attract the best-trained and experienced individuals. A comment was made that in addition to their training,
immigrants have brought “skills that maybe don’t relate to the job but are transferable, like being taught and susceptible to new ideas.”

Work Ethic

There was a consensus among the people interviewed that immigrants are hard-working, motivated employees. Specific work behaviour differed among cultural groups, but a common quality among immigrants was an ambition to succeed. Some employers attributed this to their courage to move to a new country. Some employers explained how the cultural difference works to the company’s advantage. For example, one employer had immigrant employees who “had to be told to go home. Their workday in those countries is much longer and expectations higher.” Human resource managers discussed the lower turnover rates and sick days among their immigrant employees. Comments were given such as, immigrants have a “willingness to work, willingness to do what is asked” and “I find them very driven, motivated and if you give them a chance to prove themselves, that is what I’ve seen…they perform enormously because they have to prove themselves here in Canada again.”

Other Advantages

One employer pointed out the financial benefits her small business has had with hiring immigrants: “If you are a small, growing company, you can get some really good skills and resources at a lower cost than perhaps bringing a Canadian in with the same experience. They are willing to take less to get their foot in the door.” In addition, she commented that small businesses especially rely on people to multitask and help out with whatever needs doing. She said that in her experience immigrants will “do anything. Nothing is beneath them if you know what I mean. They have very skilled, excellent educational background.”

Communication: The Biggest Challenge

Factors Which Determine Language Requirements

Every person interviewed said that language and communication problems are the biggest difficulty they face when hiring an immigrant. As one employer phrased it, “Language is the one flag. We want to utilize their skills. Everything else is quite manageable.” In this section, the factors that influence required language ability will be compared. The three main factors that determine the degree of language required by employers are task difficulty, autonomy, and labour market. Different employers have different degrees of leniency depending on factors such as multiculturalism in the business and selection policies.

The difficulty factor can be explained by comparing the perspective of an employer at an engineering design organization with an employer who hires general labourers. The employer who hires engineers says that employees “need to be fluent…there are no step by step manuals, it is design, so if there is a language barrier then it is hard to communicate a creative vision and explain what direction you want the person to go. In a packaging job where it is process-driven, where there are process instructions, steps to follow, it is much easier.” The manager who hires labourers commented that “There have never been any serious problems. We’ve always found
ways to communicate. We have guys who have worked here for 20 years and still don’t really know how to speak the language but it doesn’t affect their output/productivity… We have to adjust the training sometimes, but I’d be surprised if it took even an extra day.”

Language ability is also crucial in businesses where an employee must be able to do multiple jobs, such as a small business where an autonomous worker may be asked to help answer phones or relay messages. In labour jobs or trades where employees work autonomously, such as automotive mechanics, the employers did not stress communication difficulties to the same degree as employers in the high tech industry. In companies like this, employees are required to work on team projects, or need to reference each other on how to solve problems, or provide technical support to other departments. For example, a restaurant owner hires immigrants in the kitchen and as servers. He said “we have people in the (kitchen) and their language level was almost nothing, but boy oh boy are they great cooks!…Cooking has an international language. In the front of the house it is more difficult. If the person isn’t 100% comfortable with the language level then it is very difficult (for them) to serve the customer.”

Labour market trends, specifically skill sets available in the workforce, also play an important role in the level of English that businesses require. One engineering firm reported that “Language was the greatest hurdle. Four years ago we were much more accommodating of the language issue because we were so in need [of engineers]. Now I would say we are not as flexible, we have raised our standard as to the level of English that hires must speak. We just don’t have the time or necessity; it is just an expectation that you are going to be able to communicate at a technical level.”

Importance of Communication Level

In selection interviews, most jobs require every candidate, Canadian or immigrant, to be evaluated on their ability to communicate. Employers are especially careful with people who use English as their second language, and have just arrived in Canada. One employer comments, “They can have all the skills in the world but they don’t understand what we are asking, or they understand us perfectly well but can’t speak it and when working with our departments, acting as a liaison for technical support then [we won’t hire them].” Other employers also mentioned difficulty understanding the depth of job experience that immigrant job candidates have due to communication difficulties. As well, poor language abilities lower the status of positions that immigrants are hired into despite their training and experience. An employer comments that, “maybe their expectations are a little high coming [to Canada]. They think their language is better than it is, or they are not prepared to start at the bottom and work their way up [because of language barriers].”

The biggest factor influencing how quickly immigrants learn the language is how often they speak English outside of work. An employer observed, “If they didn’t speak English at home, [they] didn’t pick it up fast enough, and so we couldn’t have them answer the phone, and they couldn’t progress to other positions in the company.” Other factors that predict whether a candidate will improve his or her language quickly is the influence of English in their background. One employer explained, “It depends on where they are coming from. We have some guys from Europe and their text books and stuff are in English so they already have a base
of it, and it may not be very strong but they know they need English to get anywhere. I find a lot of [non-European] immigrants sitting, reading the paper in [their language], they are really struggling with the language. It is not about the education or their experience, it is a language thing.” Sometimes immigrants underestimate the importance of communication. An employer admitted that "if something is misunderstood there are serious consequences and may cost a tremendous amount of money." For example, a different employer explained that even general labourer employees must speak English well because "if there is an auditor that goes on to the floor we need our employees to be well-informed so that if an auditor asked “what are you doing?” they can readily answer. If we fail audit we won’t be in business very long."

**Interpersonal Comprehension**

The majority of employers agree that Canadian staffs have positive attitudes toward immigrant co-workers. Several employers stated that their staffs are patient towards new Canadians; they slow down or clarify their speech. Sometimes, however, this is not enough. Immigrants who don’t understand instructions or expectations or policies are often apprehensive about asking questions of their employers or their peers. An employer reported that “Sometimes we are in a meeting and they don’t understand so they sometimes make assumptions that misrepresent what was said.”

In contrast, Canadian staff members are sometimes confused by conversations with new immigrants. A human resources representative theorized that because her staff were engineers, "They are linear thinkers and are linear listeners too, so if they get off track with one word they don’t understand and you have someone with a very thick accent, and their grammar is convoluted, it is very hard for them to follow the conversation." One interviewee warned that, “The real issue is a fundamental concept between people that if you find that you communicate readily with an individual then you assume you’re the same intellect level. If there is a barrier because of communication style or accents then there is a misconception about intellect or qualifications...That is the issue that I face.” In organizations or departments with high immigrant to Canadian staff ratios, communication issues are less serious. An employer comments that "writing isn’t a problem because most [of the new Canadians we hire] are in IT and they’ve had so many new Canadians over the years...The IT managers have an easier time understanding...because they have [new Canadian] employees who they work with daily so they have the ear."

**Overcoming Communication Challenges**

The most common way employers handle low communication abilities is to screen applicants very carefully to ensure their language level suits the position requirements. However, employers also shared strategies they rely on for appealing candidates to learn English if they have low language ability but the right skills. One employer said that in this situation with an applicant from the New Canadian Program (NCP), he will normally phone his contact at NCP to discuss the person’s language abilities. If the two agree that the communication level required could be achieved then he said that he “sits with the candidate and asks them what they can do to improve it, go on a certain course...with one of the candidates I spoke with, they joined a social club in the evening to chat with others twice a week.”
Employers find that the success of English lessons or improvement techniques depends on the individual and their motivation and exposure to the language. One employer found on-site ESL classes very helpful for her employees. She said it “really helped us to keep the immigrants we have now.” However, another employer confessed that her company has “tried ESL classes without much success, I must say. [The teacher] came here, this was a few years ago, and we had a Chinese immigrant and a Russian immigrant in the class, and I don’t know if the amount of interaction just wasn’t sufficient or the topics just weren’t right, I don’t know. It kind of went on for six months and then the people came to us and said ‘do we have to do this anymore?’ So we said ‘No, we’re not trying to torture you here!’” Another employer found the same lack of progress in the internal English program developed at her company. She said, “We had an ESL program tutor, English classes three times a week, it was quite fine in terms of having a conversation in the cafeteria you know, ‘how was your week?’ But on the technical level we very much struggled with language barriers.”

Companies have been creative in the ways they ensure comprehension. One employer said that he’ll call his wife to help translate, or translate through a fluent relative of the employee. A larger company put together a translator list of all their employees who speak different languages to use whether if is to help another employee communicate or understand or to deal with a customer. Employers who have many employees of the same ethnicity have an easier time overcoming communication problems because as one employer puts it, “We get somebody whose English skills are fairly good, solid…and then the next person can be a little less solid because we have someone who can be the translator.”

Integration and Cultural Differences

Integration Time

Although employers shared many experiences and observations regarding the difference in the time it takes a new immigrant to integrate into the corporate culture compared to a Canadian hire, on the whole these have far less impact on their hiring decisions than communication difficulties. One employer explained, “Relationally, 99% of immigrants exceed. It is their ambition to exceed.” Only two employers expressed a leeriness to hire immigrants based on cultural differences or integration time. One said, "Unfortunately, we don’t have the time to train people after we hire them. They have to hit the ground running. There is no differentiation there. With people in North America it is much easier to determine if they are going to have reasonable success than when dealing with immigrants." Most employers either didn't think it took less time to train immigrants or didn't mind taking extra time working with immigrants. One employer observed that, "Immigrants really need structure, but our working environment is really informal. Sometimes I can tell a local Canadian something and they will find a way to do it, but immigrants normally require specific instruction. That is really OK because they are new to the environment so therefore for the first few months I have to really lay out structured plans on what to do in case of this and that. So it takes them a little longer to understand the way we do things...therefore I need to pay special attention to them in the first month or two. After that they understand all and feel comfortable."
Cultural Difficulties

Canada is a country with a lot of cultural diversity. This is helpful when new immigrants are learning about corporate culture because people understand and are patient when explaining appropriate compared to inappropriate behaviour. There were several stories about ways an immigrant’s native culture clashed with Canadian corporate culture but they were not common circumstances. It depends on countries and individuals. For the most part, difficulties were minimal, and no more common than interpersonal difficulties between Canadian staff. Misunderstanding can happen by Canadians too. For example, an employer recalls a situation where "because the immigrant doesn’t speak up a lot, others may assume that the immigrant is not approachable."

Expectations

Most employers didn't find a significant difference in the time it takes them to be productive compared to Canadian hires, and some employers could not distinguish integration times based on the native culture of the immigrant. Most, however, did feel that integration times depended on the business culture of the country the immigrant came from. For example, a human resources manager told a story about an employee her company hired who was "appalled by our hospitality because when he came in the morning we told him to help himself to the juices and everything that was back there...we found out that where he came from we should have asked him the first time, he would say 'Oh, no, no I’m not hungry,' because it is rude to arrive somewhere hungry, and then (a host should have) asked him again ten minutes later and then offered him the beverage, so there was this whole list of things he was waiting for, where we thought we were being really hospitable, and in his mind we weren’t." The employer who told this story said that she and the new Canadian laughed about the situation afterwards because she explained that “We don’t even serve coffee to the president!” Her perspective was very healthy towards hiring new Canadians. She advises “Just accept each other - not all Canadians are the same all across the map… I think it enriches things.” None of the other interviewees mentioned any hospitality or politeness misunderstandings like this.

Structure

More often employers talked about how they would often have to coach people into understanding common qualities of Canadian corporate culture, such as flexibility, teamwork and openness. For example, a software company shared that in its workplace "someone will stand up and visit someone else’s cube and they will talk about the solution and their work, and tricks, whatever they need to get to the next step. And some of the new Canadians would prefer that there was a more formal way to do that, say we were to have a meeting everyday at 2:00. Whereas, from our point of view why have a meeting everyday if you don’t need help at 2:00, why not go to someone at 10 and at 4:00?" Many employers shared comments such as this one: "We have to explain and remind [new Canadians about] the open door policy and sometimes it takes them a very long time to understand it."

Teamwork is a prominent value to most Canadian companies, but depending on the country a person comes from, this concept may take time to grasp. An employer commented,
“I’ve noticed differences within different ethnic communities…I find sometimes it is harder for them to buy into the team idea.” Another employer offered the following explanation based on his experiences with immigrants, "A lot of [new Canadians] come from countries where things are very, very regimented…Like, don’t talk to your boss’s boss unless you go through your boss. Well, here it is a much more open attitude." One employer shared that her company used to struggle with getting new Canadians to think creatively. She explained that she thinks that this “is just reflective of where they have come from, where things are very regimented and you are encouraged to be very law-abiding and stay within the rules. So we have done some creative problem-solving sessions just to encourage that.”

**Authoritarianism**

Some points raised by employers included: discrimination against women, taking criticism and teamwork. One employer confided that she has dealt with a situation where people were hired from a country where the norms on treatment of women were lower than they are here. She said that she overcame this by having “extra conversations to make them be aware of the fact that they have to be polite and attentive, and tell them that some of the women employees feel that you are being disrespectful, and that their opinion isn’t valued.”

Understanding the Canadian corporate culture of teamwork takes a bit of time for immigrants, depending on their cultural background. One employer commented “We’ve only had one problem with culture, which is that a manager who was an immigrant acted in a very abrupt way with employees.” Another employer observed that an immigrant he hired “doesn’t take well to [criticism] unless it is from a manager. I can tell you that [many people we’ve hired from a certain country] are not as willing to take positive feedback or criticism. Part of that is just part of their culture.” An example given by a human resource manager described a common scenario, “if, say, they needed something from someone or let’s say another department, the training in their culture is to go up to that person and say ‘I need it,’ basically ‘you have to give it to me’. Whereas in our environment we are much more collaborative. We try to get people to work with [us] rather than taking the authoritarian look.” Another example was given from a customer service perspective: “The [new Canadian] may need to collect money, and their approach might be ‘oh, you owe us money and you need to pay by this date.’ Whereas our approach is ‘how can we work with you to help you to pay.’”

**Shyness**

There were mixed feelings concerning whether the average immigrant was more or less shy than a Canadian employee. One employer reported that new immigrants “tend to be more proactive in questioning, asking questions about new things. Not only questions about technical things but about their new environment. Our company is really, really multicultural, the majority are immigrants.” However, most agreed that immigrants take time to “come out of their shell.” The majority of employers have lower ratios of immigrants to Canadian staff and have more difficulty with immigrants being shy. One employer told us that one of his new Canadian employees “has worked here for about six years and it is only now that he is becoming more social with people in the shop.” Another employer commented that “Asian culture in particular is really quite shy. They almost at times treat us like we’re up here, you know, ‘thank you
(bowing) thank you!,’ overly apologetic...Highly intelligent, but very soft-spoken and shy.” This employer explained that the departments have to prompt them to comment when they feel in opposition to something, rather than accepting the norm.

Another employer said, “Sometimes I can tell from the look in their eyes, ‘I know you don’t know what I’ve asked you to do, so just ask me!’” Other employers are more frustrated with the shyness they have observed in some of their staff. One commented that the “new Canadians we’ve hired tended to be timid and not wanted to contribute anything that would either help the product that we have or the job itself, like tools or something that they needed. They tend to wait for someone to bring it up or their boss to initiate it…For example, we had someone with a PhD in (very specialized field) yet we never knew exactly what he could bring to the table. I mean, we could imagine the amount of knowledge that he must’ve had but he would never bring anything up in meetings. It took a lot of probing, you know ‘what else do you think?’”

*Intercultural Socialization*

There were no reports of Canadians excluding immigrants, “If they do their job with competency they are well respected. If they’re not, they are not and that doesn’t change between race, creed or colour.” However, most employers mentioned that immigrants tended to segregate themselves. One human resources manager outlined his concerns about the tendency for immigrants to socialize within their own ethnic groups with these comments, “One of the challenges I face is when I go to the other building (shop) you see all of the 9 people from one ethnicity sitting together, all the (people from another ethnicity) sitting together, and I understand why, you know, like when you move to a city, you go to something that is familiar, but one of my jobs…is to try to have our employees mix together a little more, some of the cliques are not healthy for our organization for a number of reasons. I’m not saying we can’t have it or everyone has to be separated. Sometimes it runs counter to the team idea that we want to foster here, and it is not individual teams, it is one team.”

Another example of this common scenario was told by an employer who observed that when her company had “one ethnic person they ate lunch with everyone, when there are two people (from a minority ethnicity) they don’t. So we have had to reintegrate them back to the group to make sure that people will sit at the table with them, and invite them to eat with them, you know, without totally invading their privacy everyday, just to work on the segregation thing a little better.” An employer at a high tech firm said that her company “tried to do sensitivity training like, ‘When you are sitting in the cafeteria all speaking the same language that is separating yourself from your team and from the organization.’ So from their perspective they are comfortable. It is a stress reliever, but to others it is like ‘what are they talking about?’ Are they talking about us?” However, she found that it was not as effective as talking to individuals confidentially.

One employer shared that he did not believe that the segregation issue was entirely the immigrants’ responsibility. He believed that previous administrations did a poor job mixing up employees of different ethnicities. He believes that to help immigrants integrate and prevent cliques, “We need to get people excited about what we are making…we need to have them have
ownership of that job. Be proud of it…see how they work into the picture of the entire company…We’re going to mesh the workers together because if you work side-by-side with someone you are going to get to know them.”

A less common experience was told by an employer who had employees from two countries that didn’t get along. She said it was a surprise for her because Canadians are sheltered from a lot of the political and historic conflicts between nations. She explained that “we are working through that (and) helping them to recognize each other as individuals instead of as a collective and that, um, at the moment they don’t have to work together in the same team but we have let them know that that would be an expectation.”

Advice to Businesses

Training Immigrants

Most culture training is done informally, telling employees (immigrant or not) what to expect, and expectations the company has for them. An employer shared that through the process of discussing what the immigrant expects compared to what the company expects cultural and communication difficulties are overcome. One immigrant recalled that the social activities at his company really helped him with his communication skills and integration.

An employer observed that “new Canadians want to know what is expected of them and then they will work really hard to live up to those expectations. So being really clear and instructional with your expectations and values.” Regular performance reviews can greatly help employees. According to the interviewees, the most effective way to approach an issue with any employee is talking to them one-on-one. An employer added that, “If you hide in the company values, especially when English is not their first language, they miss the point.”

When employers were asked how they overcome challenges of integrating employees, they commonly mentioned buddy system tactics. One employer said that, “once someone works here they get a buddy and eat lunch with them, you know, show them the ropes, work beside them, build a rapport with, that is something that works for us.” Another advocate of the buddy system said that this mentoring technique is important “so that once training is over it is not like that’s it. They’ll have someone who they can go to who is dedicated to helping them understand, either a person who has the same background or a person who can take time as needed. Training is usually a week or up to ninety days and after it they seem to be confused as to who to go to.”

There are a few different strategies that employers use to deal with communication or cultural issues in their workplaces. Some companies have asked a few employees to enroll in language classes. A couple of others have provided in-house ESL programs. One company provided external and internal ESL training. One company explained that each employee is reimbursed $750.00 annually for courses they attend to upgrade their skills. This may be used on English lessons, or to upgrade their foreign degrees to meet Canadian standards. One employer said that his company has tests to ensure that they are not hiring an immigrant below his education or experience level to ensure immigrants “are on the same playing field.” Another
employer explains that “to compensate for low communication levels [during training] we just back up, slow down, do what we have to do, adjust the speed.”

Advice to Employers from Employers

♦ “If you are going to have a multicultural organization you need to talk to [current employees] about what it is like to be a new hire. I think it is common sense.”

♦ “We had a multicultural festival a few years ago which helped staff understand that there were a lot of different cultures in the company.”

♦ “The people who come to this country are some of the best trained in the world and the fact that we are hung up ‘where did you work in Canada?’ …I think that really investigating instead of discrediting someone because they haven’t worked in Canada (is important)…Some of the best employees we’ve had are people we’ve given a chance to. Immigration is the future. If we think we don’t need it we are fooling ourselves that we are going to be prosperous.”

♦ “You have to be patient with them. If you don’t have this the thing could get worse. The employee will be underestimated.”

♦ “Coming from my own experience (traveling), there is nothing worse than feeling like your inability to understand is causing people stress or frustration or anger. We try our best to understand them.”

♦ “Part of our challenge is to know their skills. Today I met a lady on the shop floor who was a dentist (where she used to live). I’m not saying she is going to be a company dentist, but obviously she is bright, she is coachable, she is willing to learn. From my perspective we need to know their skills. My advice to employers is be involved.”

♦ “We are in a world economy, so hire people who can give you an edge in another part of the world!”

♦ “What we normally do is do a two-week work placement to see if the person is motivated and fits in the group. This exercise does not cost a lot. There is not a lot to get approved in your organization. My experience is that we get a very good candidate out of it. In all cases better than from the market, because they are so extremely driven to make a success. I think that 90% of the people who we have given work placements to eventually got a job in our organization. I did an interview (but the candidate) was not a person who came to the front. He was vague, a little bit of problems with the language. I didn’t have the right feeling about it…..so I said, let’s do a two-week work placement and let him surprise me, which he did. I gave him the job offer and he is still doing a great job. He is one of the best people on my team at this moment.”
Agencies have to keep communicating with employers. Ninety-nine percent of the time I can get [translation] done for free. The resources available today are phenomenal compared to ten, fifteen years ago.

“For people who haven’t hired immigrants yet, the services are free. Some of the services that the government offers, for example, the New Canadian Program, all the resumes are posted on the website and the employer just has to find a match, call them directly or NCP and get them to come in. And there is often a subsidy for hiring them because of their learning curve, and then you have a great, fully qualified candidate and you haven’t had a recruiter fee, and in fact you get a subsidy for it. I think that’s a major thing that employers who haven’t used your service don’t know.”

Advice to Immigrants

Get Involved

Some employers found that new immigrants were not very involved in the social get-togethers. However, these are good times to build friendships, learn English, and perhaps help them get promotions. One employer advises, “Don’t be afraid. Develop a quick relationship with your boss, manager, human resources, share what you are thinking, don’t keep it in! In a small organization like ours, we are always multitasking, whatever talents people can bring to the table, it would help with peoples’ careers and [attain] opportunities that they really want to go after.” Another employer recalled a situation where an immigrant was overqualified for the job he was in but his language skills were too low for the employer to promote him. When his contract was up for the season, he dismissed the advice of his employer to take English classes over the two-month break. When he reapplied for the job, the employer had found someone with better language skills. The employer who shared this story said that the immigrant “didn’t realize that if he picked up English better, then we could use him elsewhere, we could move him up the ladder.”

Another common piece of advice from employers is do not speak your native language in the work environment. Doing this will affect your ability to learn the language, receive promotions, relate to Canadian coworkers, and help other new Canadians learn English. An employer comments on this saying that when immigrants form cliques by speaking their own language, “Then they find that comfort zone and they don’t really go outside that population within the organization. So they don’t really interact with anyone else…They work with them on their job, and there aren’t any issues with that, but socially I find that they don’t venture too far out.” When this employer was asked, “How does this segregation affect an immigrant’s productivity?” she answered, “It limits them to just what their job is. They won’t tend to go out more than that or bring up ideas, or suggestions or questions. They will just attend to their job and that’s it until they feel more comfortable with this company or they know who to go to, or they get over that fear that they aren’t going to be understood. It just tends to limit them.”

One employer stated that the agencies that help foreigners before they immigrated to Canada should make sure immigrants are thoroughly involved in understanding everything they possibly can about: their language level compared to what is expected; whether their
qualifications meet Canadian expectations; how Canadians find jobs; etc. She explained that although most regulatory boards do not recommend using outside agencies to confirm whether an immigrant’s credentials meet regulatory board standards, some regulatory boards are developing self-evaluations of whether the course material they have studied compares to Canadian standards. This employer said, “Individuals new to Canada are very unaware of strategies to find jobs in Canada. It may be because where they are coming from the whole system of finding work was different. Individuals need to know they will not be assigned a job when they get here. We have a free market system. You have to compete for every job, you have to take control of your own career, you have to find ways and means of locating these jobs through your own abilities and connections…making this information available might make immigrants less frustrated because the perception is they are not finding work because they are new to Canada but people born, raised and educated here often have the same difficulty. It is based on that open market economy.”

**Sell Yourself!**

Employers commonly reported that new immigrants seemed to have difficulty relating in the right way to the employer in a selection interview. They really have to be active participants in the interview process. One employer said that more than once she has interviewed new immigrants and “barely got five words out of them!” The concept of marketing personal talents and qualifications is foreign to many new Canadians. An employer said, “It is amazing for me to learn that sometimes they will graduate and be given a piece of paper telling them what job they are going to show up at, where here, as you know, we have to compete for jobs!” Learning English and effective communication was the main piece of advice from every employer: find ways to practice your language skills. An employer said, “On paper we will find that someone is fantastic but when we interview them they just don’t have the ability to articulate or sell themselves.”

An important aspect of Canadian organizational culture is extroversion. Tips on how to practice extroversion include: boldly introducing yourself; communicating your thoughts and suggestions for improvement; etc. An employer commented that extroverts “have it a lot easier…[shy people] are very hard to train…Individuals who are too timid need to show more confidence because certainly their technical abilities are up to par with anyone from Canada, but they are not showing salesmanship for it, so their ideas may be seen as not suitable, at least as good, if not superior because they aren’t selling it.”

It would be wise for any applicant to act on the words of the employer who made this comment, “Make yourself visible. In an interview, make sure you show a positive image and that you are motivated and driven. Those are the things I’m looking for. If a person comes in here and doesn’t present him or herself, then you don’t know what you are going to get…You need to sell yourself, and if you are new to Canada, I think you need to be able to do that even a little bit more. Especially if the language is not good. So go to an interview, and sell yourself, show your motivation!”
Advice to Immigrants from Employers

♦ “I’m going to say that the barrier is not that you are from a different country; it is that they speak a different language. You need to be fluent, you can have an accent. Canadians are very understanding when communicating, but you have to be able to more than just have a conversation and be understood. You need to speak English at a professional level.”

♦ “With communication I can’t stress it enough…if that is the language of the country it is an expectation, you have got to have it.”

♦ “[Integrating] is all about watching and not being afraid to ask questions about what is appropriate, what they can copy and what is not so good.”

♦ “I think there was a sense that you need to have Canadian experience for it to be relevant but I don’t think that is really the case. If your degree is there, your work experience is there, you can come to an interview and there is a way for us to determine if you have that knowledge or not.”

♦ “Immigrants need to know that they are not alone and need to seek help. Most come here from upper society and when they get here they feel slapped in the face because they are struggling. They need to understand the free market system produces dips and sags and my advice to those wanting to come would be: research, research, research! --the location, job market, expectations, support services.”

♦ “They are at a disadvantage because they don’t have a network set up being new to the country so their focus should be networking – building a system of connections. They need to be aware of the fact that it is not easy for anyone in this country to find work in their own career. If you are at management level it may take six months to a year to find work at that level, higher up it could be two years or more.”

♦ “I think that people have to be very aware of how they are perceived when they are with others and spend more time and energy making adjustments from that perspective.”

Advice to Immigrants from Immigrants

Immigrants who have already integrated into the Canadian business culture gave advice that they would pass on to new immigrants. However, the feedback they provided was consistent with the advice and information about the integration process that employers had previously mentioned. Here were some of the comments they made:

♦ “My advice is ‘learn, learn, learn’ as much and as fast as you can. Know your values and strengths. Get to know the potential employer before first initial contact. Learn how to sell yourself.”

♦ “The support that I had from the supervisor in the previous job I had was crucial to my adaptation. He was very skilled and he always had time to support me in accomplishing (or
better understanding) my tasks….The problem I had was that there were too many different technologies used, so I had to go through a significant learning curve in a very short time.”

• “In my opinion, the immigrants that don’t fit easily into the labour market follow the same pattern: they are not prepared to change and adapt fast enough (or change at all).”

• “I don’t think employers should be obligated to treat new immigrants any different than all other employees…the preparation process should take place before, outside the workplace.”

• “Be flexible, watch out for pride that says my education and country is best.”

• “Be prepared to start over…pay attention to detail.”

• “Be open and understand that if you find it difficult to understand others’ culture, they are also having a hard time trying to understand yours.”

• “At the beginning I was having lunch at my desk everyday in order to save time to work more. But then I realized that I should go and have lunch in the kitchen, so I can meet more people, talk to them about different things, not only work but maybe make some friends…don’t just send emails, go to the colleague’s desk, talk to him in person, ask him about his children in the picture, everybody loves that.”

• “Co-workers should feel comfortable with the way we work. Important things to be taken care of are personal hygiene, controlling body odours and maintaining a (positive) outlook…Try to observe the surroundings and adapt to them as this is the most important thing.”

• “You can always go to the human resources person and take their advice regarding conducting yourself at the workplace…ask for their opinion instead of acting on your own.”

Support Recommendations

Services For Immigrants

Generally, employers believe that immigrants are sufficiently prepared to enter the workforce, as long as their language ability is professional enough. Language support services recommended that immigrants need to focus on speaking and understanding English because their writing abilities are either pretty good or easily overcome with translation programs. Many employers agreed with the statement, “If the language is good enough, that is all that is important.”

The second most common recommendation was assistance for immigrants in being able to sell and market themselves in the interview. One employer commented, “We have lots of people who look great on paper and when we bring them in we just can’t get the information out of them. They are not selling themselves, they are not able to articulate their strengths and why we should hire them, you know, their success in the past and that type of thing.” Some cultural
recommendations were given as well. An employer suggested that support agencies could help immigrants to compare “the differences between where the individual is coming from, maybe communication style, maybe dress code, maybe interpersonal relations or reactions in the workforce” to the norms in the Canadian business culture.

Services for Companies

Most companies felt that they do not require more support from outside agencies. A couple of employers mentioned wanting hiring services, like the New Canadian Program. One employer said that outside support is important, “especially for small businesses. They need resources to hire and integrate (immigrants). A placement agency, referral service, work placement...something more than that. Somewhere for an employer to go, tell their needs and be connected to, in this case, the right immigrant.” A couple of employers thought it would be beneficial to educate businesses on different interview techniques that would help them interview immigrants, “because there are probably a lot of cultural things there that we might not have full knowledge or understanding of.”

Several employers also mentioned wanting help to ensure that an immigrant’s qualifications matched Canadian standards. Another employer mentioned that there is “a lot of invalid information being put on résumés, and when we go and research it, it is very hard to. You find out it takes a very long time to go through a third party; it is not the cost, it is just time. It would be really, really great if applicants were precertified.” Another employer recalled a frustrating example having immigrants say “they’ve got a masters of wire stripping from the university of [wherever] but I don’t know what that means. It is essential for them to say I have Canadian equivalency and have been classified in controls engineer. I’ve interviewed people who you read their university credentials and when we get right down to it they are a low-level electrician. And it is just because of what things are called in different countries. When we refer to an engineer we generally refer to someone who is a professional and has an engineering degree. That is not the same in many other countries. They may call someone an engineer who is an electrician and has two years at a college.”

When one employer was asked to suggest ways agencies could support companies she replied, “I’m a huge believer in education, I’m not saying committees, because some companies can be ‘committed’ to death. I love how…in our company newsletter having a feature like ‘did you know that…’ something about multiculturalism and people can say oh, isn’t that interesting. Helps them understand, appreciate.” Another employer commented that, “Companies need help with communication training, etc., especially companies that have such a diverse workforce.” One large company suggested that agencies could provide training for how Human Resources can train their managers to deal with immigrants. She suggested that information could be given “about how diverse we are and the importance of diversity.”

Conclusions

The questionnaire results showed that there is a significant lack of awareness and usage of local programs and services that can support businesses in overcoming obstacles they encounter as they hire more and more foreign trained professionals. Employers gave a lot of
positive feedback about their experiences with immigrants regarding qualities such as their skills, work ethic, and motivation. In the interviews, employers from a variety of industries and sizes of company commented on these qualities as well.

Most of the employers surveyed did not report experiencing difficulties integrating immigrants into their workforce; however, several general characteristics of immigrants were identified that employers reported as hindrances in how well a new Canadian integrates, or compares to the productivity of native Canadian employees. These factors include: social and cultural issues at their workplace as a result of hiring people from different ethnicities. Few of them saw the problems as very serious, with the exception of language and communication issues. Some of the other challenges identified included: slightly higher integration times; cultural differences; shyness; as well as having to learn the new cultural norms, such as informality, flexibility, open door policies, and collaborative qualities which characterize most Canadian businesses. Large companies were frustrated at how different ethnic groups form exclusive social groups. This was primarily attributed to people speaking their native languages in the workplace.

Communication problems were the most difficult issue any business reported facing. This factor was identified by all of the businesses; however, its level of seriousness depended on factors such as the degree of multiculturalism at the workplace and the immigrant’s interaction level with other employees. The issues employers reported surrounding communication difficulties include difficulties understanding instructions and concepts, and being understood by coworkers and customers due to poor pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary. As well, most employers expressed a high level of frustration due to new Canadian employees not asking for clarification when they don’t understand and not offering suggestions or giving input despite being highly qualified.

Most businesses interviewed reported not requiring outside support. Some suggestions for support programs that were given were reported as being ineffective by other businesses. The effectiveness of a support service for an immigrant seems to depend on the immigrant’s investment in becoming a better employee.
### Table 33

**Waterloo-Wellington Training and Adjustment Board**

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<th>Occupation Major Group</th>
<th>Total Labour Force Activity</th>
<th>in the Labour Force</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Not in the Labour Force</th>
<th>Participation Rate %</th>
<th>Employment Rate %</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate %</th>
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<td>75</td>
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<td>Professional Occupations in Social Sciences, Education, Govt Services and Religion</td>
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<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
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<td>Professional Occupations in Art and Culture</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Technical And Skilled Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>81</td>
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<td>700</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>Traders And Skilled Transport and Equipment Operators</td>
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<td>750</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<td>Skilled Occupations in Primary Industry</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processing, Manufacturing And Utilities Supervisors and Skilled Operators</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processing And Manufacturing Machine Operators and Assemblers</td>
<td>1,810</td>
<td>1,445</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>92</td>
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<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers in Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total - All Occupations</td>
<td>13,970</td>
<td>9,910</td>
<td>7,840</td>
<td>1,270</td>
<td>4,665</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>56</td>
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Source: Statistics Canada 2001 Census, Special Tabulations.

Notes: Totals may not exactly equal the sum of their components due to rounding.

Occupational major groups based on the 2001 NDC - HRD Canada.
Appendix B

Organizational Culture Study for Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge.

For the purposes of this study, “immigrants” are defined as persons who are in Canada under 3 years.

1. What sector do you represent?
   - Agriculture
   - Forestry, fishing, mining, oil and gas
   - Utilities
   - Construction
   - Manufacturing
   - Trade (Retail/Wholesale)
   - Transportation and Warehousing
   - Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing
   - Professional, scientific and technical services
   - Business, building and other support services
   - Educational services
   - Health care and social assistance
   - Information, culture and recreation
   - Accommodation and food services
   - Public administration
   - Other ___

2. Number of employees:
   - Under 20
   - 20 – 50
   - 50 – 500
   - 500+

3. Which of the following immigrant support services have you used, or are aware of?

   Used     Heard of        Never Heard of
   
   YMCA Cross-Cultural & Community Center
   New Canadian Program
   Multicultural Center
   Working For Work
   Focus for Ethnic Women
   Working Center
   Cambridge Settlement and Integration Services
   Region of Waterloo –Employment Options, Ontario Works

4. Which of the following subsidy or work placement programs have you used, or are aware of?

   Used     Heard of        Never Heard of
   
   Targeted Wage Subsidy
   Skills Link
5. Which of the following credential assessment services have you used, or are aware of?
   - World Education Services (WES) Used Heard of Never Heard of
   - Academic Credentials Evaluation Service (ACES - York U.)
   - International Credential Assessment Service (ICAS)
   - Ontario Comparative Education Service (OCES - U of T)

6. Which of the following English language training services are you aware of?
   - K-W English School Used Heard of Never Heard of
   - St. Louis Adult Learning Center
   - Conestoga College
   - University of Waterloo
   - Cambridge English school
   - Private Providers

7. Have you hired immigrants in the past?
   Yes No

8. If yes, which of the following positions have you hired for:
   - Entry level
   - Mid-level
   - Technical/trades
   - Professional
   - Managerial

9. Would lack of Canadian work experience alone stop you from hiring an immigrant?
   Yes No

10. If yes, how much experience do you feel is required before you would consider hiring?
    - 0-6 months
    - 6 months – 1 year
    - 1-2 years

11. If you have hired immigrants, have you experienced any difficulties in integrating them as new employees to your workplace?
    Yes No

12. If yes, were the difficulties related to
    - New Employee?
    - Existing Employees?
    - Both?
    Please describe in detail:
13. In your opinion, how long does it take an average employee to be productive, or take part in your team at your workplace?
   - One week
   - One month
   - 3 months
   - Longer than 3 months

14. In your opinion, how long does it take an immigrant to be productive, or take part in your team at your workplace?
   - One week
   - One month
   - 3 months
   - Longer than 3 months

15. Which adjective best describes your organizational culture?
   - Flexible
   - Structured
   - Other. Please Explain:__________

16. Which of the following reasons do you feel affects the ability of immigrants to effectively integrate into your workforce. Choose all that apply:
   - Communication Skills
   - Dress Code deviations
   - Shyness
   - Cultural differences
   - Tendancy not to socialize interculturally
   - Attitude
   - Manners
   - Relationships with supervisor
   - Relations with co-workers
   - Work ethic
   - Other, Please explain:__________

17. In your experience with immigrants in your workplace, please rate how often you find the following statements true?
   - Never  Sometimes   Frequently    Always

   Immigrants are harder working than others
   Immigrants are more motivated to learn than others
   Immigrants have difficulty understanding instructions
   Immigrants do not communicate problems
   Immigrants do not ask questions
   Immigrants do not mix well with others
   Immigrants do not contribute suggestions
18. Do you currently have a Diversity Committee or designated staff?
   Yes   No

19. If no, do you feel a Diversity Committee would benefit your organization?
   Yes   No

20. Which is the biggest factor preventing your company from offering services such as English training classes or workforce development/cultural orientation?
    Time  Money  Resources  No need  Other. Please explain.

21. Comments and/or Additional Comments and Suggestions are appreciated:
    ____________________________

22. Would you be willing to participate in a short interview?   Yes / No

23. If yes, please provide contact information:
    Name:
    Email:
    Phone:

    Thank you for taking the time to contribute your input.