

Indigenous Talent Management

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In recent years, there has been a spotlight on diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Many organizations have begun to understand that diversity in the workforce helps to spark new perspectives, increases innovation, and contributes to their public image. In Canada, organizations understand partnering/employing Indigenous Peoples is not just “good business”, but can actually add benefit to their organization.

In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission put forth a set of Calls to Action that urge all levels of government and all Canadian institutions to join in the effort toward the reconciliation between Indigenous people and Canada. Working to increase an Indigenous presence within the workplace would help organizations respond to those 94 calls to action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Hiring Indigenous Employees to work in Indigenous-owned businesses contributes to the economic prosperity of First Nations Communities. These businesses are better received by their communities as they are improving the local business climate, and helping to infuse income into the hands of its employed community members.

Over the past generation, Indigenous peoples across Canada have placed larger importance on education as a way of bettering themselves and helping their community. In 2016 Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) all made improvements in post-secondary education at every level. According to Statistics Canada, “10.9% of Aboriginal people overall aged 25 to 64 had a bachelor’s degree or higher up from 7.7% in 2006” (Statistics Canada, 2017). Similarly, college diplomas also rose by a similar margin.

While organizations have begun to shift their focus to Diversity and Inclusion, Indigenous Peoples across Canada have begun to expect more from their employer. An employer can no longer state they support Indigenous Employees; they have to show it through their actions. In order for an organization to be successful at not only recruiting but retaining as well, there needs to be a strategic conscious Indigenous strategy in place.

While there is no “right” way to recruit and retain Indigenous employees, there are several recommendations that an organization may consider when developing an Indigenous talent management strategy:

Recruitment

1. Understand the local culture, traditions, and norms of the people you are looking to recruit. In Canada, there are “more than 630 First Nation communities”, each being unique; in addition, there are also Métis and Inuit communities to consider (Government of Canada, 2017).
2. Connect with Indigenous communities to understand the needs of their people. Look at the creation of roles that are mutually beneficial to the community and the organization.
3. Designate a role specifically for recruitment/talent management for Indigenous Employees. This role can help identify potential employees, assist in the interview process, and ensure employee success in the future.
4. Develop partnerships with post-secondary institutions across Canada. Indigenous post-secondary students can begin connecting with the organization while completing studies. In addition, the implementation of an Indigenous Internship Program is an opportunity to invest in future employees.
5. Develop Indigenous-specific recruitment marketing (online postings, traditional media, and videos).
6. Implement implicit bias training, and truth and reconciliation training for all recruiters to help ensure that unsuccessful candidates aren't disqualified due to biases or prejudices.
7. Leverage the work already being done to retain employees as a potential recruitment tool.
8. Allow Indigenous employees currently in the organization to have input on the recruitment practices and strategies.

Retention

1. Celebrate and encourage Indigenous traditions and celebrations (such as National Indigenous Peoples Day).
2. Implement an organizational-wide Indigenous cultural sensitivity training. This training will aid in integrating Indigenous employees into the workplace and will help to reduce implicit bias.
3. Develop policies and guidelines to support cultural needs such as the creation of a cultural leave provision.
4. Allow your employees to volunteer in their communities during work time.
5. Implement an Indigenous mentorship program to aid in the development process.
6. Implement an Indigenous employee resource group to allow for networking, employee assistance, and a sense of community.
7. Ensure that the traditional territory or treaty in which your business is located is acknowledged during large events and on the company website.
8. Look at implementing weekly smudging and/or a weekly visit from an Indigenous elder.
9. Ensure Indigenous employees have the opportunity to provide feedback/suggestions regarding retention and internal programs.

In an ever changing work environment, organizations are understanding the value of Indigenous Employees. Indigenous employees add benefits to an organization far beyond the nominal benefit of a checkmark in Diversity and Inclusion reporting. Recruitment of Indigenous Employees can increase your public image and relations, input new perspectives, and strengthen your brand. Taking a strategic approach to the recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees helps to ensure success and respect in your approach. Overall, any increase in Indigenous recruitment and retention helps to create a better work environment for everyone.

REFERENCES

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