

Employer Survey: Immigrants and the Canadian Tourism Sector

Survey Approach

Methodology

The CTHRC hired Fleishman-Hillard Canada to develop a telephone survey questionnaire directed at tourism employers, to solicit views and information on needs and experiences in working with an immigrant workforce.

The survey questionnaire was comprised of 18 categories, and covered a range of subjects (reflected in the general findings reported below).

Profile of Respondents

278 tourism employers were surveyed in the last week of March, 2006. Employers were targeted from seven Canadian centres: Halifax (4%), Montreal (17%), Ottawa-Gatineau (9%), Toronto (35%), Calgary (9%), Edmonton (8%), and Vancouver (18%).

Respondents were largely represented by very small businesses. 56% of these businesses employed 2 to 9 employees; 35% employed 10 to 49 employees. Only 9% reported employing more than 50 people. 61% indicated their businesses were in the Food & Beverage sector, followed by 12% in the Accommodations sector.

Most responded to the survey in English (85%), and the remaining in French. 51% of respondents said their first learned language was English, and only 15% reported their first learned language as French. 33% declared it was a language other than English or French.

61% of respondents were born in Canada, and 94% of all respondents have Canadian citizenship. 24% indicated they were visible minorities. Six out of every ten respondents were male.

Most respondents reported having completed some post-secondary education, with the Montreal respondents reporting the greatest percentage within one region with a university degree.

Summary of Key Findings

When faced with the difficulty of finding skilled staff, 74% reported they were *not likely* to recruit workers from a foreign country. Overall, 76% said they would likely invest in upgrading skills of current employees. (52% of those polled said they would *very likely* do this.)

49% do not require new employees to have Canadian work experience. However, 35% felt it was a priority. In general, businesses in eastern Canada saw the need for Canadian work experience as a need over those in the west.

52% consider work experience from other countries as equivalent to Canadian experience. However, when asked to consider job types and relative experience, there was mixed views on whether Canadian experience was important. For example, 42% of employers said Canadian experience was important when it came to sales and marketing positions.

Unreliable credentials and equivalency of skills learned elsewhere was generally ranked as *not a lot* of difficulty with employees who are immigrants. However, 78% of employers said that resume validation by government or a non-profit sectoral body was useful. (Overall, 48% said this service would be *very useful*.) 79% felt this way about reference checking. There was mixed views on whether government or a non-profit sectoral body should provide services in standardized testing of job skills, however a good number - 69% - said this would be useful.

Job training conducted by government or a non-profit sectoral body was identified as very useful – 81% supported this idea. Sensitivity training ranked at 61% identifying it as useful. Two areas were identified as being most useful for government or a non-profit sectoral body to assist employers: 84% said it would be useful to help businesses find immigrants with the right skills, and 91% said it would be useful to provide English/French courses.

34% of businesses surveyed indicated they have no immigrant workers, however, the survey results suggest a great interest in employing immigrant workers. 55% say they will have a customer service advantage, and the same number say they will gain an advantage in development of products and services for multicultural markets. 44% agree that immigrant workers could provide an advantage to accessing international business.

Multi-lingual staff and language skills overall are identified as increasingly important to the businesses. 89% reported that English or French language skills were *very important*; overall 97% said it was *useful*. 64% see an advantage to having employees that can speak a language other than French or English. When asked to comment on the value of specific languages (other than French or English), the data shows that employers ranked languages more useful if they had staff with those language skills.

Hiring young people seems to be the most likely approach for filling jobs. Overall, 86% said they would likely *hire younger people just entering the labour market*. (58% of respondents said they would *very likely* do this.) 54% said they it was *not likely* they would attract workers from other organizations or businesses.

Employers' views on the challenges newcomers face in looking for a job were mixed and overall not that significant. Respondents were asked to comment on challenges associated with initial application phase and getting an interview, on language difficulties and potential cultural misunderstandings. Employers were asked how often they think they would face additional training costs with immigrant employees, and 56% of employers responded *not a lot*. It appears that there is a lack of understanding or awareness of the challenges.

When asked how an immigrant employee from a specific region would interact with other employees, generally responses ranked as *well*. The ratings, by region, on the dimension of *well*: East Asia (77%), South Asia including India and Pakistan (75%), the Middle East (70%), Africa (71%), Latin America (82%), West Indies (73%), the United States (86%), and Eastern Europe

(80%). 70% of respondents that ranked any of these regions as *not very well* or *not at all* reported that publicly-funded sensitivity training would be helpful.

48% of employers said that immigrant employees require training in *Canadian business practices*, and in general knowledge about the business market in Canada. 56% felt that immigrants would require language training (English or French) specific to the job.

26% of businesses felt that the Government of Canada should focus on tax reform. Only 7% saw skills and training as priority. Jobs/unemployment, immigration, and labour shortages all ranked at a mere 2% respectively.

Only 5% of respondents anticipated that their business would decrease over the near year or so. 35% believe they will see increases and 58% said it would remain the same. One occupation stands out as difficult to fill – cooks/food preparation.

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