Integrating Foreign Workers into Your Workforce

Courtesy of go2 Tourism HR Society

While the integration of all new employees should include efforts to create a welcoming, inclusive environment, flexibility, and clear communication of job expectations, some employers have found creative ways to welcome foreign workers to their new community and their new role.

Working in an inclusive environment that provides a good understanding of the company’s culture and expectations is an important start for any new employee, but can be especially critical to the success of a foreign worker in the organization, explains Chris Thomas, Human Resources at the TDK Group (which owns Tim Hortons). Thomas says that one of the keys in effectively recruiting, integrating and retaining any new employee, and especially immigrants, is to offer flexibility and opportunity. For example, Tim Hortons’ HR tagline has been “Imagine the job that fits your life.”

The Manteo Resort in Kelowna takes a collaborative approach to welcoming and integrating foreign workers. With roughly 15% of Manteo’s staff comprising foreign workers, it’s important for the resort to successfully integrate them into their workforce. Along with offering a thorough orientation, the Manteo Resort helps new foreign workers to find housing, learn the local transit system and help them get settled into their new community.

“One thing we’re very conscious of doing is creating a helpful environment for our new foreign workers,” explains Heather Schroeter, General Manager at the Manteo Resort. “It’s so important to help these workers get settled, as they can feel a bit lost when they arrive. That’s why we make sure to always create an open and comfortable environment where they can get their bearings.”

Terry Schneider at Prestige Hotels and Resorts explains that their team also takes a detailed and proactive approach in welcoming and integrating foreign workers into their organization. “We take them through the whole process of living and working in Canada – helping them get their social insurance number, setting-up their email address and bank account, taking them to the nearest grocery store that carries multicultural food items, introducing them to other members of the community and so on,” he says. “Essentially, we want them to feel as comfortable and at home as possible – and as valuable members of our team, just like all our other employees.”

Of course, the success of most efforts or initiatives is in the details; and the same could be said for welcoming and integrating foreign workers into the workplace.

Rob Fussey, Director of Operations of Western Canada at A&W Restaurants, emphasizes Schneider’s point of paying attention to details when welcoming foreign workers. He cites one example of an A&W franchisee who drove to the local airport to personally meet and pick up a new foreign worker. Since it was the middle of winter and this individual was arriving from the Philippines, the franchisee brought a warm winter coat for her to wear – anticipating she would be inappropriately dressed for her first Canadian winter.

Fussey explains that it is this kind of consideration, thoughtfulness and attention to detail that will help employers in recruiting, retaining and successfully integrating immigrants and foreign workers into their workforce. “If we meet our employees’ needs, they’ll also meet our needs – it’s a two-way relationship that helps develop a sense of loyalty and stability among our teams,” he adds. “And at the end of the day, this is good for everyone: our employees, our customers and our business – including our bottom line.”

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