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"Be Better...Do Better"

TIP SHEET #8

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Refer to Summary of Resources
Tip Sheet #12 for a listing of
information sources.

diversity

An Employer Advantage

Alberta 

Tip Sheet 8: Training and Development

Education comes in many forms such as training, team-building exercises, workshops, or courses. The goal of educating employees on diversity is to make them aware of their own unconscious bias, instill new perspectives, bridge gaps, and strengthen relationships. Leaders, particularly middle managers, need to be fully on board and dedicated to educating themselves and being aware of their own unconscious biases.

This tip sheet will help business owners and Human Resources explore learning opportunities to keep leadership and employees engaged in learning.

1 Why do we need diversity training?

- Successful diversity training enables employees to become more comfortable with concepts such as unconscious bias and cultural competency. When employees become more familiar with these ideas, they can begin to identify how these concepts show up in real world situations.
- Each of us has a unique identity that is shaped by history, socialization, and culture. Workplaces that acknowledge an individual's unique identity cultivates inclusion and a sense of belonging that allows them to be their authentic self. Individuals who can be their authentic selves are more productive, have higher levels of trust, and contribute to organizational success.
- Companies that focus on building diverse teams have a better business reputation. When you have a diverse team, your business has a wider reach and can relate to more individuals.
- Another benefit of diversity training is obtaining and retaining the best and brightest talents. When all employees feel their voices are heard, they feel included. Employees who are happy at work are more productive, willing to take on more projects, and will provide more feedback. When your employees are happy, it shows, and attracts more top talent.
- Different people view problems differently, and have different ways of solving them. When your team understands different perspectives, they are more likely to come up with innovative solutions. A diverse team is a creative team. When your staff can learn and grow with each other, understand each other, and grow with each other, they can open their minds to creative solutions.
- Diversity within your organization can mean increased business. Reaching all demographics and markets will ensure you are competitive and able to expand your customer base.

Tip Sheet 8: Training and Development

2 Where can we start?

Whether we admit it or not, research shows that we tend to like those who are like us (or at least what we think are like us). This means that we have to actively change our biases.

From hiring practices to how we communicate and lead, we need to be finding ways to bring in different perspectives and find solutions that accommodate differences. However, without thought, practice, and training, most organizations will slide right back to what is familiar. Here are some suggestions to get started:

- **Raise awareness.** Awareness enables employees to become more comfortable with concepts such as unconscious bias at work. When employees become more aware of these concepts, they can implement their knowledge into real-life scenarios.
- **Make space for unique perspectives while encouraging collaboration and innovation.** Diverse teams are more effective. They have a distinct advantage when it comes to decision-making, including bringing a broader perspective on issues, identifying more options for solving it, reducing bias, and increasing accountability.

- **Develop inclusive thinking and actions.** Fostering diversity requires making an effort towards building a more inclusive environment so that all people, especially those from underrepresented groups, feel comfortable and valued. Successful diversity training gets employees in the habit of thinking about inclusion and how they can behave in a way that makes the workplace more inclusive for everyone.
- **Promote workplace sensitivity.** When employees are encouraged to understand the different perspectives and comfort levels of others, they are more likely to think about how their actions could unintentionally cause offense. Diversity training can go a long way towards preventing discrimination and harassment by making employees more capable of empathy.



Tip Sheet 8: Training and Development

3

Training, mentoring, and career development:

Support for the training, mentoring, and career development of your new hires offers benefits such as increased productivity, an improved adaptation to new technologies, employee retention, and the ability to obtain or maintain accreditations or licenses.

Training Programs

You can provide training courses or peer-to-peer practical training.

- **Skills Training** can include academic, technical, literacy, or essential skills such as computer skills or working with others. For example, the **Skills for Success - Assessment and Training Skills** on the Government of Canada website outlines helpful strategies for developing essential workplace skills and further developing current skills.
- **Language Training:** Newcomers may benefit from language training and can include labour market and occupation-specific language training.
- **Cultural and communications training** helps all workers interact more effectively with colleagues and customers, as well as develop stronger presentation skills.
- **Organizational training** focuses on your organization's norms, practices, and expectations.

Mentoring Programs

Providing dedicated and experienced mentors to answer all new workers' questions helps Newcomers integrate into your workplace faster.

- Mentorship is particularly valuable to Newcomers, as a mentor will expand professional networks and awareness of Canadian workplace culture.
- Mentoring programs create a welcoming environment, foster diversity in the workplace, and help existing staff members enhance their cultural competencies and awareness.

Career Development

Career development opportunities are important for all employees.

- Include Newcomers in formal leadership development and collaborative programs. Don't overlook their abilities just because they don't reflect the norm in your workplace.
- Provide coaching and courses to develop their communication skills. Newcomers may have unique needs based on their cultural backgrounds, abilities, and training.
- Support workers who are pursuing certifications or licensing. Your organization could benefit by providing financial support or by offering workers paid time off to prepare for and write important examinations.

Tip Sheet 8: Training and Development

4 Provide diversity training to all leaders in your organization:

- Staff conflicts and interpersonal issues can negatively effect the smooth operation of your business and can be expensive. Management and supervisory staff need to understand the value of having a diverse and inclusive workforce. All managers should receive formal training on cross-cultural management. They should be able to discuss diversity goals with staff on a regular basis and handle communication issues immediately.
- Train all supervisors on effective performance review practices, specific to Newcomers. Work with employees to develop action plans for their goals and ensure employees are acknowledged for their work achievements.

“

The only thing worse
than training your new
employees and
having them leave

is not training them and
HAVING THEM STAY.

”

~ Henry Ford ~
Founder, Ford Motor Company

5 Provide learning opportunities for all team members:

- Offering training to groups of employees gives them an opportunity to get to know each other better. General training allows new hires to meet people outside of their department or team.
- Training modules designed to develop specific skills and expertise also give employees the opportunity to work in their field or in a similar role, who might share their interests.
- Include opportunities for individual development as well as team-building workshops to foster skills for working with diverse teams. Offer mini-workshops or sponsored courses to improve communication skills such as report writing, giving presentations, or business English.
- Seek out new opportunities to share and teach best practices and celebrate the company's cultural diversity. Lunch and learn events, posters, newsletters or casual social events can help encourage acceptance of Newcomers before issues arise, and can contribute to a happier and more productive workforce.
- Providing diversity training for your entire staff could open lines of communication and prevent misunderstandings.



For more tips and strategies to improve diversity in your workplace, check out our other Tip Sheets:

1. Job Descriptions
2. Recruitment and Job Sourcing
3. Assessing Skills and Competencies
4. Interviewing and Selection
5. Orientation
6. Onboarding
7. Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Work Environment
8. Training and Development
9. Communication
10. Employee Retention
11. Common Terms and Definitions
12. Summary of Resources

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