



Cross-Cultural Teamwork Video

Facilitator's Guide

Intended for Employer Audiences

Developed by:

Funded by:

Financé par:



TRIEC

Toronto Region Immigrant
Employment Council



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

Ontario receives support for
some skills training programs
from the Government of Canada



Table of Contents

Introduction to the Cross-Cultural Teamwork Video and Facilitation Guide	2
EPISODE 1: Pre-meeting Small Talk.....	5
EPISODE 2: Accommodating Religious Diversity.....	8
EPISODE 3: Delegating Roles and Managing Communication Barriers	10
EPISODE 4: Facilitating Contributions to Team Discussions	12
Appendix 1: How the Best Onboarding Programs Work.....	14
Appendix 2: Tips for Employers When Dealing With an Accommodation Request for Religious Observance	16
Appendix 3: Internet Resources.....	17
Appendix 4: Six Key Areas of Adjustment for Newcomers in Organizations	18
Appendix 5: Establishing Group Norms	19
Appendix 6: Agenda Items for the First Team Meeting.....	20

Introduction to the Cross-Cultural Teamwork Video and Facilitation Guide

TRIEC creates and champions solutions to better integrate skilled immigrants in the Greater Toronto Region labour market.

The *Cross-Cultural Teamwork* video was originally designed by TRIEC for Human Resources (HR) professionals, trainers, diversity consultants and immigrant-serving agencies who work with employers. These groups all play a role in increasing the awareness of HR professionals, hiring managers and co-workers about issues related to integrating and developing skilled immigrant talent within the Canadian workforce. Individuals who are responsible for leading and supporting the development of cross-cultural competencies will find this and other TRIEC tools useful.

Cross-Cultural Teamwork follows the experience of two skilled immigrants recently employed at CQR Logistics. The CEO of CQR Logistics is committed to building a diverse workforce, which will give the company an advantage in global marketing.

The video illustrates how cultural differences can affect team dynamics in a Canadian workplace, highlights challenges that may arise in cross-cultural teams and suggests strategies for avoiding or overcoming such challenges.

The video and guide are divided into an introduction and four episodes, which explore the following themes:

Episode 1: Pre-meeting “Small Talk”

Episode 2: Accommodating Religious Diversity

Episode 3: Delegating Roles and Managing Communication Barriers

Episode 4: Facilitating Contributions to Team Discussions

The guide provides an overview of each video episode, identifies learning objectives, and offers suggestions on how to use the video as a learning tool. It is further sub-divided into scenes to help you plan and customize your training.

For each episode and scene the following information is provided:

- Title
- A description of what happens
- Key learning points
- Background information for trainers
- Discussion questions

How to Use the Video and Guide

The video and facilitation guide can be used for team discussion or as part of a broader, facilitated workshop.

Each audience will be different. We suggest that you customize each session by selecting relevant discussion questions from what the guide provides, and developing specific questions to suit your audience's needs and interests. Documenting additional learning objectives, questions and insights is also suggested if you plan to lead discussions with multiple groups. Consider screening the video over a few sessions to accommodate your timetable as well as to allow for more reflection and in-depth learning.

We recommend that you take the following steps in preparation for a video discussion session:

- View each of the video chapters at least once before the session, to become familiar with each chapter's contents, timing and structure.
- Once you have identified the specific video chapter that you plan to use, make sure you download and save the video file on to your computer. This step will help you avoid choppiness and unsynchronized video/audio which can come up when viewing video files from the web.
- Read through the remainder of this manual, especially the discussion questions for each scene and suggested activities in the Appendices.
- Refer to the Resources section of this guide – these provide tools and resources to enrich learning.
- Identify specific topic area/s for discussion, according to your participants' needs and the time available.
- Have participants watch the video as a group so they can learn from each other's reactions and experiences. An individual viewer will still benefit from watching the video but will likely learn more when accompanied by his or her peers.
- Watch the video in sequence, either as a whole or by scenes, and allow ample time for group discussion and/or activities.

Facilitation Approach

This video focuses on two immigrant's cultures. Your training group, however, will likely be made up of newcomers from several different backgrounds. It may be important to stress that much of what the two skilled immigrants featured in the video experience applies to newcomers from around the world. Focus the discussion on identifying elements of culture commonly encountered in the audience's workplace(s).

The video is made up of scenes in which cultural differences are at play. For each video chapter, viewers are presented with:

1. An interaction which is potentially problematic
2. Discussion questions
3. An alternative approach to the interaction

As you lead the discussion, the following sequence is suggested, to help you to introduce, explore and summarize learning points for each video chapter.

1. Screen the first part of the chapter, in which characters use a problematic cross-cultural communication approach.
2. Pause the video and ask the group to describe their reactions to the scene. You may want to record comments on a flipchart, listing positive and negative reactions separately.
3. Summarize by screening each video character's reaction and comparing these with what the group has listed.
4. Screen the final segment of the scene to demonstrate an alternative communication approach.
5. As appropriate, interactive elements such as small group discussions, case scenarios or games are also helpful to promote participation and engage the audience.

Overview of CQR Logistics and Cast of Characters (In order of appearance)

CQR Logistics is a medium-sized, global company specializing in logistics services and support. The company is preparing to launch a new media campaign introducing their small and medium size business logistics software.

CQR's CEO, Peter Thompson, is committed to creating a diverse workforce that will be an asset to global marketing and has recently hired several skilled immigrants to support this new project.

Victor Xiazhi (One month at CQR; Software Developer)

Victor recently joined CQR as a software developer. Beneath his soft-spoken demeanor, Victor brings a breadth and depth of technical knowledge which could potentially be key to CQR's success in the global market. Victor will be working closely with Rob in the next few months, and is anxious to get started.

Nazneen Khan (One month at CQR; Project Coordinator)

Prior to immigrating to Canada, Nazneen was employed as a Project Manager in Pakistan. Although this is Nazneen's first job in Canada, she is confident in her ability to meet the requirements of her role as Project Coordinator at CQR and is eager to prove herself to the team.

Carol Scott (10 years at CQR Logistics; Program Manager and Team Leader)

Carol has almost 10 years of experience as a leader at CQR. She is feeling uncertain about the organization's move to bring in a more diverse workforce. Although she recognizes the need for the organization to change to remain competitive in the global market, Carol is concerned that communication issues and cultural differences will slow down the team.

Rob Goldstein (Five years at CQR Logistics; Project Manager and Team Leader)

Rob has been a Project Manager for the past five years, and has been tasked with leading CQR's first cross-cultural project team. Prior to Victor and Nazneen's arrival, he has never worked with a culturally diverse team. Rob wonders how much time it will take the new team members to "learn how we do things here".

Adeola Banhole (Seven years at CQR; Communications Coordinator)

Adeola has been at CQR for seven years and was recently promoted to her current role as Communications Coordinator. Having worked closely with Carol and Rob in the past, she is familiar with the unspoken rules and knows both their work styles and preferences. Adeola recognizes the potential challenges for the team, and the importance of effective communication in averting issues.

EPISODE 1: Pre-meeting Small Talk

Scene Description

As this episode opens, we see Victor and Nazneen, new members to the CQR team, as they wait for their first team meeting to start. Although they acknowledge each other's presence, it is quite evident that they are both hesitant to strike up a conversation. Will Carol, Rob and Adeola's arrival help to break the ice?

Key Learning Points

- Understand how being inclusive of all cultures adds value to new employee orientation programs, team meetings and one-on-one communication.
- Encourage self-reflection to consider individual behaviours and attitudes which are related to culture.
- Identify behaviours and attitudes which promote inclusive one-on-one and team communication.

Notes for Trainer

- Culture is a framework that shapes and directs the way we behave and the way we interpret other people's behaviors. It gives us a set of rules for how to interact with others, how to express ourselves and how to deal with conflict. Because culture is not always visible, we are usually unaware of how culture influences our behavior. We assume that our cultural rules are the norm. The ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures is often referred to as cultural competence. Individual cultural competence is not innate - it is human nature to think that our culture is the "best" and to use our cultural rules as a basis of comparison or judgment for people who are different from us.
- Cultural competence exists on both the organizational and individual level.
 - In an **individual**, cultural competence is evidenced by the extent to which a person is able to interact effectively with people of different cultures. He or she develops an awareness of his/her own cultural worldview, broadens knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, acquires and applies cross-cultural skills and adapts an open attitude toward cultural differences.
 - At the **organizational level**, cultural competence is visible in the standards, policies, practices, and attitudes which are used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes (Davis and Donald 1997)¹. To develop organizational cultural competence, it is essential to identify the systemic barriers that prevent access to opportunities for career advancement. Next, strategies to address/eliminate these barriers must be implemented, and mechanisms for ongoing review and adaptation introduced.
- A new workplace culture, however similar it to our own and however welcoming, may take a little time to adjust to. Often, when a newcomer joins a team the most subtle differences cause the most discomfort for all involved – the new team member, his or her colleagues and manager. Some examples of unspoken norms and expectations which may need clarification for a newcomer include: how to engage in small talk and introductions, appropriate forms of address, physical proximity when you are holding a conversation with an acquaintance or colleague; and, personal disclosure.

¹ Davis, P., & Donald, B. (1997). Multicultural counselling competencies: Assessment, evaluation, education and training, and supervision. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
Cross-Cultural Teamwork Video - Facilitator's Guide
Intended for Employer Audiences

- Culture shapes the norms which enable seamless interaction among people who share the same culture. When we find ourselves in an unfamiliar culture, the tendency is to continue to operate based on our norms. When the actual norms in the new environment are vastly different from what we are used to, misinterpretations and culture shock occur.
- Effective communication is essential to help employees (new and existing) expand cultural awareness and knowledge that enables each person to interpret, adapt and respond positively during cross-cultural interactions. As well, modeling culturally sensitive approaches during team and one-on-one interaction engages each team member and promotes an inclusive workplace culture.
- Developing cultural competence equips us to demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the values, beliefs and expectations of other cultures. Doing so enables us to transform our teams and organizations when we share knowledge with staff and colleagues and promote opportunities to apply new knowledge and skills to each encounter.

Discussion Questions

Leadership and Cultural Competence

- What are some judgments and assumptions made by the characters in this scene?
- How might these assumptions help or hinder Victor and Nazneen's integration into the CQR team?
- Based on the scene, how would you describe Carol's leadership style?
- How might Carol's leadership style affect a new immigrant in the workplace?
- What role do you expect a manager like Carol to play in helping new immigrant employees successfully integrate into the team?
- What specific skills and knowledge should Carol and her team develop, to enable successful integration of their new immigrant employees?

Think of your team and your own role:

- To what extent do your actions and behaviours as a team leader or member make the best use of the diversity that exists in your team?
- How can you use your own interpersonal skills and knowledge to effectively facilitate communication in a diverse team?
- What opportunities to better utilize the skills and talents of new immigrant employees are you aware of in your organization?
- What skills and knowledge would be beneficial for you to develop, to fully leverage diversity in your team?

Workplace Orientation and Teambuilding

- Based on the video scene, which aspects of the initial team meeting seemed uncomfortable for the new team members (Victor and Nazneen)?
- Pick a character that you can identify with. What first impressions might he or she form of other team members, in the scene presented?
- The characters in the video are all evidently from different cultures. What behaviours did your chosen character display, which might indicate discomfort or unfamiliarity with an existing norm?
- What new approaches would you recommend for this character, to help make the onboarding process more effective?

Think about your own workplace:

- What unspoken rules should the new employees understand, in order to fit in?
- How might the existing team help in communicating these to new team members, particularly individuals who are used to a different workplace culture?
- What might your new immigrant employees consider important/necessary as part of the teambuilding process?
- How might you adapt your current new employee orientation practices in order to better support the specific needs of new immigrant employees?
- What information/tools/processes can help make your current practices more inclusive?

Cross-Cultural Communication

This scene presents a group of people from different cultural backgrounds as they engage in their first team meeting.

- How did each person's approach to small talk differ? What similarities did you observe?
- What might these differences be based on — culture, communication style, etc.?
- Describe the verbal and nonverbal interaction among the members of the group. What messages did each person's behaviour send to other people on the team?
- To what extent did the various characters' communication styles differ? Why?
- How well did the manager (Carol) deal with these differences? What recommendations would you have for Carol?
- What could the other CQR team members do differently to help break the ice before, during and after the first team meeting?

Think of your own workplace:

- What do you currently do to “break the ice” and introduce new employees to your team or organization?
- Based on what you have observed in the past, identify a specific challenge faced by new employees in your organization? For example, are procedures clearly documented in language that is jargon free and easily understood by newcomers? What resources are available to new employees, to help them decode unwritten rules which might be in place?
- What is one thing you can immediately commit to and practice to help a new employee during the onboarding period?
- How might other members of your team be better involved during the orientation process?

References and Resources

Please refer to Appendix 1 in the References and Resources section of this guide.

EPISODE 2: Accommodating Religious Diversity

Scene Description

Conflicting priorities and timelines, statutory holidays and business travel schedules are making it difficult to schedule the next CQR project update meeting. Carol and the team have finally managed to pinpoint one date when the crucial updates and review of critical project deliverables can happen. As it turns out, Nazneen may need to take the day off on that day, to celebrate Eid, a three-day Muslim holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting.

Key Learning Points

- Understand the Canadian employer's duty to accommodate religious needs and observances.
- Recognize the cross-cultural communication skills needed to ensure religious accommodation policies are implemented and practiced in a manner that contributes to an inclusive workplace.
- Identify situations that may cause undue hardship to employers and define parameters for reasonable accommodation of religious needs and observances.

Notes for Trainer

- Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, discrimination due to religion (creed) is against the law. Everyone should have access to the same opportunities and benefits and be treated with equal dignity and respect regardless of their religion. The objective of the Code is to help foster an environment of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity of each person so that they may feel like a valued part of society that is able to contribute. Employers need to understand their obligations under the Code.
- The Canadian Human Rights Commission has outlined some of the rights and duties of both an employee requesting accommodation and the person or organization responsible for providing accommodation. The employer's duty to accommodate requires reasonable efforts short of undue hardship. This level of accommodation has been explained by the Commission as requiring reasonable steps to accommodate without undue interference in the operation of the employer's business and without undue financial burden to the employer. The term "undue" implies that some level of hardship or expense on the part of the employer will be required. What may be undue hardship for one employer may not be the case for another. The development of a religious accommodation policy is the first step in addressing religious needs.
- In the typically diverse Canadian workplace, managers and professionals interact with colleagues, clients and business partners from different cultures on a daily basis. Although most organizations may have religious accommodation policies in place, interpreting and implementing these may pose challenges for employers and employees alike.
- Dress codes, break policies, scheduling and recruitment procedures are areas which are often affected by requests for religious accommodation. When requests are made to accommodate religious observances and practices which may be unfamiliar, it is not uncommon to encounter different reactions which can potentially be misinterpreted. When this happens, it is important to be mindful of how your own cultural beliefs and attitudes may be influencing your interpretation of the request.
- One-on-one and team communication is an important tool to promote awareness and understanding of rights and responsibilities related to religious accommodation. When each person understands, it promotes a workplace culture which values and respects differences.

Discussion Questions

Religious Accommodation

- What are some of the employer's responsibilities related to religious accommodation?
- What are some examples of an employee's responsibilities related to religious accommodation?
- What do you think of Carol's expressed concern that Nazneen's fasting may interfere with her level of concentration while working? How might you address her concern in a way that helps her better understand the religious practice of fasting?
- How well did the team leader, Carol, handle Nazneen's request for a rescheduling of the meeting?
- What recommendations would you make to help Carol address similar situations effectively?

Consider your own workplace:

- How would you have responded to a similar request from your staff?
- What steps can you take to broaden your own understanding of religious accommodation as it applies to your workplace?
- What steps would an employee need to take to ensure that his or her needs related to religious observance are understood and accommodated?
- What assistance would be available to help you deal with religious observation requests from employees?
- What steps can you take in your role, to promote understanding of cultural and religious diversity within your team?

References and Resources

Refer to Appendix 2 and 3 in the References and Resources section of this guide.

Ontario Human Rights Commission, Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/Policies/PolicyCreedAccomodEN/pdf>

EPISODE 3: Delegating Roles and Managing Communication Barriers

Scene Description

The CQR sales team has questions but Carol's schedule makes it a challenge for her to meet with them to address their concerns. Carol needs to delegate coordination with the sales team to someone else on the team. Nazneen surprises Carol by stepping up to the challenge. Victor on the other hand, still needs to establish his footing so he can keep up with the rest of the team.

Key Learning Points

- Identify ways in which differences in culturally-based values can affect interactions within teams.
- Recognize behaviors that encourage and discourage consensus building in group interactions.
- Describe strategies to facilitate collaboration and encourage inclusive communication in teams.

Notes for Trainer

- Culture, personal experience and personality are among the factors which shape individual communication styles and preferences. When working with other people, these differences influences how we:
 - Establish credibility
 - Delegate roles and responsibilities
 - Make decisions and solves problems
 - Define parameters of acceptable and/or polite behaviour
 - Organize and present information
 - Seek and provide encouragement
 - Express agreement or disagreement with others
 - Build trust and relationships with others
 - Negotiate
 - Resolve conflict
- The culturally-competent team leader promotes an inclusive work culture which brings out each team member's ideas and talents. Teams evolve as members join and leave the group. Each team member brings his or her cultural orientation which is shaped by knowledge, experience, and attitudes, and which may be different from other members of the team. Existing members of a team may find it difficult to unlearn their old way of doing things; new team members may have a different interpretation of how things should be done and may view the organization and/or team's culture differently.
- During the early stages of forming a cross-cultural team, it is important for leaders and existing team members to be aware of and recognize communication styles which might be influenced by culture. Being aware of the differences between what is familiar to the existing group and to the new team members helps to facilitate planning of effective interactions which are essential to teambuilding.
- Each of us defines normal behaviour according to our own cultural criteria, assuming similarities instead of differences. Therefore, it is important to be aware of our own cultural biases when interacting with culturally-different individuals. Our individual biases program us to see or hear what we want to see or hear. As a result, misinterpretation, stereotyping, stress and conflict are more likely to come up during cross-cultural interactions.

Discussion Questions

- What communication issues and challenges did you notice in this scene?
- To what extent were these issues cultural differences? Why?
- What are some assumptions and cultural stereotypes that may have influenced Carol's behaviour?
- How did these behaviours and attitudes affect her team?
- What recommendations would you have for Carol to improve communication with her team?
- What suggestions might you have for the rest of the team to improve communication with their peers and Carol?
- What could Carol have done to make all team members feel part of the discussions?

Think of your own experiences:

- Describe a challenging situation when differences in culture and/or communication style made it challenging for you to work with another person (colleague or boss).
- What was at issue?
- What were the cultural differences?
- What was the outcome of the interaction?
- In hindsight, what would you have done differently?
- What strategies would you recommend to help leaders within your organization who may encounter similar challenges?
- What steps can you, as an individual, take to help reduce stereotyping or cultural miscommunication in your workplace?

References and Resources

Please refer to Appendix 4 in the References and Resources section of this guide.

EPISODE 4: Facilitating Contributions to Team Discussions

Scene Description

The CQR project team holds a brainstorming meeting to identify continuous improvement strategies in support of the organization's global marketing initiative. Carol leads the discussion, hoping to capitalize on the global perspectives which Victor and Nazneen bring. Carol goes through the meeting agenda, which aligns with the organization's push towards using specific technology. Rob and Adeola present suggestions to support the predetermined path and Nazneen sheds some light on potential challenges existing in the global market. However, Victor continues to struggle with bringing his ideas forward.

Key Learning Points

- Recognize culture-bound communication challenges and obstacles which hinder new immigrant's participation in team meetings.
- Explore the value of inclusive communication to facilitate participation in one-on-one and team interactions, in spite of cultural and linguistic differences.

Notes for Trainer

- Culture influences our attitudes, values and behaviours. It also informs how we interpret other people's behaviours, as well as how our actions are perceived by others. Within a group, norms are formed based on similarities which exist among its member. They define the parameters within which each team member is expected to operate. When these norms are not explicit, they can be challenging for someone who is new to the group, who may be operating on an incongruent set of norms.
- A person's ability to "fit" in with the job and with the organization (person-organization fit) is an important consideration throughout the employee life cycle. Assessment of an employee's fit is often made, based on his or her day-to-day interactions in the workplace. In this scene, Carol compares Nazneen and Victor's ability to "fit" in with the team, based on how they each participated during the team meeting.
- Cultural differences and similarities in communication style affect how a new immigrant's peers and managers interpret and assess fit in relation to:
 - The extent and manner in which the person leads and/or participates in team processes
 - How different/conflicting viewpoints are handled
 - How planning is carried out
 - How information and support are sought
 - How the individual demonstrates cooperation and team work
- Individually, our attitudes and behaviours combine with those of other individuals in the group, to shape the workplace culture. We develop cultural proficiency which in turn contributes to shaping an inclusive culture when we:
 1. Make the effort to examine our current worldviews
 2. Explore other worldviews
 3. Examine our own behaviour when working with people who behave differently than we do

- In recent years, a variety of studies targeted at exploring the phenomena of employee engagement indicate that management style has a direct impact on employees' overall job satisfaction and relationship with co-workers. Highest levels of employee satisfaction occur when organizations equip employees at all levels with the communication skills that are important to build solid relationships necessary to succeed. Some examples:
 - Establishing communication that solicits and values input and honesty
 - Understanding how individuals (leaders and peers) make decisions
 - Cultivating a curious approach when dealing with individuals who demonstrate attitudes and behaviours that are different from our own

Discussion Questions

- In this scene, how well does this team tap into their collective knowledge?
- What behaviours did you observe, which hindered the exchange of ideas?
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure that each person contributes to the discussion?
- What could have been done differently to improve the situation? By whom?
- What assumptions helped or hindered the team's effectiveness at communicating their ideas?

Consider your own team:

- In what ways are the challenges faced by CQR present in your team?
- How have you been involved in similar issues?
- What do you currently do when you are faced with these situations? What do other people (manager, peers) do?
- Which of these actions, behaviours and attitudes lead to positive outcomes?
- In similar situations, which actions, behaviours and attitudes would you consider a challenge?
- How might this change?
- What actions might you consider to effectively manage conflict arising as a result of culture-bound norms and conflicting communication styles?

References and Resources

Please refer to Appendix 5 and 6 in the References and Resources section of this guide.

Appendix 1: How the Best Onboarding Programs Work²

An effective workplace orientation and onboarding program is a valuable talent management strategy to help new hires assimilate into an organization's culture and feel valued.

When elements of the process help to convey the culture of the organization, new employees are better able to decode the unwritten rules which define behaviours and practices and help the organization function more smoothly.

Another outcome of a good onboarding program is that new hires get up to speed and become more productive within a shorter timeframe. When new employees join an organization, the ability to adjust to the cultural differences can make or break the individual's ability to reach full productivity.

This is particularly true for roles which depend on interactions with many other employees or in linking work from different parts of the firm. In these instances, upfront education delivered as part of an orientation and onboarding program, having an internal social network or some other Internet-based tools, can expedite their connections and bring different people with similar needs together.

What makes an Orientation and Onboarding Program work?

First of all, **they are fun, not overly formal, and engage employees.** Make sure you develop a program that has substance and that addresses serious issues effectively, but do it in a manner that is interactive and fun. Set the stage for productive, aligned, and focused work by helping employees understand what it takes to be successful in your organization.

- Use technology to facilitate the experience and provide the new employee with the corporate history, the values of the firm, an overview of the strategy and fiscal goals.
- Videos can be used to provide an overview of the finances by the CFO, for example, and a greeting from some senior-level executive.

Second, **good onboarding programs may extend over several months.** After an intensive one-to-two day session up front to start things off, subsequent activities may extend over several months at periodic intervals.

- Consider including rotational assignments for new employees
- Assign new employees to special projects that can expose them to parts of the company they would not normally have any contact with
- Promote opportunities for new employees to see how other employees work and develop a feel for the culture in action
- Engage your organization's subject matter experts to share their knowledge and best practices with new colleagues
- Schedule follow-up networking events throughout the year to allow the opportunity to get into topics in an in-depth way

² Excerpts from: Kevin Wheeler. "How The Best Onboarding Programs Work". Global Learning Resources Inc., 2008. Accessed on 29 April 2011 from <http://www.ere.net/2008/10/03/how-the-best-onboarding-programs-work/>
Cross-Cultural Teamwork Video - Facilitator's Guide
Intended for Employer Audiences

The third thing effective onboarding programs are good at is **getting the manager to be part of the onboarding process**. Surveys show that the relationship with the manager is one of the most significant in an employee's work life.

- Most turnover is ultimately caused by the employee-manager relationship (or lack thereof), which makes the ability to assimilate new employees a core competence of managers.
- A manager who takes time to discuss issues with a new employee, who shows concern over that person's assimilation, and who knows what the employee can do and wants to do, will make wiser decisions and build loyalty over time.
- Some firms have managers attend a session designed to provide the employee with an initial set of goals – perhaps for the first 30 to 60 days. Others include the manager in team-building exercises or have a luncheon where the manager sits with the new employee. At the executive level, the CEO can invite new hires to dinner at his or her home or set up a special quarterly new executive dinner and reception. The key is to make sure the manager has a real role in both the formal process of onboarding as well as in the informal one that happens every day.

And finally, **the best programs offer coaching and mentoring to new employees' right from the start**. Again, research shows very clearly that providing a mentor who can offer insights into the corporate culture, who can explain the organizational structure and help the new employee understand why things get done in the way they do is a major contributor to increased productivity and lower turnover.

- Mentors should be individuals who are exemplars of the kind of behavior and results orientation your firm would like all its employees to exhibit.
- The role of mentors can be very simple – as simple as going to lunch once a week with the new hires to show them the ropes and transmit some of the tacit culture that is never articulated or acknowledged in formal sessions.
- Mentors are the vehicles to educate the new hire, and should be trained to serve as listeners who can intervene quietly with a manager if an issue arises.
- Mentors need to be respected and well-networked in the organization.

Appendix 2: Tips for Employers When Dealing With an Accommodation Request for Religious Observance³

Steps to guide employers

Put it in writing: Ensure a request for accommodation of a religious observance is in writing and it explains why accommodation is required (the nature of the sincerely held belief and nexus to religion) and what measures of accommodation are required.

Reply to the request within a reasonable time: Acknowledge the request has been received and management is reviewing it. Also, confirm the organization's general commitment to accommodation, provide an outline of the process for dealing with the request and a time frame for a final decision, and deal in good faith and respect the dignity of the employee making the request.

If needed, request further information from the employee: Seek clarification or further details to investigate the employee's need for accommodation to determine the legitimacy of the request or determine an adequate scope of accommodation.

Assess the need for accommodation – dress code, scheduling, religious leave – based on the religious observance needs of the employee: There are a few questions to answer here, such as: What is the exact nature of the religious observance? What religious holy day(s) is the employee requesting off? Are there health and safety factors involved? How does the request conflict with the regular work schedule? What measures can be taken to accommodate the person?

Consult with stakeholders: Talk with all relevant parties during the accommodation assessment process (such as the employee and union, if applicable).

Denying accommodation

If accommodation is not possible because of undue hardship, explain this clearly to the person concerned. Make sure the details are provided in writing and be aware the employee may request details of the cost of accommodation if undue hardship is the reason for denial of accommodation.

³ TATLA DIVERSITY GROUP. www.tatlagroup.com
Cross-Cultural Teamwork Video - Facilitator's Guide
Intended for Employer Audiences

Appendix 3: Internet Resources

Webinar: Religious Accommodation in the Workplace

Separation of Church and Work: What Employers Need to Know About Accommodation

<http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/resources-tools/webinars/accommodation/>

The duty to accommodate religious practices is not discretionary and employers should approach this mandatory requirement with openness – it is another way to widen the recruiting pool and improve employee satisfaction and productivity. This seminar explains the duty to accommodate employees' religious practices and how to implement these changes in your organization.

Speakers: Suzanne McFarlane, Diversity Sourcing Specialist Hewitt Associates & Len Starrett, CHRP, Manager, Human Resources Tyco Electronics Canada Ltd.

Religious Accommodation Checklist

http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/resources/teleseminars/pdf/20081022_Religious_Accommodation_Checklist_-_Final.pdf

Multi-Faith Calendar

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/>

This webpage displays holy days for 12 major faiths/religions using the Gregorian (Western) calendar, including a brief description of each holy day. Although the calendar is accurate, some dates may vary regionally because they are determined by the lunar calendar. Jewish festivals usually begin at sundown on the previous day.

Religious Accommodation FAQs

<http://www.queensu.ca/humanrights/legislationgroup/highlights/religiousaccommodation.html>

This resource provides responses to frequently asked questions related to religious accommodation, which are based on previous court rulings in Canada.

How to Request Religious Accommodation at Work

<http://www.cnmag.ca/issue-35/942-how-to-request-religious-accommodation-at-work>

This article was published in the Canadian Newcomer magazine and presents religious accommodation strategies from the employee perspective.

Appendix 4: Six Key Areas of Adjustment for Newcomers in Organizations

1. Performance Proficiency

Identify what needs to be learned and master the required knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the required work task.

2. People

This refers to the establishment of successful and satisfying work relationships with organizational members. Finding the right person or persons from whom to learn about the organization, work group, and job plays a pivotal role in socialization.

3. Politics

This concerns the individual's success in gaining information regarding formal and informal work relationships and power structures within the organization. Effective learning and adjustment to a new job or organization could be made more efficient by a heightened awareness of which people are more knowledgeable and powerful than others

4. Language

This dimension describes the individual's knowledge of the profession's technical language as well as knowledge of the acronyms, slang, and jargon that are unique to the organization. For example, the acquisition of language allows a child to understand parental guidance, explanations and reasoning. Similarly, newcomers require a certain base knowledge of company specific language in order to comprehend information from others as well as communicate effectively with other organizational members and customers.

5. Organizational Vision and Values

This refers to the understanding of the rules or principles that maintain the integrity of the organization. The formation of collective identity is the core of engagement. Likewise, the new manager must understand and internalize the organization's vision.

6. History

An organization's traditions, customs, myths, and rituals transmit cultural knowledge. Knowledge of this history, as well as knowledge about the personal backgrounds of particular organizational members, can help newcomers learn what types of behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate in specific interactions and circumstances

Appendix 5: Establishing Group Norms⁴

This outline guides you through the process of leading a team meeting to establish group norms. These practices set up the cross-cultural team for success by articulating expectations which were previously unspoken norms.

Type of Activity

Discussion

Purpose

To create a positive learning climate by establishing guidelines for group discussion that will help learners feel comfortable about participating in team meetings and activities.

Learning Objective

Participants will be able to articulate group norms agreed upon by consensus.

Steps

1. Explain what is meant by group norms. Give one or two examples of possible group norms, e.g., “Start and end on time,” “Personal comments made during the training are kept confidential,” “No side conversations.”
2. Ask the group to suggest norms that will guide them during meetings and as they work together. Write them on the flipchart as they are mentioned.
3. Go through the list, asking for clarification if needed.
4. With the participation of the group, consolidate the norms into a list that everyone approves of.
5. Give the list the title “Group Norms” and affix to the wall where it can be seen and referred to throughout the session.
6. Tell the group that these norms define the expectations of each team member, as you work together. Because these ground rules are developed by the group, it is also important to keep in mind that they can add or change ground rules as a group at any time.
7. You may suggest other ground rules you feel may be helpful that haven’t been stated, by saying “Other groups have found this group norm helpful. Does anyone want to add this to our list?”
8. Ask participants to discuss ways to ensure that the group norms are adhered to going forward. Possible strategies include: defining each person’s responsibility to remind each other of the norms during interactions and identifying when and how the norms will be reviewed and revised by the group.
9. Document the agreed-upon group norms and send each group member a copy. You may also find it useful to start off subsequent meetings with a quick review of the norms.

⁴ Adapted from: Mutha, S., Allen, C., Welch, M., Toward Culturally Competent Care: A Toolbox for Teaching Communication Strategies. San Francisco, CA: Center for the Health Professions, University of California, San Francisco, 2002.

Appendix 6: Agenda Items for the First Team Meeting⁵

Following are suggested activities you may find useful to include in your team kickoff meeting:

Cultural views of team

- Explore each person's cultural views about the team / work. This may be a simple icebreaker exercise where you ask each person to complete the statement: "My ideal work environment is..."
- You may also wish to take the opportunity to complete a Team Assessment (Appendix 4) with your team, and discuss the results.
- Decide how everyone will work together.
- Establish how and when to share information, and who is responsible for each task.
- Discuss individual preferences around communication and identify steps which the team will adapt in order to work well together.

Goals and strategies

- Outline goals: what the company wants from the team.
- Decide on the steps to take to achieve the goals, and interim targets.

Purpose

- Define the purpose of your team.
- Define how it will benefit the members, individually and as a group.
- Define the role each person will play.

Code of conduct

Develop a code of conduct in meetings, a shared behaviour style that balances cultural preferred styles and organizational styles.

Decision-making

Identify a clear decision-making process to move projects from concepts to results.

Evaluation

Establish procedures for evaluating and reviewing progress, and for making necessary changes in values, policies or procedures.

Communication channels

Identify what team members are expected to share, and how and when they should relay this information.

Relationship-building

At the first team meeting, balance in-session meeting time for norm setting with appropriate out-of-session time for informal relationship-building activities that will be enjoyed by all.

⁵ Adapted from: Goldman, L. You're Hired...Now What?: An Immigrant's Guide to Success in the Canadian Workplace. Oxford University Press. 2010; and The Global Diversity Desk Reference: Managing an International Workforce. Lee Gardenswartz et al. Pfeiffer. 2003.
Cross-Cultural Teamwork Video - Facilitator's Guide
Intended for Employer Audiences



TRIEC

**Toronto Region Immigrant
Employment Council**

170 Bloor Street West, Suite 901
Toronto, ON M5S 1T9

Phone: 416.944.1946

Fax: 416.944.8915

www.triec.ca