

# IEP CONFERENCE



www.iep.ca

A UNIQUE FORUM FOR  
Internationally Educated Professionals

January 2011

## Winning Strategies for IEPs' Success in the Workplace:

*Employers' and IEPs' Perspectives*



*Funded by / Financé par*



Citizenship and  
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et  
Immigration Canada

Canada

*Presented by*



WORKING TOGETHER FOR PROGRESS

[www.pcpi.ca](http://www.pcpi.ca)



I am honoured to present **Winning Strategies for IEPs' Success in the Workplace: Employers' and IEPs' Perspectives** the 5th annual study by the Progress and Career Planning Institute (PCPI) to coincide with the 8th annual Conference of Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs).

As chair of the conference, and an employer who has worked with IEPs for the past 13 years, I've had the privilege of witnessing first hand some of the challenges IEPs face every day and the techniques they use to persevere. Every day IEPs across Canada are working to understand and adapt to Canadian workplace culture; while also trying to transfer their international experience and credentials to the Canadian context.

While challenges are a reality for many IEPs, too often we focus on barriers rather than success, on problems rather than solutions. That is why we have chosen to focus the 2011 research study on exploring what is working today for IEPs. This study is about asking: what approaches are IEPs using to successfully integrate into the Canadian workforce? We want to give hope to other IEPs that they can attain jobs commensurate with their credentials and demonstrate that many employers are supportive of these objectives.

The study proves that employers are investing in mentorships and other programs to support IEPs in the workplace and the results are proving mutually beneficial. By using case studies we were also able to showcase effective strategies and lessons learned, as well as other insights from the practical experiences of Internationally Educated Professionals and their employers in the Greater Toronto Area.

The conclusion from this exercise is that the journey to successful integration is long. It requires well thought out strategies that include commitment and dedication on the part of employers and IEPs. Our hope at PCPI is that our message will encourage IEPs to "try and try again until they succeed". To employers, we hope they recognize the wealth of skills and talents that IEPs bring to the workplace.

On a final note, I would like to offer a sincere thank you to the participants of the research studies for sharing their experiences and insights. We are also grateful to Citizenship and Immigration Canada for the funding to make this research possible.

Silma H Roddau  
President PCPI & IEP Conference Chair





## Acknowledgement

PCPI is grateful to the organizations and individuals who took the time to complete the online survey and to participate in this research study. PCPI would also like to acknowledge the support and contribution from:

### Funder



### The Centre for Community Based Research



Dr. Jonathan Lomotey  
Dr. Rich Janzen  
Liliana Araujo  
Yasir Dildar

### Research Advisory Team

Silma H. Roddau  
Amal Mirghani  
Karen Lior  
Nora Kelly  
Susan Brown

### 8th Annual IEP Conference Strategic Partners



## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction and Literature Review</b> .....	3
Immigration in Canada.....	3
Immigrant Integration into the Canadian Workforce .....	3
Promising/Good Practices to Integrate and Retain IEPs in the Workplace .....	4
The Importance and Benefits of Having IEPs Integrated into the Workplace .....	6
The Importance of this Study.....	6
<b>Objectives and Methodology</b> .....	7
Research Method .....	7
Data gathering .....	7
Data analysis .....	7
<b>Participants</b> .....	9
Interviews .....	9
Survey .....	9
Limitations .....	9
<b>Findings</b> .....	12
<b>Case Study #1: Dr. Nava Israel</b> .....	13
Background.....	13
Employer Strategies that Supported Nava’s Integration into Ryerson University .....	14
Nava’s Personal Strategies for Integration .....	16
A Summary of Key Strategies .....	18
<b>Case Study #2: Leonard Kange</b> .....	19
Background.....	19
Employer’s Support for Leonard’s Integration .....	19
Leonard’s Personal Strategies for Integration .....	22
A Summary of Key Strategies .....	22
<b>Case Study #3: Sandra Mastrovic</b> .....	23
Background.....	23
Employer Strategies that Supported Sandra’s Integration into WoodGreen .....	24
Sandra’s Personal Strategies for Integration .....	24
A Summary of Key Strategies .....	26
<b>Case Study #4: Dr. Alice Herrera</b> .....	27
Background.....	27
Employer and Mentor Strategies .....	28
Alice’s Personal Strategies for Integration .....	29
Summary of Key Strategies .....	30
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	31
<b>References</b> .....	32
<b>About PCPI</b> .....	34



## Executive Summary

**Winning Strategies for IEPs' Success in the Workplace: Employers' and IEPs' Perspectives** is a study initiated by the Progress Career Planning Institute (PCPI) as an integral part of its eighth annual Internationally Educated Professional (IEP) Conference on January 14, 2011. The aim of this study is to identify practical strategies that enable IEPs to integrate successfully into the workplace in the Toronto region by using a case study approach.

Data was gathered through the use of key informant interviews and surveys. Altogether, four case studies were conducted with IEPs from the following sectors: education, finance and banking, human resources, and government. Each case study involved interviews with the main participant and one or two individuals who provided professional support within or outside the workplace. The four case studies are summarized below.

### Case Study #1: Dr. Nava Israel

Dr. Nava Israel is an IEP in the area of education who immigrated to Canada with her family. She developed two successful programs at Ryerson University. Nava had the support of Phil, her manager and employer. Phil's guidance played a very important role in her success at Ryerson University.

### Case Study #2: Leonard Kange

Leonard Kange is a professional in the financial services sector who successfully moved through the ranks at the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), starting as a trainee account manager. With the help of his manager, Grant, and an in-house formal mentorship and training program, Leonard developed a better understanding of the Canadian workplace environment. He was later promoted to senior account manager.

### Case Study #3: Sandra Mastrovic

Sandra is a human resources professional who was successful in finding employment in her profession at WoodGreen Employment Services. WoodGreen provided professional development opportunities in combination with a supportive workplace with an inclusive environment.

### Case Study #4: Dr. Alice Herrera

Dr. Alice Herrera is an engineer currently employed with the Ontario Power Authority (OPA). Alice's success was facilitated by her former manager at CB Richard Ellis, her two mentors from the University of Philippines Alumni Association in Toronto and the inclusive work environment at OPA.

All of these four professionals were aided by supportive coaches, mentors, inclusive workplaces and access to professional development opportunities. These were the strategies used by both IEPs and employers that successfully integrated IEPs into their firms and/or organizations. Employers that want to "win the war on talent" will do well to apply these strategies.



## Executive Summary

### Conclusion

The findings of this study indicated that IEPs who achieve success in the Canadian workplace are:

- Highly motivated individuals who take control of their lives and work hard towards their goals.
- Open-minded, able to learn effectively and are aware of cultural differences.
- Able to seek and listen to advice.
- Willing to invest time and energy to improve their language and communication skills.
- Skilled networkers who take risks in “putting themselves out there” to meet new people and capitalize on the connections they offer.

Strategies that have helped IEPs with the above characteristics to be successful in the Canadian workplace are:

- **Mentoring/coaching:** The provision of formal and informal supports from individuals within and outside their work place who help IEPs to understand the corporate culture as well as the Canadian culture.
- **Investing in improving language and communication skills:** Enhance their ability to speak and communicate effectively in the workplace.
- **Networking:** Networking with other professionals within and outside the workplace helps IEPs to build on professional connections, advance and acclimate to a different corporate culture.
- **Actively seeking learning opportunities:** Successful IEPs seek opportunities to learn about the job through volunteerism and by taking advantage of available professional development opportunities.

In addition to using effective strategies, IEPs who have achieved success in the Canadian workplace have often found themselves in very supportive environments. Their colleagues understand diversity, are willing to listen, and provide open and honest feedback.

The findings of this study also indicated that employers who have mentored or coached IEPs to successfully integrate into the workplace are those who understand the value that IEPs bring to Canadian industries. These are individuals who take personal interest in helping an IEP to be successful.

Strategies that these employers used to assist the integration of IEPs into the workplace are:

- **Strong support from the start of employment:** working closely with IEPs and supporting them until they are comfortable in the workplace.
- **Support in understanding Canadian culture:** helping IEPs to understand the Canadian communication norms and expectations.
- **Support their networking:** exposing IEPs to professional development opportunities.
- **Open and honest feedback:** providing IEPs with feedback that allows them to learn and improve upon their work related interactions and relationships.
- **Work-life balance:** ensuring that IEPs are able to balance their personal and professional lives.
- **Building reciprocal relationships:** creating a dual learning environment where employers also learn from IEPs as they mentor and coach them at the workplace.



## Introduction and Literature Review

**Winning Strategies for IEPs’ Success in the Workplace: Employers’ and IEPs’ Perspectives** is a study initiated by Progress Career Planning Institute (PCPI). The purpose of the study was to identify the practical strategies that IEPs use to integrate successfully into the workplace in the Toronto region. This study builds on past research conducted by PCPI in the area of IEP employment. The study sought to outline strategies and best practices used by employers and successful IEPs to enhance IEP retention.

### Immigration in Canada

**The immigrant population in Canada is the highest it has been in 75 years** (Statistics Canada, 2007). In 2009, a total of 252,179 immigrants were admitted into Canada (CIC, 2009)<sup>1</sup>. As a result, approximately one-fifth (19.8%) of Canada’s total population is immigrant or foreign-born; a population that is growing faster than the Canadian-born population (Statistics Canada, 2007).

**Approximately 60% of immigrants admitted in 2009 were economic immigrants.** Of all immigrants admitted that year, 29.8% had a Bachelor’s degree, 11.6% had a Master’s degree, and 2.2% held a Doctorate degree. This means that nearly half (43.6%) of the immigrants that entered Canada in 2009 had a university education (CIC, 2009).

**In 2006, 57.3% of newcomers who had come to Canada in the preceding 5 years were in the prime working age group** (25 to 54), compared to 42.3% of Canadian-born individuals were in this age group (Statistics Canada, 2008).

**In 2009, Ontario received a total of 42.4% (106,867) of all immigrants to Canada; 51.3% being classified as economic immigrants.** Toronto became home to 32.8% (82,644) of immigrants to Ontario (CIC, 2009).

**According to the 2006 census,** Toronto and the surrounding metropolitan area is home to 2,320,200 foreign-born people (Statistics Canada, 2006). The top source countries of immigrants to Toronto are China, India and the Philippines (Statistics Canada, 2006).

### Immigrant Integration into the Canadian Workforce

**Immigration policy is bringing some of the world’s best and brightest skilled immigrants to Canada.** However, there is a disconnection between the availability of skilled immigrants and the need for filling labour shortages. Frank (2009) describes this disconnection as “...a conflict between the stated goals of Canada’s main immigration focus of recruiting immigrant professionals to satisfy the demand for skilled workers in certain occupational fields and the actual practice of employing these professionals in these fields” (pg. 5).

According to a Public Policy Forum study (2004), **the challenges employers face in integrating recent immigrants into their businesses include issues of language, difficulties with communication, recognizing foreign work experience, and a lack of Canadian experience.** These challenges affect small and medium-sized enterprises more than large organizations and appear to be higher in the city of Toronto than elsewhere in Ontario and other parts of Canada.

A 2009 study by PCPI on strategies for integrating IEPs in the Canadian labour force found that employers were “favourable to hiring IEPs but only a minority of firms have put into place tangible, IEP-friendly policies and programs” (pg. 3). Also, factors such as the global recession and fewer resources have resulted in a lack of effort put into this area.

<sup>1</sup> Citizenship and Immigration





### Promising/Good Practices to Integrate and Retain IEPs in the Workplace

There are promising or good practices that have been recommended, and/or implemented by employers to integrate and retain their IEPs. These practices include suggestions for the performance of top management to improve daily workplace interactions among employees.

#### Policies and governance

**Policies and governance that recognize the importance of diversity within the workplace result in immigrant friendly practices and a more inclusive workplace for IEPs.** In their study of integrating internationally educated health care professionals into the Ontario workforce Baumann and Blythe (2009), reported that the integration of these professionals into the workplace “begins long before they accept employment and begin work” (pg. 35). They suggested that all stakeholders from the immigration officials through the regulatory bodies to the actual employer are engaged to ensure the successful integration of IEPs. According to the Conference Board of Canada (2009), “Organizations with top management that views diversity as a strategic priority often achieve the best results in creating a work environment that welcomes people of various cultural backgrounds” (pg. 36). KPMG, for example, has a diversity council led by the company’s CEO with representatives from diverse cultures working in the company. This approach is a foundational strategy that can be effective in integrating and retaining IEPs as it recognizes the importance of their work and contributions from a company or executive level. Such recognition may result in the implementation of different programs and/or tools to further facilitate IEP integration and retention within the business or organization.

#### Diversity training for employees and management

**Diversity training for employees and management is a foundational practice for organizations and businesses to increase their cultural competency and become inclusive.** Benefits of diversity training may include: a reduction in cultural biases and the ability to address stereotypes; the promotion of a positive attitude towards diversity in the workplace; the creation and support of diverse teams; the improvement of organizational and financial performance; greater staff satisfaction; less turnover and better retention rates (CBC , 2005).

According to the reports of the employer consultations carried out by Colleges Ontario (2009), employers found diversity training especially effective in integrating immigrants into the workplace as well as in helping “the entire workforce work productively in a multicultural environment” (pg. 5). The employers who participated in the consultations noted that it is important to be aware of personal cultural norms. Without this awareness, investments in training and integrating immigrants into the workforce may be less effective.

The Conference Board of Canada (2009) reported that formal diversity training programs are more common in large organizations because of the financial and human resources that are available to implement an overall diversity strategy. An example of successful diversity training is at Deloitte as “cultural diversity content is integrated into all new-employee orientations” and performance reviews for managers include an “assessment of their ability to manage diverse teams” (pg. 35). Cultural competency is included in a mandatory training module for employees who receive promotions.



### Orientation

**Providing a thorough orientation to IEPs has also been identified as a strategy for IEP success in the workplace.** British Columbia’s Human Resources Management Association (BC HRMA, 2010) suggested that a thorough orientation should include both

...professional and cultural considerations such as: 1. Orientation to the organization mission, values, structure, teams, and staff members; identify those with diversity roles in the workplace; 2. Policies affecting the workplace such as diversity policies, human rights, anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, and other worker safeguards; 3. Workplace values including how teams work together, and management operates (BC HRMA, 2010, pg. 14)

According to Hire Immigrants Ottawa (2008), a thorough orientation goes beyond providing an overview of policies and procedures and includes “more specific behaviours than might be appropriate when we all share a similar cultural background” (pg. 20).

### Mentoring

**Mentorship within the workplace is a strategy consistently recommended for integrating IEPs into the workplace.** For example, a PCPI (2009) study found that mentoring was one of the most desired integration strategies among employers. A mentor can be a peer of the same or different culture or a supervisor who acts as a support and/or guide to the IEP (BC HRMA, 2010).

Mentorship is seen as a “common and effective way of helping new employees adapt to a new workplace” (CBC, 2009, pg. 30). Numerous companies are pairing their new hires with an experienced staff member to “provide one-on-one training and guidance to new employees” (CBC, 2009, pg. 30). Mentoring is considered to be “highly conducive to promoting talent within a company because it is about building relationships and allows employees to learn the intangibles that are needed to succeed in the workplace” (Hire Immigrants Ottawa, 2008, pg. 20).

Providing mentorship opportunities has benefits for both employers and IEPs. Employers are at an advantage of having IEPs who are well integrated into the organization and are in a position to increase performance and productivity. IEPs are enabled to have well developed careers within the organization (CBC, 2009).

### Workplace/professional development sessions

**Workplace/professional development is a strategy that assists with IEP integration and especially with their retention within their organizations.** According to the BC HRMA (2010), providing regular workplace development sessions, including team building opportunities, diversity workshops, and workshops to support team work, is part of ensuring the success of skilled immigrants in the workplace. Professional development is also seen as a vital component in the retention of IEPs. According to the CBC (2009), without opportunities for professional growth or recognition of their accomplishments, employees tend to seek other opportunities.



### English language and communication skills training

**Providing English language and/or communication skills training is another strategy that employers may use to decrease the language and communication barriers for IEPs.** According to a study by Colleges Ontario (2009), the employers and associations consulted emphasized the importance of IEPs speaking one of the two official languages not only to secure employment, but also to allow for greater mobility within the organization.

### The Importance and Benefits of Having IEPs Integrated into the Workplace

Studies have indicated that Canada's immigration policy brings high levels of professional talent to this country. For example, the Conference Board of Canada (2009) noted that businesses across Canada have the opportunity to benefit from adding worldwide talent to their teams and that, **"With strong competition for top talent among Canadian businesses, those organizations that choose to utilize what immigrants have to offer will reap the rewards"** (CBC, 2009, pg. i). Colleges Ontario (2009) found that immigrants are a wise investment for the sustainability, stability, and growth of businesses. Similarly, participants in the Public Policy Forum (2004) identified language skills, ability to generate new ideas, and expansion to multicultural markets as some of the benefits of hiring immigrants.

### The Importance of this Study

The focus of the majority of research studies in the area of immigrant employment have been on immigrant entry into the Canadian workforce. This research study goes beyond and explores the subsequent phase of internationally educated professionals' integration into the Canadian workplace.

Immigration is projected as the primary source of new entrants to the Canadian labour force in 2030 (Statistics Canada, 2008). In order to stay competitive and attract the qualified talent arriving in Canada, employers must be aware of the changing demographics and be prepared with the necessary knowledge and tools to hire, integrate and retain IEPs who come to Canada. The findings of this study may serve as a tool for those employers in integrating their IEPs.



### Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was threefold:

- 1** To assist IEPs with navigating stumbling blocks in the workplace and transition to progressive roles in their fields of work.
- 2** To support the development of new government and employer initiatives that provide opportunities for IEPs to utilize their skills and learn new ones, with growth potential, in their field of work.
- 3** To promote one of PCPI's main goals; to enable individuals and organizations to realize their full potential within Canada's multicultural workforce.

### Research Method

This study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods of data gathering, key informant interviews and surveys. Information from these sources was complemented with information from the literature on employment and retention of IEPs in the Toronto region.

### Data gathering

The two main data gathering methods were:

#### **1. Individual Interviews**

Four IEPs were identified for case studies. Selection criteria for the case studies included the level of success achieved in the workplace, gender, age, profession (regulated and unregulated) and region (by continent of origin) from which the individual immigrated to Canada. This approach was used to ensure diversity in the cases studied.

Each case study consisted of individual interviews with an IEP and one or two supporters (one inside the workplace and one outside the workplace).

The individual interviews focused on the strategies used by IEPs and their supporters to:

- enhance their success in the Canadian workplace
- deal with the challenges they experienced
- consider factors that enhance successful integration
- document opportunities for IEPs to achieve progressive positions



## 2. Online survey

An online survey was used to complement interview findings. The survey allowed the research team to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from a larger sample of people than the interviews allowed. The advantages of using an online survey include: a rapid response, reduced expenses, and increased respondent flexibility. Moreover, an online survey eliminates interviewer bias or error and protects the privacy of respondents. The two surveys were:

**Employer/Mentor Survey:** The purpose of this survey was to identify strategies used by employers/mentors in the Toronto Region in coaching and supporting IEPs to be successful in the Canadian workplace. The survey identified factors that enhance IEP integration and the challenges employers experience in supporting them.

**Successful IEP Survey:** The successful IEPs survey aimed at identifying strategies that IEPs used to enhance their successful integration into the Canadian workplace. It included questions about the role of supporters, factors that enhanced their successful integration and the challenges they experienced.

## Data analysis

Qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed using content analysis. Through content analysis, the data was systematically coded based on themes that were relevant to the project's objectives.

Quantitative data from the surveys was coded and analyzed using SPSS statistical software. The data analysis included the generation of descriptive statistics and the creation of tables and charts to highlight key points in the data.



Eleven individuals participated in interviews for the case studies and 188 people participated in the IEP and employer surveys. The numbers of survey and case studies participants are presented separately because there is an overlap between the two data gathering methods. Individuals who participated in one method were also invited to participate in the other method.

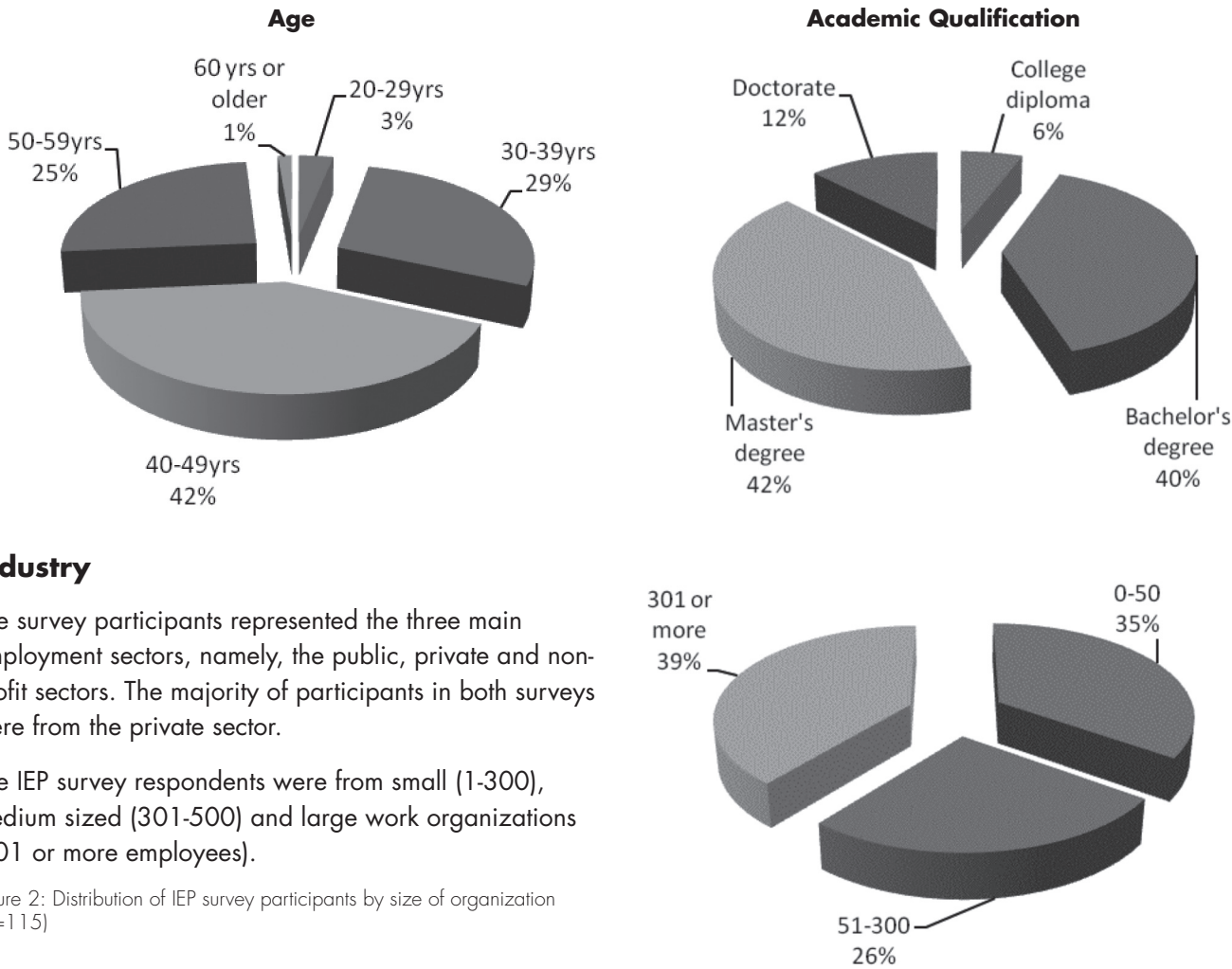
## Interviews

The central IEP participants in the case studies were three females and one male. They represented the following sectors: education; government; banking and finance; and business services. Seven IEP supporters were also interviewed, including five males and two females. Four of them were internal to the organization or employment setting, and three were external. The internal supporters included managers and supervisors.

## Survey

The survey participants included 168 IEPs and 20 employers. Their age range was 20 to 60 years or older. The majority of them had university degrees. The participants in the IEP survey were 55.8% male and 44.2% female while the participants in the employer survey were 55.6% male and 44.4% female.

Figure 1: The distribution of IEP survey participants by age and academic qualifications



## Industry

The survey participants represented the three main employment sectors, namely, the public, private and non-profit sectors. The majority of participants in both surveys were from the private sector.

The IEP survey respondents were from small (1-300), medium sized (301-500) and large work organizations (501 or more employees).

Figure 2: Distribution of IEP survey participants by size of organization (N=115)





## Participants

The employer survey participants were from the following sectors: engineering and related professions, information technology and communications, and education. The sectors with the most participants in the IEP survey were healthcare and related professions, community and social services, engineering, education, finance and accounting, and information technology.

Table 1: Distribution of IEP survey participants by industry

Industry	Internationally Educated Professionals		Employers	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	2	2.0%	-	-
Manufacturing	6	5.9%	-	-
Mining	2	2.0%	-	-
Engineering and related professions	10	9.9%	5	31.2%
Utilities	4	4.0%	-	-
Construction	1	1.0%	-	-
Transportation	1	1.0%	-	-
Business Services	4	4.0%	1	6.3%
Trade	6	5.9%	1	6.3%
Finance and Accounting	9	8.8%	1	6.3%
Information Technology & Communications	8	7.9%	3	18.7%
Education	10	9.9%	3	18.7%
Real Estate, Rental or Leasing	1	1.0%	-	-
Healthcare and Related Professions	17	16.8%	1	6.3%
Community and Social Services	15	14.9%	-	-
Public Service (Government)	5	5.0%	1	6.3%
Total	101	100%	16	100%

Among the respondents in the IEP survey were 53 people (32%) who were working in their trained professions; 89 (53.7%) were working in other professions or fields of employment. The remaining participants did not indicate whether or not they were working in their professions.

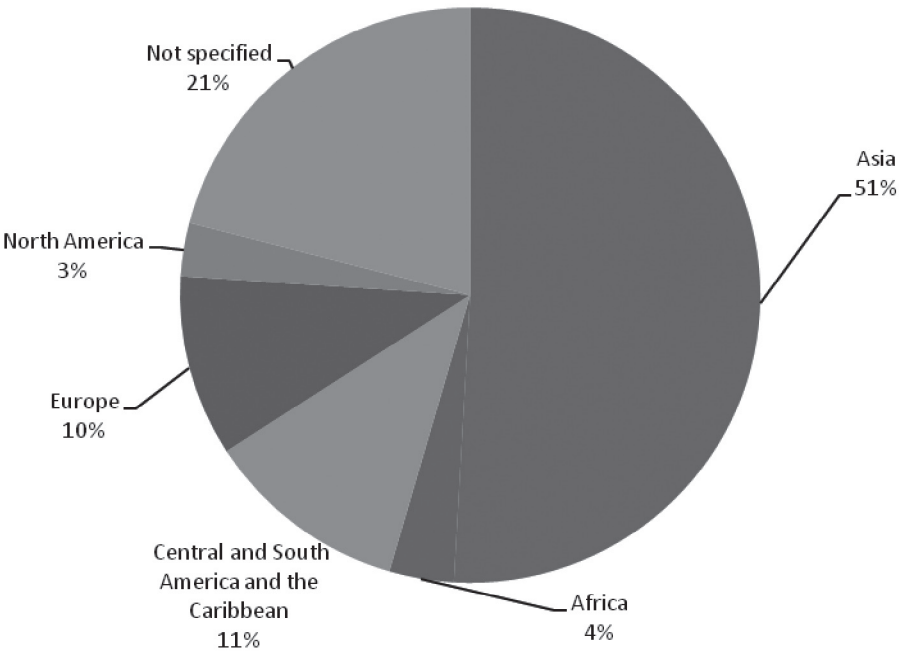


## Participants

### Length of stay in Canada and continent of immigration

The average length of stay in Canada for IEPs who participated in the survey was 4.62 years. About half of them had emigrated from Asia, which reflects the distribution of immigrants by continent of origin in the Toronto region (Statistics Canada, 2006). The remaining participants in the IEP survey had emigrated from Central and South America (11%), Europe (10%), Africa (4%), and North America (3%).

Figure 3: Chart showing IEP survey participants’ continents of immigration



### Limitations:

The response rate for both surveys was very small: 8.3% for the IEP survey and 1.4% for the employer survey. Based on these response rates, we cannot generalize the survey findings to the general population. The survey findings reinforce some of the findings in the case studies.



## Findings

The findings of this study are presented in this section by case study. For each case study we describe the IEP participant and provide some personal background information. This is followed by a presentation of the strategies used by employers and other people to support IEPs, as well as the personal strategies used by IEPs to facilitate their integration into the workplace. The case studies’ findings are supported by the literature, as well as findings from the IEP and employer surveys.



## Case Study #1

**Dr. Nava Israel is an IEP in the area of education who successfully developed two bridging programs for IEPs at Ryerson University. Her employer’s support and guidance played a very important role in her success at Ryerson University.**

Nava is the founder and president of Global Fusion Education. This organization provides tools for regulators, professional bodies and employers to better integrate IEPs as well as educational programs to assist internationally educated professionals to develop the soft skills and leadership skills required to be successful in the Canadian workplace.



### Background

Nava is a 45 year-old dietitian with a background in development of educational programs and dietetics. She was educated and trained in Israel and immigrated to Canada with her husband and two children in 2001. They came to Canada initially because her husband had a contract to work for a Canadian company. When the contract ended, the family chose to remain in Canada. Before immigrating to Canada, Nava owned and operated a clinic. She worked as a dietitian or consultant with many groups and organizations such as sports teams, and factory owners. In addition, Nava developed and taught in seven Israeli colleges and universities.

### Employment in Canada

Nava registered with the College of Dietitians of Ontario when she arrived in Canada in order to continue working in her profession. Despite her PhD degree in her profession and the 18 years of experience, it took her one and a half years to register. The process was long and complicated, but she persevered. Ultimately, she was one of the few IEPs who passed the registration exam and was subsequently licensed as a dietitian among many other internationally trained dietitians who had unsuccessfully sought a license.

***When I go to a conference, I would always get up and speak or ask a question. So that is building your profile. It was a situation in which you had to re-invent yourself.***  
~ Nava

After receiving her license, Nava applied to various institutions for the position of dietitian but was not granted any interviews, either because she was over-qualified or because she had “no Canadian work experience”. She chose to work as a self-employed consultant, as she had been in Israel. She started by calling organizations, clinics, and hospitals to ask if they needed a dietitian, and to offer her services as a contractor. Through this process Nava secured work as a dietitian with a few organizations, including doctors’ offices and sports clinics.

While practising as a private dietitian, she made it a point to attend every professional conference, and to network with other professionals in the field. These activities helped her to build her profile, and enhance her professional connections.



## Case Study #1

It was through these activities, and according to Nava, a stroke of luck, that she was discovered by the Nutrition Program at Ryerson University. The Nutrition Program was looking for someone with her background and skills to help build a certificate program for dietitians. Bridging programs are provincially funded programs to help newcomers to bridge the gap between their past learning and work experience, and Canadian labour market requirements for their professions.

Nava was hired, initially on part-time basis, by Ryerson's G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education- The Chang School- to help develop a new certificate program in dietetics and kinesiology. This program was part of the Community Services Program and was designed for practicing Registered Dietitians and nutritionists. Nava's experience as a dietitian and her work with sports organizations in Israel qualified her well for the position. Subsequently, she was hired full time to develop a bridging program for immigrant dietitians. About two years later, she moved to a new full time position to develop a newly-funded bridging program titled Workplace Communication in Canada (WCC).

Nava had a very successful tenure at Ryerson. According to Phil, who was Nava's manager at Ryerson, although he always hired "the best person for the job", Nava's success was beyond all expectations. Her success in developing the bridging program for dietitians led to the department obtaining funding for her to start another bridging program for IEPs to help them develop cultural literacy and workplace communication skills in the Canadian context.

After working for six years at Ryerson University, Nava has become a leader in the areas of cultural competence, behavioural change, and culture-driven professional communication. In 2009, she founded Global Fusion Education, a private organization that assists in the integration of IEPs into the Canadian labour market.

### Employer Strategies that Supported Nava's Integration into Ryerson University

Nava's integration into Ryerson University was facilitated by a supportive environment at the Department of Continuing Education. The main strategy that facilitated Nava's integration was coaching and support.

#### Coaching and support

Coaching and support provided Nava with information, feedback, new ideas and helped her to understand the corporate culture and work environment.

Phil, the program manager at the Department of Continuing Education at Ryerson, was Nava's main supporter and coach. Phil served as a sounding board as Nava strived to make a cultural shift and adapt to working in the Canadian workplace. Nava described Phil as an individual with a great understanding of the challenges that IEPs experience in integrating into the Canadian workplace, and a person who knew how to support them to achieve success.

**Phil's main strategy for supporting Nava was coaching.**

**In addition to the coaching, Nava invested time and energy into:**

- Improving her language and communication skills, and
- Networking with her colleagues and other professionals

**The IEP survey results indicated that many IEPs have used similar strategies: (n=99)**

- Networking (92%)
- Language training programs (84%)
- Coaching and mentorship (90%)



## Case Study #1

***His (Phil's) greatness was that he was able to use my energy, abilities and will to do things and give me enough latitude [to do my work]. ~ Nava***

She also said,

***[Phil provided] me with sincere feedback and was there for me when I didn't know how or why things were happening the way they were in this environment, and what would be the way to address an issue. ~ Nava***

In Phil's assessment, Nava had the necessary qualifications for the position of program manager and the corresponding knowledge and experience. He noticed and understood Nava's focus on doing a good job and her efforts to be supportive to her colleagues. His role was primarily to help Nava direct her energy in a way that would secure her success at work.

***Nava brought huge energy to the position; but [one] still has to know how to use this energy in the most effective way in the position... and she [Nava] was very eager to learn and that really made it easy to work with her. ~ Phil***

Phil worked closely with Nava at the beginning until they were confident that she was comfortable in her role. According to Phil,

***I tell my new hires [Nava included], "At the outset, I am going to stick with you like glue. I am going to be with you and observe everything you do until we are both satisfied that you are confident in what you are doing. So, initially, "Don't do anything without talking to me first". ~ Phil***

**The employers' survey results indicated that the following strategies are popular for supporting IEPs' integration: (n=20)**

- Helping IEPs to understand the work environment (60%)
- Providing open and honest feedback (60%)
- Establishing personal relationships and building trust with IEPs (60%)
- Showing appreciation for IEPs talents and skills (60%)
- Facilitating networking with other professionals (60%)
- Connecting IEPs to internal and external resources (55%)
- Keeping the individual motivated (55%)





## Case Study #1

This approach allowed Phil and Nava to develop a mutually trusting relationship. They were both confident that she could always turn to him if she had questions. Phil said one of his principles in helping IEPs to adapt to the Canadian workplace was “No surprises”.

***The rule was, “Don’t surprise me”. If there was something that you think might be a little bit out of the ordinary, let me know. Don’t surprise me. That way, I would be able to support you. ~ Phil***

Phil also helped Nava improve her language and communication skills. He used a model that stresses the importance of understanding what the other person wants in a negotiation.

***Everyone listens to the radio station WIFM - meaning “What’s In It For Me?”***

***If you ask yourself what is in it for the other person, you will be able to start the negotiation. ~ Phil***

Phil explained that he supports IEPs in developing their careers and building their professional profiles. He identified opportunities in which Nava could gain experience by doing media and/or conference presentations.

### **Nava’s Personal Strategies for Integration**

In addition to the support that Nava received from Phil and her husband, Nava found that networking strategically and improving her English language communication skills helped adapt to the Canadian workplace.

### **Networking**

For Nava, networking involved making connections with colleagues at Ryerson University and attending conferences and other professional development events to connect with others in her field.

One challenge Nava experienced at Ryerson was working in a large North American institution.

***For me to even understand how to manage myself within such a big organization was quite a learning, in addition to the fact that the whole culture was also different. Sometimes it was strategy; sometimes it was just luck to get good feedback from honest people. ~ Nava***

### **Personal strategies used by IEPs for integration include: (n=100)**

- **Professional and career development programs (97%)**
- **Skill upgrade programs (93%)**
- **Social activities in the workplace (90%)**
- **Online professional development resources (88%)**
- **Community support programs (86%)**
- **Actively seeking leadership roles (81%)**



## Case Study #1

Nava established connections with co-workers and other professionals in order to observe and learn from their behaviour and experience. This networking deepened her understanding of workplace culture and helped clarify her roles and responsibilities.

According to Nava, a lack of understanding of the workplace culture often creates complicated situations for IEPs. This was especially true for Nava in her first months at Ryerson when she realized that her communication style differed from the norm. She noticed that some people valued her input and others found her style intolerable. Still others saw her as intrusive and tried to halt her progress.

To navigate the workplace skillfully, Nava relied on Phil’s support and guidance as well as her own acquired knowledge and the experience she acquired through interactions with her colleagues and other professionals. She learned to understand the concerns that people had and tried to address them openly. She always asked for feedback to ensure that she was on the right track.

### **Improving her language and communication skills**

Nava’s second strategy was improving her language and communication skills. This involved reading, listening and observing the way others communicate.

Although Nava spoke fluent English before coming to Canada, she discovered subtle, but significant, differences between language and communication in Israeli culture and Canadian culture. Israeli culture is blunt and direct, different from the Canadian norm. She said,

You know, when I came to Canada I thought I had good English, and I must tell you that I wrote my Ph.D. thesis in English, so it [my English] couldn’t have been bad. Yet, when I came here and I started working with clients, I was just shocked at how much more I needed to learn. (Nava)

In order to overcome this major challenge, Nava committed worked diligently on her language and communication skills to become “more Canadian” in the way she communicated. She read avidly, both fiction and non-fiction in addition to professional literature. Her reading familiarized Nava with Canadian content and language. Nava stressed the importance of keeping an open mind, being prepared to learn and taking control. She is certain that persevering is the route to success.

***“A Lack of understanding of the Canadian workplace often creates a complicated situation of IEPs”. ~ Nava***

***“As immigrants, often times we don’t know that we walk on mines. We don’t see the explosions because they happen behind our backs and people don’t tell us, either because they don’t want to, or because they think we don’t see it. They think we just don’t care, or they are just too polite to say something, and we don’t learn, which is terrible.” ~ Nava***

***According to Nava,***

***“In such situations, having people around you, who would give you honest feedback was extremely important.”***





## Case Study #1

### A Summary of Key Strategies

The following workplace strategies for facilitating the integration of IEPs are drawn from Nava's experience. They are divided into two categories; employers and IEPs themselves.

#### A. Employers strategies:

1. Provide coaching and support for IEPs by linking IEPs with individuals who have an understanding of IEP experiences and a genuine interest in helping them to succeed.
2. Focus on helping IEPs to better understand the workplace and how to navigate it.
3. Provide opportunities for networking with other employees to enhance learning opportunities for IEPs. This helps them to observe, learn, and build their careers in the Canadian context.
4. Help IEPs to improve their language and communication skills by helping them to adapt their communication styles to the Canadian context to make them more effective. It also involves providing open and honest feedback.

#### B. IEP strategies:

1. Seek networking opportunities with colleagues and other professionals: Listen, ask questions, and pay attention to the local culture. Have an open mind, be prepared to learn, and ask for feedback.
2. Improve your language and communication skills: Learn to become "more Canadian" in your communication.
3. Take control and work hard to achieve success: "Giving up is not an option".

***Sometimes people sabotage their own chances to success by focusing on blaming others, and the system, and whatever for their situations instead of putting their energy in finding solutions. ~ Nava***

***According to Nava, "Giving up is not an option",***

- ***Yes, unpleasant things happen***
- ***Sometimes there would be discrimination***
- ***There would be barriers***
- ***There would be hardships***
- ***Yes, you would have to change***

***But ...***

***"It's really about taking responsibility for your own life; knowing it would be a hard journey, 'sit at the helm', and drive yourself wherever you want to go." ~ Nava***



## Case Study #2

**Leonard Kange is a professional in the financial services sector. He started at the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) in 2007 as a trainee account manager.**

During Leonard's training, Grant, his manager noticed his talent and motivation, and provided Leonard with additional support to help him adapt to the Canadian workplace. Upon completion of his training, Leonard became an account manager. Through hard work and perseverance he was promoted to the position of a senior account manager.

### Background

Leonard and his family immigrated to Canada from Nigeria in 2006. Leonard has a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology and experience in banking.

Leonard had formal training in financial services, commercial, corporate, and investment banking in Nigeria. Prior to his emigration, he worked for 14 years in Nigeria's banking sector in several positions including the Head of Strategy. He left a successful career in the Nigerian banking sector to come to Canada.

### Employment in Canada

Before emigrating, Leonard did research on employment opportunities in the Canadian financial sector. He submitted applications to several Canadian financial institutions one of which offered him a position as a financial advisor. With this offer, Leonard took an examination and obtained certification to work as a financial advisor in insurance and mutual funds. He supplemented his training and experience with additional professional courses, including one in professional financial planning, in which he had worked in Nigeria.

### Employer's Support for Leonard's Integration

RBC has a formal mentorship and training program that assigns new employees to a mentor in the company who can facilitate the integration process.

### Coaching and support

The RBC training and mentorship program includes computer-based learning, on-the-job learning, workshops, and practical examinations that help new employees to learn the technical aspects of the job.



**Employers rated the following strategies as effective in helping IEP integration:**

**(Mean rating on a scale of 1 to 7; n=20)**

- **Showing appreciation for IEPs talents and skills (6.1)**
- **Connecting IEPs to internal and external resources (5.9)**
- **Providing open and honest feedback (5.9)**
- **Establishing personal relationships and building trust with IEPs (5.8)**
- **Facilitating networking with other professionals (5.7)**
- **Helping IEPs to understand the work environment (5.6)**
- **Keeping the individual motivated (5.6)**



## Case Study #2

RBC's training and mentoring program is based on a strong support for diversity, starting with a diversity council headed by its CEO. RBC provides diversity training for staff and managers and actively has a hiring policy that encourages bringing people of different cultural backgrounds into the company. RBC believes that diversity is a source of innovation, and sustainable economic prosperity for clients, employees and shareholders.

***RBC has done a lot of work around working with people who come to this country from different cultures and who have different experiences. And I can say that in working with people from different cultural backgrounds and sharing their business practices and organizational norms, we learn from each other. ~ Grant***

When Leonard was hired into the trainee pool at RBC, Dan was assigned to him as a mentor. Dan was a team leader whose formal mentorship focused primarily on the technical aspects of the work. He helped Leonard to develop the skills and competency required for the job.

Leonard realized soon after starting at RBC that his entry position was much below his knowledge and experience. He had anticipated a position that would be challenging and lead to other opportunities in the company.

Leonard spoke to his mentor, Dan, and an executive, Grant, about his concerns and, at the same time, agreed to continue in the position in order to demonstrate his skills and competencies to his managers.

Dan and Grant said that when Leonard joined RBC they noticed that he was very capable. Dan said he found Leonard to be a good networker who made the effort to establish himself as a trusted advisor to his clients, and a solid partner to his colleagues. Grant said Leonard had the skills for a more senior level position.

Grant and Dan also agreed that Leonard needed help to better understand the financial system in Canada, and deepen his awareness and understanding of RBC. According to Grant, Leonard needed to learn how the different parts of RBC worked together, how decisions are made, and how to influence those decisions.

To help Leonard achieve these objectives, Dan ensured that time and resources were available that he could develop a good understanding of financial services in Canada. Dan allowed Leonard to job-shadow and gave him other opportunities for learning.

### **Some strategies used by employers of IEPs in the financial services:**

**(IEP survey; n=8)**

- **Creating a culturally inclusive work environment (87.5%)**
- **Creating equal opportunities for staff (87.5%)**
- **Networking with other organizations to provide services and programs for IEPs (75%)**
- **Providing supports and resources to aid IEP integration (73.4%)**



## Case Study #2

***I assigned Leonard to a number of jobs, and provided him opportunities to attend external events. Through these opportunities, he learned more about the Canadian banking industry and this helped him to develop a context for the job. ~ Dan***

***"I have worked with people from other countries who are new to the organization who often say, "Well I know I did this somewhere else but it was in another country or with another company". And they would follow up by saying, "but I know we don't count that here". My advice to them is, "Be sure that you are telling your story because we do value what that brings to this company. Be sure to tell us how what you did before can help us here." ~ Grant***

Grant understood the value that IEPs bring to the Canadian industry and, noticing Leonard's skill level and motivation, took a personal interest in mentoring and supporting him. Grant helped Leonard to develop the soft skills needed to succeed in the Canadian financial sector.

Grant interacted with Leonard regularly and assisted him with his career development plans. They discussed Leonard's career interests and objectives, set goals, and developed a plan for working towards achieving them.

Grant's model of mentorship took into consideration both Leonard's professional and personal lives. This model had three main components:

1. An exploration of the individual's career interests in relation to the company to understand the persons career aspirations.
2. An exploration of the individual's work-life balance requirements to help the individual prioritize. This may include exploring hours of work, mobility, and time spent with family.
3. An exploration of the individual's personal interests and preferences. This includes discussions about the individual's likes and hobbies, past work, and life experiences.

Grant believes that holding mentoring discussions in these three areas enables one to know a person better. This allows him to support the individual to achieve a better personal and professional life balance. Grant helped Leonard to build a strong network with managerial staff, as a way of socializing him into RBC.

Grant also worked with Leonard on improving his communication skills. He provided Leonard with feedback and spoke with him about communicating effectively. He also encouraged Leonard to ask questions and to focus on both the technical and relational aspects of the work.

***"When I came in and I saw the position and the job description, it turned out to be what I had been doing 14 years ago in Nigeria. So I said, "What? Am I going to start all over again from the beginning?" ~ Leonard***

Grant encouraged Leonard to tell his story so that people would know more about him and about his capabilities. Grant did this because he noticed that Leonard was reluctant to tell his own story not wanting to appear boastful or self-promoting. Grant thought this was a cultural trait and helped Leonard tell his story in a way that was comfortable.



## Case Study #2

Grant’s mentorship and support played a significant role in Leonard’s integration into RBC. Leonard notes, ***He was a person with whom I could share my challenges and success, and get some insights into how I could navigate the organization. That helped me a great deal. ~ Leonard***

### Leonard’s Personal Strategies for Integration

Leonard relied on two personal strategies to help him adapt to the Canadian workplace. These were actively seeking opportunities for learning, and investigative networking with colleagues.

#### Actively seeking opportunities for learning

Actively seeking opportunities for learning was offering to help colleagues with tasks in his spare time. Leonard said he wanted to learn as much as possible, so he tried to be of service to all his colleagues. He offered to help people with tasks whenever an opportunity presented itself.

***I tried to be of service to all my colleagues. For instance if they were going on vacation, I would volunteer to cover for them. That way I would learn quite a lot while managing their desks. Also for those that had high workloads, I would offer to help when they had a lot of transactions coming off at the same time. ~ Leonard***

Offering to help people allowed Leonard to observe how different managers handled their work and learn from their behaviour. This was critical for his personal development.

#### Investigative networking

Investigative networking involved attending social events at RBC for the purpose of learning. Leonard attended as many social events as possible to better understand the corporate culture at RBC. During these events he established contacts with as many people as possible and asked them questions about their work. Through these contacts, he learned more about the organization and how it operated.

### A Summary of Key Strategies

The following workplace strategies for facilitating the integration of IEPs are extrapolated from this case study.

#### A. Employers Strategies:

1. Provide mentorship for IEPs: In addition to the technical aspects of the work, emphasize on helping IEPs to understand the corporate culture as well as the cultural expectations of them as co-workers.
2. Encourage IEPs to tell their stories in order to help others to understand the value that they bring to the organization.

#### B. IEPs Strategies:

1. Network to learn more about how people go about their work. Attend social events, meet people, and ask questions. Seek out people in your organization who have the knowledge and experience to help you understand your organization and its culture. Ask them for feedback and learn from them.
2. Seek opportunities for learning: Offer to help your colleagues with tasks to provide yourself more opportunities for learning. This helps one to better understand the organization and how it works.



## Case Study #3

Sandra Mastrovic is a human resources professional from Argentina. Upon her arrival in Canada, Sandra worked at odd jobs and volunteered until she found employment in her profession as an employment advisor at WoodGreen Employment Services. At WoodGreen Sandra found Elizabeth, who became a friend and mentor. Sandra recognizes that having a personal coach at the workplace, opportunities for professional development, and an inclusive work environment were key to her success at WoodGreen.

### Background

Sandra is a 52 year old woman who arrived in 2001 from Argentina. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in architecture and a Master’s in Business Administration. In addition to these degrees, Sandra completed courses in human resources and pursued a career in human resources. She was employed as a human resources compensation consultant and later as a manager in Argentina and in Venezuela, where she resided for 20 years.

Sandra’s professional pace slowed upon immigrating to Canada. When she first arrived, Sandra decided to stay home and care for her family until they felt settled in Canada. After approximately five years, she decided to return to the workforce.

### Employment in Canada

In preparation for re-entering the workforce, Sandra registered with the Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA) and took courses with the Canadian Human Resources Professionals (CHRP) organization.

Sandra was frustrated after a year of looking for employment and not finding a job as a human resource professional so she took a job as a part-time bus driver. During this time, she volunteered with a Hispanic non-profit organization for Spanish-speaking women. There Sandra met Elizabeth, who would become her friend and mentor. Elizabeth supported Sandra through her job search, job acquisition, and ultimately her integration into the Canadian workplace.

The position with WoodGreen was Sandra’s first job related to the area of human resources in Canada. She has settled into her position at WoodGreen, and according to Elizabeth, she has been a very successful employee.







**Employer Strategies that Supported Sandra’s Integration into WoodGreen**

Two main workplace strategies, finding opportunities for professional development and an inclusive environment, aided Sandra’s integration at WoodGreen.

**Professional development**

WoodGreen has policies for the professional development of all employees. This includes regular training; workshops on various topics (e.g. conflict resolution and customer service); regular staff meetings; and team building activities within and outside the office. These training opportunities were vital to Sandra’s integration into the workplace. They built on her knowledge base and skills, leading to her success.

**Inclusive work environment**

WoodGreen has an inclusive environment and non-discriminatory culture for its entire staff, which includes a large number of IEPs. Elizabeth stated that the office manager at WoodGreen makes a conscious effort to create this inclusive environment. His strategies include welcoming new employees to the team, organizing cultural celebrations, celebrating employees’ birthdays (for those who wish), and celebrating various cultural and holy days.

***...the office manager makes each new staff feel welcome. He also organizes cultural and holy days. These strategies have contributed to a positive work environment where cultural diversity is respected.***  
**~ Elizabeth**

**Sandra’s Personal Strategies for Integration**

Sandra’s two main personal strategies for integrating into the workplace were seeking support, and improving her English language and communication skills.

**The effectiveness of workplace strategies identified by IEPs in the human resources industry:  
(Mean ratings on a scale of 1 to 7; n=100)**

- **Putting in place anti-racism and harassment policies and procedures (5.29)**
- **Providing socialization opportunities for staff both at work and outside work (5.13)**
- **Diversity training for staff to enhance cultural competence (5.0)**
- **Cross-cultural management training (5.0)**



**Seeking support**

Sandra knew that to succeed she had to gain a better understanding of the Canadian culture and workplace. She relied on Elizabeth for support and information about the norms of the workplace.

In the beginning, Elizabeth and Sandra had very similar jobs. This allowed Sandra to work with Elizabeth on a daily basis and receive tips from her on how to make her job easier. Elizabeth, whose cultural background was similar to Sandra’s, provided Sandra with insights into the cultural differences that she might encounter in the workplace and ways to interpret behaviour.

Most importantly, Elizabeth gave Sandra constant honest and constructive feedback, which helped Sandra boost her self-confidence. A confidence boost was what Sandra needed the most, according to Elizabeth, because she had great qualifications and good experience.

Elizabeth also facilitated Sandra’s relationships with colleagues. This allowed her to develop a supportive network in the organization.

***First of all, she introduced me to the rest of the staff beyond the formal introduction that the manager did when I started working. She did much more... like we would go out for lunch or coffee with somebody from the office or she would facilitate a meeting with somebody else.***  
**~ Sandra**

**Improving her language and communication skills**

Sandra experienced the same obstacles related to language and communication that face many IEPs from non-English speaking countries. She developed specific strategies to minimize her insecurities about her language skills.

***“...the best resource is having a mentor; a person who works in the same organization, and who can tell you, or show you how things are done and how to proceed.”*** ~ Sandra

She joined an English conversation circle to practice speaking and enrolled in an English pronunciation course to improve her communication. In order to improve both her reading and speaking skills, Sandra joined a book club as well as a settlement program to further improve her reading and speaking fluency in English.

In the settlement program, Sandra found opportunities to make short oral presentations to her peers. These presentations were often focused on job searching techniques for internationally trained professionals. These strategies helped Sandra to develop her English language skills and expand her professional network.

***“...having the support of someone who has gone through the same and knows how to overcome things will really help integrate them.”***  
**~ Elizabeth**





## Case Study #3

### A Summary of Key Strategies

The following workplace strategies for facilitating the integration of IEPs can be identified from Sandra's experience.

#### A. Employers Strategies:

1. Provide professional development opportunities for all staff, especially for IEPs including training workshops and team building activities.
2. Create an inclusive work environment for all staff, one in which staff of all cultures share a sense of belonging.

#### B. IEPs Strategies

1. Seek out an individual with knowledge and experience about the workplace and the Canadian culture for coaching and support in work sites where there is no formal mentorship program.
2. Focus on improving language and communication skills development by seeking opportunities to learn and practice English speaking skills.



## Case Study #4

**Dr. Alice Herrera is an engineer working for the Ontario Power Authority (OPA). Prior to her employment at OPA, Alice worked briefly as an engineer with CB Richard Ellis (CBRE).**

Alice's integration into the Canadian workplace was greatly facilitated by the support she received from two sources: Byron, her first manager and two mentors assigned to Alice by the University of Philippines Alumni Association in Toronto, Estelita and her husband, Ely.

### Background

Alice and her family of four arrived in Canada in September of 2007. Alice had a PhD in Energy Engineering and extensive experience working in the field. In her 20 years she worked in the area of energy efficiency and renewable energy. At one point, she worked in a government agency's research and development department. Alice led a team of researchers on biomass energy, in addition to being a consultant for energy efficiency and renewable energy policies.

Alice and her family chose to live in Toronto and here they connected to the University of Philippines Alumni Association. This association had a new mentoring program that matched Alice with two long-time members of the association, Estelita and Ely, who were also IEPs. Estelita explained that the mentorship program was created by the University of the Philippines Alumni Association in order to help newly arrived alumni with various job acquisition and integration supports.

### Employment in Canada

Alice worked as a math and science tutor during the eight months she spent looking for a job that matched her qualifications, skills and experience. When she found her first appropriate job, at CBRE, Byron would become her manager and supporter.

Alice started in an entry level job at CBRE. After four months she was offered a job as a senior analyst with the Ontario Power Authority. She has worked successfully in this position for the past two years.





Employer and Mentor Strategies

Strategies used by Alice’s employer and her mentors from the University of Philippines Alumni Association to support her were coaching and support, creating an inclusive environment, and finding opportunities for professional development.

Coaching and support

Byron, her manager at the CBRE, provided Alice with mentoring and support. According to Byron, Alice had the knowledge, skills and abilities for the job; however, she needed support to develop her understanding of the Canadian industry in order to be effective in her role.

**... [She needed to strengthen] her knowledge of the local industry and local practices. ~ Byron**

Byron constantly provided Alice feedback, clearly laid out the scope of Alice’s work and welcomed her to ask questions. Alice confirmed Byron’s approach made her feel welcome and made it easier for her to adjust to the workplace at CBRE. She said that what she learned from Byron greatly smoothed her integration into the OPA.

In addition to Byron’s the support and guidance, Alice had support and direction from Estelita and her husband. The couple shared with Alice their experiences as IEPs in the Canadian workplace. This gave Alice the perspective of individuals from her culture on how to adapt to the Canadian culture and work environment.

Estelita gave Alice advice on things such as: the potential barriers in being a visible minority in the workplace; the importance of networking; being aware of specific group culture that exists in the work environment; feeling secure internally and sticking to her personal values. Estelita advised Alice to “just be herself.” Estelita helped Alice understand Canadian attitudes and corporate culture.

**Employees’ rights are very important here. If you think you’re right, just go ahead and approach your manager and tell him/her what you think. ~ Estelita**

Some strategies used by employers in the engineering industry to support IEP:

(IEP survey; n=22)

- Creating equal opportunities for staff (66.3%)
- Creating a culturally inclusive work environment (59.1%)
- Providing supports and resources to aid IEP integration (54.5%)



Creating an inclusive environment

Working in an inclusive environment facilitated Alice’s successful workplace integration. Byron notes that CBRE has a culturally inclusive environment where all employees feel welcomed and appreciated.

**We didn’t treat her as a foreign person coming into the office... When you introduce new employees, you welcome them and you always help them out; there were no language issues; no communication issues; she’s just a new employee... ~ Byron**

Alice added that OPA also has an inclusive work environment.

Support for professional development

The OPA provides professional development opportunities for all employees. Some of the options are professional development seminars; external university course offerings; and support for career development and/or planning.

Alice has benefited greatly from the OPA’s support for its employees professional and career development. The OPA assisted her in achieving two certifications in her field since she began working. The authority is currently encouraging and assisting her in applying for membership into the Professional Engineers of Ontario.

Alice’s manager at the OPA is open to his employees enrolling in courses offered by local universities to support their professional development. Alice intends to take advantage of this opportunity.

Alice’s Personal Strategies for Integration

Personal strategies that aided Alice’s integration into the workplace were networking with colleagues at work and improving her English language and communication skills.

Networking

Networking strategically at work helped Alice’s integration into the workplace. Alice often interacted with many co-workers, giving her an opportunity to create a network through being friendly and flexible.

**According to Alice,  
“IEPs should try to understand the Canadian culture and the Canadian workplace, and in order to do so, they need to be open minded and be willing to accept the culture and integrate.” ~ Alice**



## Case Study #4

*The nature of my job at the OPA brings me into contact with many other staff members. I'm in charge of a base of energy savings and so people from other departments would come and ask me questions about energy savings. When they do, I try to be very helpful and very friendly; I don't use technical terms that would be intimidating. It makes them feel comfortable and at ease with me. ~ Alice*

Through this strategy, Alice developed informal relationships with co-workers within her department. These relationships helped her to better understand the workplace culture at the OPA.

### Improving her English and communication skills

Alice felt that her lack of confidence in English conversation was a key obstacle to her success in the workplace. Although she spoke English prior to immigrating to Canada, Alice said there was something about Canadian English that made her hesitant to speak in everyday non-technical terms.

In order to overcome this limitation, she actively tried to improve her language skills. She frequently made an effort to speak with her co-workers, starting or joining lunchroom conversations. When she did not understand something, she would ask her co-workers or managers. Sometimes she used an online resource to find the meaning of words or idioms to help her make sense of what people had said in a conversation. Alice has become more fluent in English and able to communicate effectively within the Canadian context.

### Summary of Key Strategies

The following effective workplace strategies were part of Alice's experience.

#### A. Employer Strategies:

1. Provide coaching and support for IEPs by linking them with individuals who have the knowledge and experience to IEPs understand the workplace and how to be effective within it.
2. Create an inclusive work environment that makes all employees feel welcome and valued by treating all employees equally and promoting cultural understanding among them.
3. Support the career and professional development of IEPs by assisting them with obtaining their Canadian professional credentials and licenses.

#### B. IEPs Strategies:

1. Network with colleagues in the workplace to gain a better understanding of the Canadian culture and the Canadian workplace.
2. Improve their English and communication skills by drawing on all resources available, including co-workers, managers, and online resources.



## Conclusion

The findings of this study indicated that IEPs who achieve success in the Canadian workplace are:

- Highly motivated individuals who take control of their lives and work hard towards their goals
- Open-minded, able to learn effectively and are aware of cultural differences.
- Able to seek and listen to advice
- Willing to invest time and energy to improve their language and communication skills
- Skilled networkers who take risks in "putting themselves out there" to meet new people and capitalize on the connections they offer.

Strategies that have helped IEPs with the above characteristics to be successful in the Canadian workplace are:

- **Mentoring/coaching:** The provision of formal and informal supports from individuals within and outside their work place who help IEPs to understand the corporate and the Canadian culture.
- **Investing in improving language and communication skills:** Enhance their ability to speak and communicate effectively in the workplace.
- **Networking:** Networking with other professionals within and outside the workplace helps IEPs to build on professional connections, advance and acclimate to a different corporate culture.
- **Actively seeking learning opportunities:** Successful IEPs seek opportunities to learn about the job through volunteerism and by taking advantage of available professional development opportunities.

In addition to using effective strategies, IEPs who have achieved success in the Canadian workplace have, often, found themselves in very supportive environments. Their colleagues understand diversity, are willing to listen, and provide open and honest feedback.

The findings of this study also indicated that employers who have mentored or coached IEPs to successfully integrate into the workplace are those who understand the value that IEPs bring to Canadian industry. These are individuals who take personal interest in helping an IEP to be successful.

Strategies that these employers used to assist the integration of IEPs into the workplace are:

- **Strong support from the start of employment:** working closely with IEPs and supporting them until they are comfortable in the workplace.
- **Support in understanding Canadian culture:** helping IEPs to understand the Canadian communication norms and expectations.
- **Support their networking:** exposing IEPs to professional development opportunities.
- **Open and honest feedback:** providing IEPs with feedback that allows them to learn and improve upon their work related interactions and relationships
- **Work-life balance:** ensuring that IEPs are able to balance their personal and professional lives
- **Building reciprocal relationships:** creating a dual learning environment where employers also learn from IEPs as they mentor and coach them at the workplace.



## References

- Adey, G., Gagnon, C. (2007) Engaging Employers: Strategies for the Integration of Internationally Trained Workers in *Ottawa Our Diverse Cities* No. 4, 54-58. A Metropolis Publication [http://canada.metropolis.net/publications/index\\_e.htm](http://canada.metropolis.net/publications/index_e.htm)
- Baumann, A., Blythe, J. (2009) *Integrating Internationally Educated Health Professionals into the Ontario Workforce*. Prepared for the Ontario Hospital Association.
- Retrieved from: <http://www.oha.com/SERVICES/HEALTHHUMANRESOURCES/EMPLOYINGIEHP/Pages/ConductingResearchandDevelopinganEmployerGuide.aspx>
- BC Human Resources Management Association (BC HRMA). *Hiring and Retaining Skilled Immigrants: A Cultural Competence Toolkit*.
- Retrieved in November 2010 from: [www.bchrma.org/pdf/itiguide.pdf](http://www.bchrma.org/pdf/itiguide.pdf)
- Brampton Board of Trade Workplace Diversity: *An Employers Guide for Business Advantage*.
- Retrieved in November 2010 from: [www.skillswithoutborders.com/files/2.pdf](http://www.skillswithoutborders.com/files/2.pdf)
- Canadian Federation of Independent Business (2006). *Immigration and Small Business: Ideas to Better Respond to Canada's Skills and Labour Shortage*, Willowdale, ON.
- Retrieved from: [http://www.cfib-fcei.ca/english/research/canada/112-labour\\_policy/230-immigration\\_and\\_small\\_business.html](http://www.cfib-fcei.ca/english/research/canada/112-labour_policy/230-immigration_and_small_business.html) (see Full Report)
- Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council. *Good Employer Practices: Attracting and Retaining Internationally Trained Worked in Canada's Tourism Sector*
- Retrieved in November 2010 from: [http://www.stec.com/files/CTHRC\\_Good\\_Employer\\_Practices.pdf](http://www.stec.com/files/CTHRC_Good_Employer_Practices.pdf)
- Colleges Ontario (2009). *Enhancing the Role of Colleges in Immigrant Integration to Employment: A Report on Consultations with Employers and Associations*.
- Retrieved from: <http://www.collegesontario.org/policy-positions/position-papers>
- Conference Board of Canada (2005). *Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities*. Human Resource Management.
- Conference Board of Canada (2009). *Immigrant-friendly businesses: Effective practices for attracting, integrating and retaining immigrants in Canadian workplaces*. Centre on the Future Workforce.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2009). *Facts and Figures: Immigration Overview Permanent and Temporary Residents*.
- Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2009/index.asp>
- Frank, Kristyn (2009). *The Economic Integration of Recent Immigrants to Canada: A Longitudinal Analysis of Dimensions of Employment Success*. Waterloo: University of Waterloo. Doctor of Philosophy Thesis.
- Hire Immigrants Ottawa (2008). *Employer's Guide to Integrating Immigrants into the Workplace*.



## References

- PCPI (2007). *Strategic Workforce Planning and Internationally Educated Professionals: An Employer Perspective*.
- PCPI (2009). *Best Practices: Employers and IEPs speak about Strategies for Integrating Internationally Educated Professionals into the Canadian Labour Force*.
- Retrieved from: [http://www.iep.ca/09documents/IEP\\_Employer\\_Report\\_English.pdf](http://www.iep.ca/09documents/IEP_Employer_Report_English.pdf)
- PCPI (2010). *The Power of Different: The race to bridge the skills gap in the Toronto Region*.
- Retrieved from: [www.iep.ca/10documents/2010\\_IEP\\_Research\\_Study\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.iep.ca/10documents/2010_IEP_Research_Study_Eng.pdf)
- Public Policy Forum (2004) *Bringing Employers into the Immigration Debate: Survey and Conference*.
- Retrieved from: <http://www.ppforum.ca/publications/bringing-employers-immigration-debate>
- Reitz, Jeffrey G. (2007). *Immigrant Employment Success in Canada, Part I: Individual and Contextual Causes*. International Migration and Integration 8:11-36.
- Retrieved from: <http://www.utoronto.ca/ethnicstudies/part1.pdf>
- Statistics Canada (2003). *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: A Regional Perspective of the Labour Market Experiences*. Ottawa, Canada: Ministry of Industry (Statistics catalogue 89-616-XIE)
- Statistics Canada (2006). *Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign-born Population, 2006 Census: Portraits of major metropolitan centres*.
- Retrieved from: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-557/p24-eng.cfm>
- Statistics Canada (2008). *Canadian Demographics at a Glance*.
- Retrieved from: [http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/collection\\_2008/statcan/91-003-X/91-003XIE2007001.pdf](http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/collection_2008/statcan/91-003-X/91-003XIE2007001.pdf)
- Statistics Canada (2009). *The 2008 Canadian Immigrant Labour Market: Analysis of Quality of Employment*. Ottawa, Canada: Labour Statistics Division. (Statistics Canada catalogue 71-606-X, no. 5).





Since 2003 PCPI has been delivering the annual Internationally Educated Professional (IEP) Conference. Complementing the 2011 conference is this research study which PCPI has commissioned in an effort to bring the issues facing IEPs to the decision makers and to share solutions for integrating IEPs into the workforce.

[illegible]



## Winning Strategies for IEPs' Success in the Workplace: Employers' and IEPs' Perspectives

# Winning Strategies for IEPs' Success in the Workplace:

## *Employers' and IEPs' Perspectives*

Research study conducted by:



CENTRE FOR  
COMMUNITY  
BASED RESEARCH

[www.communitybasedresearch.ca](http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca)



WORKING TOGETHER FOR PROGRESS

**Progress Career Planning Institute**

400-1200 Markham Road | Toronto, Ontario | M1H 3C3 | Ph. 416.439.8448 | [www.pcpic.ca](http://www.pcpic.ca)