



Creating an Inclusive Organization Culture in a Professional Service Firm

When Enron, WorldCom and other large organizations collapsed, as a result of accounting fraud, the U.S. Congress enacted the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. By placing significantly more stringent requirements on the way accounting was done in publicly-traded companies, this act created millions of chargeable hours for auditors around the world; a global shortage of auditors ensued. Public accounting firms had to look outside Canadian borders to staff all the projects their clients gave them.

Thus, a large number of foreign-trained accountants joined our client, a professional services firm in Canada, between 2005 and 2010 (the total number is estimated at more than 1,000 on a total employee base of 7,000). MultiCultural Business Solutions (MCB) was first brought in to provide cross-cultural consulting and training for international assignees. The project expanded over the course of five years. Here is a brief description of the various phases of this project:

- The first phase was an assessment of the needs of incoming assignees and newly hired immigrants. This was done through discussions between Dr. Laroche, Global Mobility staff members and HR managers throughout the organization.
- Dr. Laroche designed an integrated solution that combined individual coaching (each incoming assignee or newly hired immigrant received, on average, three sessions) and group training (they all attended a one-day workshop entitled “Succeeding in Canada”).
- The success of these programs led to a significant interest on the part of HR professionals within the organization. The firm included several cultural awareness workshops in the management induction program (internal training program for newly-promoted managers).
- Dr. Laroche was asked to present to the Canadian Leadership Group, the Board of Directors and the Audit Leadership Group. These presentations resulted in the approval of a corporate-wide initiative to create and roll out skills building sessions, designed for all management staff as part of the firm’s diversity and inclusion initiative.
 - This program started with a needs assessment involving discussions with many high-level HR professionals. The needs assessment stage highlighted the three key priorities: cross-cultural communication, performance management and teamwork.
 - Dr. Laroche then designed two half-day workshops that were piloted across Canada (Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal) in December 2008 and are rolled out to all offices (St John’s, Halifax, Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Mississauga, Waterloo, London, Windsor, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver) in 2009, 2010 and 2011.
 - A total of 50 sessions took place across Canada in 2009, another 75 sessions in 2010, and a final set of 50 sessions are scheduled in 2011. In all, a total of approximately 2,600 managers, senior managers, directors and partners have and will have attended this workshop.