

Aboriginal Employee Development Series

Article 1: Hiring and Retention

By

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“You don’t need to be a human resource expert to begin improving the recruitment and retention results of Aboriginal employees.”

If you are faced with problems of high turnover, it is unlikely that you can just reach into the First Nations community and fill the gap with some new workers.

The reason you can’t just “cherry pick” like that is because high turnover is related more to business practices than it is with the shortage of available workers. If your place of employment is a less than desirable place to be, most people will tend to opt for the better workplace. This means you need to look at your human resources practices in general before you can look at them specific to Aboriginal recruitment and retention.

Remember, good human resource practices benefit everyone not just specialized groups, and you don’t need to be a human resource expert to begin improving the recruitment and retention results of Aboriginal employees.

To begin the process of addressing high turnover, try the following exercise and see how your thinking about the subject is impacted. If you are the person responsible for hiring, begin by looking at organizational strengths and needs. Address one of the following scenarios.

1. The current staff tends to stay with us; we have pretty good retention. Why do people stay?
2. Turnover is high; we are always trying to hire new employees. Why is turnover high?

Now you can pick a style of planning and maybe some people to help you brainstorm. Start getting honest and answering some questions about the current state of the hiring process. Mind mapping is a great way to capture all the important points of a complex issue. Use flip charts or give people big blank pieces of paper and markers.

Even in pairs the planning is better because you can build on each other’s ideas. Another good exercise is called the Five Why’s, where you follow a stream of thought on a tough issue by asking why, five times in a row. Below is an example of the process.

Round 1 – Why is turnover so high?

Answer – Likely to be one or more of the following;

- more people are quitting
- we have had to fire many non-productive workers
- people are going to competitors or others
- turnover has always been high
- there are less people applying to work here
- there are less qualified people applying

Round 2 – You could do four more rounds with each answer from Round 1. Let's pick the last one – *Why are less qualified people applying?*

Answer – Likely to be one or more of the following.

- our skill requirements are higher than those of the typical applicant
- there are less qualified people available in the overall labour market
- qualified applicants are working elsewhere
- certification or regulations have increased the need for higher qualifications

Round 3 – I think you get the picture here, and if you go five rounds, you will feel like you have enough information to develop a hiring plan.

A good hiring process will try to ensure the very best fit of employees to the work that needs to get done. If you have a clear picture of organizational skill requirements, you are ready to start the hiring process and the creation of a pool of potential workers.

Begin with a review of what you are doing today, and compare this to the employment attachment process steps that follow.

Recruitment is about developing a pool of potential qualified workers. How far and wide do you actually cast your hiring net?

Selection is an assessment process that leads to hiring decisions. How clear and complete is the process of establishing the “fit” of a new worker?

Retention is about the process you go through to keep the worker long enough to “fit” the organizational needs. The length of worker stay is key to a successful attachment process. This is why the

Orientation process needs to offer a warm welcome to the workplace community. A great retention plan says to the new worker; your

Safety is important to us, and your needs are protected here. The next key element is about

Placement and saying to the new hire – we have put you in a job that you will be able to do, and we will offer you

Development by providing good management and feedback.

Training throughout the organization will help employees build on their skills and set personal goals.

Promotion – we will provide opportunities for leadership, advancement and change.

A final note on the hiring and retention of Aboriginal employees. Be clear about the requirements of the specific job that you are trying to hire people for. Check out the OARS training Inc. recruitment planning tool called [The Perfect Hire](#) for help to clarify all the expectations related to the job you are hiring for.