



**RECRUITING AND
RETAINING
INDIGENOUS
EMPLOYEES**

**PORTAL
RESOURCES**

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Incorporating a diverse workforce is not just about fulfilling quotas or ticking boxes; it's about enriching the organization with varied perspectives and experiences. Indigenous employees bring a wealth of knowledge, cultural insight, and unique problem-solving abilities. However, recruiting and retaining Indigenous talent requires a thoughtful approach that respects their unique experiences and values.

1. Understand Indigenous Cultures and Values

Before beginning the recruitment process, invest time in understanding Indigenous cultures, histories, and values. Recognize the diversity among Indigenous groups; what applies to one community might not be relevant to another.

Action Steps:

- Arrange cultural competency training for HR professionals.
- Engage with local Indigenous communities for insights and guidance.

2. Create a Welcoming Environment

It's crucial to foster an environment where Indigenous employees feel valued, understood, and safe.

Action Steps:

- Include Indigenous art or cultural symbols in the workspace.
- Celebrate Indigenous heritage months or days, and encourage the whole team to participate.
- Offer resources or spaces for Indigenous employees to practice their customs or traditions.

3. Implement Fair Recruitment Practices

Ensure that your recruitment process is transparent, fair, and devoid of biases.

Action Steps:

- Use plain language job descriptions that focus on the essentials.

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- Offer internships or mentorship programs targeting young Indigenous talent.

4. Offer Competitive Benefits

While standard benefits are essential, consider what additional offerings might appeal specifically to Indigenous employees.

Action Steps:

- Include additional leave for cultural or community events.
- Offer scholarships or tuition waivers for Indigenous languages or cultural courses.
- Consider flexible work hours, especially if employees engage in community or cultural commitments.

5. Engage in Continuous Learning and Development

Invest in the continuous growth and development of your Indigenous employees.

Action Steps:

- Offer workshops or courses that help them advance in their careers.
- Create mentorship programs where they can learn from senior employees.
- Encourage them to attend conferences or seminars related to their heritage, which can also benefit the organization.

6. Foster Community Connections

Strengthen ties with the local Indigenous community. This not only aids recruitment but also ensures the retention of employees.

Action Steps:

- Participate in community events or sponsor local Indigenous initiatives.
- Collaborate with Indigenous Elders or Knowledge Keepers for company events or training sessions.

7. Establish a Feedback Mechanism

Regular feedback can provide insights into what's working and what needs improvement.

Action Steps:

- Conduct anonymous surveys targeting Indigenous employees.
- Create a forum or group where they can voice concerns or suggestions.

8. Address and Combat Workplace Discrimination

Zero tolerance for discrimination is a must. Ensure that Indigenous employees feel safe and respected at all times.

Action Steps:

- Offer regular anti-discrimination and anti-racism training.
- Ensure there's a clear protocol for reporting and addressing grievances.

9. Highlight Growth and Leadership Opportunities

Like all employees, Indigenous staff seek growth and progression. Make sure they're aware of the opportunities available.

Action Steps:

- During the onboarding process, discuss potential career paths.
- Encourage Indigenous employees to take up leadership roles or participate in decision-making processes.

10. Celebrate Successes

Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of your Indigenous employees. Ask Indigenous employees how they would feel most comfortable having their achievements celebrated.

Action Steps:

- If appropriate, highlight their successes in company newsletters or meetings.
- Offer awards or incentives that recognize their contributions.

11. Avoid Tokenism and Overburdening

It's essential to recognize and respect Indigenous employees as individuals with their own unique experiences and expertise. Do not reduce their role or value to merely representing or speaking for all Indigenous peoples.

Action Steps:

- Ensure that Indigenous employees are not singled out or spotlighted solely based on their Indigeneity.
- Encourage a culture where questions about Indigenous cultures or issues are directed appropriately, not automatically to any Indigenous staff member. Remember, one individual cannot represent the vast diversity of Indigenous experiences and should not bear the burden of educating others.
- Collaborate with external Indigenous consultants or educators for company-wide cultural training or sensitization programs, rather than expecting Indigenous employees to take on this role by default.
- Make efforts to recruit multiple Indigenous employees across various departments to ensure diverse representation and avoid token hires.

Recruiting and retaining Indigenous employees is not just about increasing numbers. It's about integrating their rich cultural and historical heritage into the organization, leading to a more inclusive, understanding, and enriched workplace. By ensuring that the work environment respects and values their unique perspectives and by providing them with opportunities to grow and lead, organizations can benefit immensely from the depth of experience and knowledge that Indigenous employees bring to the table.

Next Steps:

Consider reading additional tipsheets in [Indigenous Works' Resource Portal](#)