
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF
SEATTLE-KING COUNTY RESEARCH PROJECT:

EMPLOYER STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING AND
PROMOTING REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

Research Findings

January 2004

THE ATHENA INSTITUTE
REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	2
Introduction	4
Project Focus.....	4
Project Approach.....	4
The Study Technique	5
How this Report Is Organized.....	6
Summary of Key Findings	7
Employers Value Refugees and Immigrants.....	7
Success Depends on Several Factors	7
Companies Use Both Formal and Informal Practices	7
There are a Number of Different Strategies for Retaining and Promoting.....	8
Employers can Use Support.....	8
Refugee and Immigrants in the Workforce.....	10
Companies in Our Study	10
Factors Impacting Retention and Promotion	13
Many Factors Impact Success of the Immigrant.....	13
Factors in the Immigrant	14
Factors in the Manager.....	16
Factors in the Company	17
Employer Strategies for Retention and Promotion	20
Overview of Strategies.....	20
Strategies to Retain Immigrants.....	23
Strategies to Promote Immigrants as Individual Contributors	28
Strategies to Promote Immigrants to Supervisory Roles.....	37
Strategies to Promote Immigrants to Management/Executive Roles	41
Recommendations to Aid Employer Strategies	45
Research	45
Management Tools.....	46
Training.....	46
Community.....	49
Appendix A: Study Overview.....	50
Role of This Report.....	50
The Methodology	50
Refugee Resettlement Office	52

The Athena Institute..... 52
About the Analysts..... 52
Appendix B: Companies in the Study.....54
 Specific Companies Interviewed..... 54
Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Questions55
Appendix D: Overview of Outside Research.....57
 Summary of Research 57
 Sample of Reports Reviewed 59

INTRODUCTION

Immigrants and refugees are a growing part of the Pacific Northwest workforce. The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC), recognizes the importance of this segment in the workforce, and has commissioned research to better understand the strategies employers are using to retain and promote immigrants and refugees in the workplace.

The WDC is a non-profit corporation dedicated to building a results-oriented education, job training and employment system in Seattle and throughout King County. The WDC recognizes the difficulties that refugees and immigrants face in progressing beyond minimum wage jobs and believes that the sharing of best practices can support employers as they manage and support this workforce.

PROJECT FOCUS

The study focused on four key sectors: healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, and retail. The first three are currently considered key sectors for refugee and immigrant employment; the fourth is a growing area of opportunity for this workforce.

This project is focused on techniques that employers use to retain workers and achieve wage progression inside their own organization (or in the case of larger chains, within the broader network of organizations). It does not examine strategies to move refugees and immigrants from lower paying sectors to higher paying sectors.

PROJECT APPROACH

This research study was commissioned in summer of 2003. The research team combined several approaches to discover the factors and best practices impacting successful retention and promotion.

1. In-person, semi-structured interviews with 41 managers and/or human resource personnel from 29 employers in healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing and retail
2. Review of secondary literature and existing studies
3. A demographics questionnaire completed by participating employers
4. Two research roundtables with human resource professionals and key managers (included both interview participants as well as non-participants) to discuss the initial findings and explore the topics in more depth

THE STUDY TECHNIQUE

The use of qualitative techniques allowed us to uncover more details than we might with a survey. By talking to fewer employers and using more open-ended questions with follow-up probing questions we were able to pursue the research issues more thoroughly. (See Appendix D for an outline of the interview structure.) Consistent with the qualitative technique, when we talk about study results in this report we do not identify the exact percentage of respondents who made a particular claim. Doing so would be misleading and inaccurate, since not all interviewees are asked each question and not every subject raised by one interview is tested with each interview. We do, however, indicate the degree to which a particular point comes up in our interviews by using the words such as “some” and “most.” The scale below shows the range of respondents that those terms refer to:

Few: 1-6 Several: 7-10 Some: 11-17 Many: 18-24 Most: 25-29 All: 29



The scale is in terms of 29 for the number of employers, rather than 41, the actual number of interviews. Where any one individual from a company made a point, we counted that employer in our discussion of that particular topic.

During this report, we will on occasion make generalizations about a particular sector. Given that this is a small sample, these points reflect the results from our particular study but may not be representative of the sector as a whole.

HOW THIS REPORT IS ORGANIZED

This document presents findings from this multi-month study, divided into five areas:

- **Summary of Key Findings** -- a brief overview that condenses the major discoveries
- **Refugees and Immigrants in the Workforce** -- a summary of the nature of this workforce in the companies interviewed
- **Factors Impacting Retention and Promotion** -- the factors that influence whether or not refugees and immigrants stay and thrive in an organization
- **Employer Strategies for Retention and Promotion** -- the strategies employers are using to influence those factors
- **Recommendations to Aid Employer Strategies** -- a discussion of potential training directions, pilot program opportunities, and factors for success when addressing retention and promotion issues

In addition, four appendices give further details:

- **Appendix A: Study Overview** -- an overview of the research design, participating companies and analysis team
- **Appendix B: Companies in the Study** -- a listing of the participating companies and general demographic summary of the sample.
- **Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Questions** -- a table outlining the core and probing questions that guided the interviews
- **Appendix D: Overview of Outside Research** -- the themes that emerged from studies related research on these topics

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The study that follows covers topics in detail. This section provides a quick overview of the major conclusions.

EMPLOYERS VALUE REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

The employers we spoke with value refugees and immigrants in the workforce. They comprise an important part of the hospitality, health care, and manufacturing workforces in our study. In some organizations they made up 80 – 90% of the workforce in particular departments. Employers do not regularly make a distinction between refugees and immigrants and employ the same strategies towards each group.

SUCCESS DEPENDS ON SEVERAL FACTORS

From analysis of the conversations, it is clear that the factors driving retention and promotion are complex. There are factors in the employees, the managers and the companies that influence retention and promotion. When it comes to employees, employers reported that an employee's language proficiency is a key factor for success at many jobs. However, the employee drive and attitude was identified as just as critical, if not more so, to promotion. Also reported as important is their sense of security, their job skills, and their family support system. In the case of the manager, the employers in our study believe that several things count: their attitudes toward diverse workers, their communication and management skills, the outreach they do and the workplace culture they create. There are several company characteristics that came up in our conversations as important: job availability, resources for programs, senior management perspectives, level of supportive workplace culture and whether they are a stand alone company or a networked organization.

COMPANIES USE BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL PRACTICES

Employers in our study use both formal and informal practices to manage refugee and immigrant retention and promotion. They are funding those efforts internally through human resource budgets and those of individual departments. They are

also leveraging outside programs, especially in the case of English as a second language (ESL). Except for ESL training, management strategies to address refugee and immigrant needs are not discrete from other programs. In many cases, employers leverage generic employee and diversity programs and apply those to the refugee and immigrant workforce.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING AND PROMOTING

Just as there are different pathways for refugees and immigrants to find wage progression and career success, employers use different strategies to support their employees on those pathways.

- **Strategies for retaining refugees and immigrants** include getting successful new hires through referral programs, then orienting the new employees for success, offering bi-lingual support, celebrating their diversity, accommodating their life needs, and looking for job sharing opportunities.
- **Strategies for promoting refugees and immigrants as individual contributors** include offering ESL classes to increase language proficiency, providing support for specialized job training and certification, designing special computer orientation for ESL employees, exposing them to new jobs, creating formal job pathways, and mentoring and coaching to embrace job advancement, and recognition programs.
- **Strategies for promoting refugees and immigrants to supervisory roles** include mentoring and coaching employees to be receptive to the opportunities, training on workplace communication and supervisory skills, and communicating clear expectations about the job.
- **Strategies for promoting refugees and immigrants to management or executive roles** include management skills training, formal management tracks, and providing access to the broader network of senior jobs across the company.

EMPLOYERS CAN USE SUPPORT

There are a number of ways to support employers in retaining and promoting refugees and immigrants in the workplace. Suggestions were taken from the employers themselves during interviews and roundtables, and were combined with

observations from the analysts to produce a set of recommendations:

- **Follow-up research to generate more knowledge**, including incorporating the immigrant perspective into the themes and best practices raised here, generating full best practice case-studies for distribution, and conducting a full employer survey on these topics now that the concepts are better defined.
- **Management tools** to aid employer's efforts, including assessment tools to assess the effectiveness of the various strategies, tools to better understand an employee's language skills at the point of hire, tools to assess basic work skills, and tools to assess and understand an employee's past managerial experiences in other countries. Additional management tools include developing career ladders that could be used to manage the training and promotion of immigrant workers in specific sectors.
- **Training support**, including ESL, computer training, workplace orientation, supervisory/management training for immigrants, management training for supervisors/managers of immigrants, language training for managers, and resources to fund managers who focus on training needs of immigrants.
- **Building a community of employers** who employ immigrants, including web-based resources, newsletters, and networking events

REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANTS IN THE WORKFORCE

Refugees and immigrants play a critical role in the growth of labor in this country. According to a study done on 2000 census data, newly arriving immigrants accounted for nearly half of the civilian labor force growth from 1991 – 2000 across the United States¹. This increase was most pronounced with men, where *eight of every ten* new males employed were immigrants who had arrived in the country over that time frame.

Closer to home in the Pacific region (defined as Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska and Hawaii), the same study showed that seventy-two percent of this growth in the civilian workforce was attributed to immigrants. This means that a significant portion of the civilian labor force growth in Washington State during the decade (an additional 512,500 workers²) stemmed from foreign born workers. The 2000 U.S. census data shows that the percentage of foreign born King County residents grew over the last decade (1990 – 2000) from 9 % to 15%.

COMPANIES IN OUR STUDY

The study includes companies from across the Seattle- King County area. We spoke to 29 companies in all, with representation from the hospitality, healthcare, manufacturing and retail sectors, with an additional company from food service. The sample breakout by sector was

- 31% Manufacturing and Assembly
- 24% Hospitality
- 24% Healthcare
- 21% Retail

The companies ranged in size from organizations as small as 120 workers to large international corporations. The employer

¹ Immigrant Workers and the Great American Job Machine. Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, 2002. *Please note:* “Immigrant” in this report includes people born in foreign countries, but also those from Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and other U.S. island territories.

² WA State Employment Security Department, December 2003.

with the largest amount of local employees had over 8,500 workers employed in King County. We also made a point to include both unionized and non-unionized employers in the study.

ROLE OF REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS IN THE WORKFORCE

The refugee and immigrant workforce in our sample ranged from 20% to 90% of the companies' total workforce, with an average around 50% (generated from data from employers who provided this information). In addition to representing a significant part of the company's workforce overall, in some cases this population made up nearly 95% of particular departments—for instance, in one healthcare organization nearly every staff member in resident care was foreign born.

National Origins. There were a broad set of refugee and immigrant groups represented in these employers' workforces. The largest cohorts reported included groups originating from Mexico, China, Philippines, former Soviet States, Vietnam, Korea, and Samoa.

Hierarchical level. Although companies vary in the number of hierarchical levels in their organizations, we have generalized into three categories: line-level, supervisory/lead, and management/executive. Using these categories, across sectors, the refugee and immigrant population is most often found in line-level positions. In many organizations they are also employed at the supervisor or lead positions. The percentage of refugees and immigrants at the managerial level drops drastically in the companies in our study.

Departmental presence. Within sectors we identified several patterns in which departments or functions refugees and immigrants were most likely to be employed:

- In the hospitality sector, refugees and immigrants are found most often in the housekeeping, laundry, and food service areas. There are fewer refugees and immigrants in front-desk positions, and only one company in our study reported having an immigrant in their administration area (administration includes accounting and all other back-office activities).

- In the manufacturing organizations in our study, this workforce is found in both skilled and unskilled assembly positions, as well as skilled positions involving equipment and line operations.
- In the healthcare organizations in our study, this population is found in the nursing and resident care area, as well as in laundry and housekeeping.
- In the retail organizations in our study, refugees and immigrants could be found both in assembly of the product or service (as in the case of food service retail), as well as registers and customer service. They also were employed in back-store functions like stocking, inventory, and janitor services.

ATTITUDES TOWARD REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

The companies we spoke with are almost always positive about this segment of their workforce. They see the immigrants comprising an important part of their teams. They also have positive things to say about the work ethic they encounter in many immigrant employees. As one manufacturing company Director of Human Resources stated, “Staff diversity is extremely beneficial in terms of outcomes produced by blending styles and cultures. Many of the immigrants we employ work harder and set the pace for the non-immigrants.”

REFUGEES VERSUS IMMIGRANTS

In the few cases where the interviewees were able to create a distinction between refugees and immigrants, they did note that the language issue is often greater for refugees. They also commented that the refugees in their workforces are the most grateful of any group to have a job, yet are sometimes more timid and need more encouragement to progress. These challenges can be exacerbated since refugees in many cases do not have a large cohort group in the organization and so can feel isolated. Even in those few cases where the employers were aware of refugees in their workforce, they did not cite any additional programs or efforts on their part to manage the specific needs of the refugee population; instead, they approach managing refugees as they do managing immigrants. *Note: For simplicity, from this point forward in this report where we use the term “immigrants” we intend it to refer to the broader group of both refugees and immigrants.*

FACTORS IMPACTING RETENTION AND PROMOTION

As we interviewed employers, we explored 1) the challenges that immigrants face in the workplace and 2) the strategies employers are using to meet these challenges.

In this section we focus on the factors that employers believe are impacting immigrant retention and promotion. In the next section we will outline strategies currently in use by employers and identify best practices.

MANY FACTORS IMPACT SUCCESS OF THE IMMIGRANT

To find out which factors impact retention and promotion, we addressed the question from a number of angles. First, we wanted to understand what employers believe separate those immigrants who are succeeding from other immigrants who aren't. We also wanted to understand those places in the organization (e.g. specific departments, hierarchical levels, etc.) where immigrants are having more difficulty than non-immigrants in being promoted in the workforce. Further, we wanted to explore what factors seem to explain these “log-jams.”

Based on our analysis of these discussions with employers, we identified several factors that seem to impact whether an immigrant succeeds or fails in the workplace—where success is fined as being retained and promoted in the workplace. According to the employers interviewed, some of these factors are associated with the immigrant, some with the manager, and others with the company. They are listed in Table 1 below, and described more fully in this section³.

³ It is important to note that these factors were not derived from any systematic quantitative analysis, but rather represent themes in employers' perceptions that emerged from the interviews.

TABLE 1 – FACTORS IMPACTING RETENTION AND PROMOTION

Factors in the Immigrant	Factors in the Manager	Factors in the Company
Drive and Attitude	Perceived Value of a Diverse Worker	Job Context and Advancement Opportunities
Sense of Security	Communication Abilities	Resource Availability
Language Proficiency	Management Skills with Diverse Workforce	Level of Supportive Culture
Work Skills and Ability	Level of Outreach	Senior Executive Support
Knowledge of Opportunities	Ability and Willingness to Create a Culture of Trust	Role of Human Resources
Infrastructure and Support		Stand-alone versus Networked Organization

FACTORS IN THE IMMIGRANT

As with non-immigrants, immigrant workers themselves are “in control” of many of the elements that contribute to their retention and advancements, according to the employers in our study. From our discussions with employers, six main factors in the employee emerged that appear to influence whether or not immigrants are successful in the workforce.

Drive and attitude. Employers consistently describe the employee’s attitude as a primary driver of whether or not the immigrant advances in the workplace. They report that high achievers are by nature “driven” -- seeking out opportunities, asking for new assignments, and identifying areas where they want to learn. According to employers, they are willing to take risks, adapt quickly to new environments, and have a strong work ethic. The same employers noted that these employees tend to assimilate quickly and learn English not long after arriving in this country.

Employers find it more challenging to deal with those immigrants who operate out of fear -- fear of loss, fear of failure, fear of displeasure. These employees work to protect what they have, and they do so by avoiding risks, shying away from additional responsibilities, and not venturing out of their same-country cohort. In sharp contrast to the high achievers,

these employees can often go for years without ever learning English or varying their roles in the workplace.

Sense of security. Related to the previous factor, employers believe that the amount of security and confidence that immigrants have in a work situation directly impacts their desire to stay and advance in the workplace. Employees who are more secure handle new assignments, deal with change, and take feedback better than those who don't. Therefore, they tend to advance more quickly.

As previously noted, employers believe that employees who are less secure seem to be concerned about displeasing their boss. Employers report that these employees will often try to avoid their supervisor's anger or disappointment by not revealing that they don't understand instructions being given. They also hang back from applying for new positions because they are afraid if they fail, they will lose the job they currently have.

Language proficiency. Almost universally, all of the employers we spoke with identify language proficiency as one of the biggest factors separating advancing workers from others. In those cases where immigrants lack language competency, their ability to communicate, to learn tasks, to work with others, and to take on new roles are all affected.

But employees did not always have to be proficient in English to advance. In some cases, demonstrated work skills or abilities to learn new task-oriented skills are enough to propel immigrants into wage progression or promotions.

Work skills and abilities. Fundamental work skills are a significant factor for all jobs; advanced work skills are necessary for those jobs that require specialized abilities. As we mentioned previously, in some cases, English proficiency is not required. Instead work skills can be enough for retention and even advancement. This is true generally only where the job requires no contact with the general public and also 1) requires the employee to contribute individual work without interacting with others, or 2) involves a team-based job where another member of the team is bi-lingual. For example, in the healthcare and manufacturing fields, a number of entry level positions require

hand-eye coordination and precision rather than customer-facing communication skills.

Knowledge of opportunities. In order for immigrants to advance in the organization, they have to know where the opportunities are. Developing awareness of the paths available for career advancement is an important factor influencing whether they will advance or not. Several of the companies we spoke with described how immigrants generally need assistance in learning how internal job posting systems work, how some openings occur seasonally, and how their job fits into the hierarchy.

Infrastructure and resources. To be successful at work, employees need to have the infrastructure and resources to support them at home. Ability to manage transportation to work or training, have reliable childcare, adjust to changing schedules and pay for training in advance are all reported to have an impact on whether the employee is successful. Family support in the form of relatives who can provide translation, encouragement in the job, and other kinds of support seem to be important factors for immigrant success.

FACTORS IN THE MANAGER

Employers in our study also believe the manager has a powerful impact on whether or not an employee is successful. Five factors in particular -- some attitudinal, some skills and abilities, and some specific behaviors -- were identified as having impact.

Perceived value of a diverse worker. Whether or not the manager believes that diversity has a value seems to impact how far they will go to support any special needs workforce. This does not mean, though, that all managers we spoke with are motivated to aid immigrants simply because they comprise diverse populations. As mentioned earlier, in many cases managers described how their approach towards their employees just represents good management, and their treatment toward immigrants is the same they would use with any part of the workforce.

Communication abilities. The manager's ability to communicate is especially critical as it affects the immigrant workforce. This

includes both communication of tasks and procedures, communication of more complicated information like goals, expectations, performance feedback, and policy changes.

Management skills with a diverse workforce. Many of the solutions for managing immigrants involve basic management skills and abilities. Beyond communication skills outlined above, this includes activities related to directing, facilitation, mentoring, coaching, resolving conflict, and, at times, disciplining. Employers believe that these actions are all most successful when the manager understands the cultural context of the employee they are dealing with.

Level of outreach. Managers in our study also reported that immigrants responded to direct outreach by the manager to the immigrant on job-related issues. When immigrants feel as if managers care about their success, they perform better and are willing to take more risks for the manager. This outreach usually consisted of the manager taking time to work one-on-one with the immigrant to identify opportunities, support development of new skills, etc. Employers also believed that immigrants often responded positively to a manager's interest in their family and culture as part of that outreach.

Ability and willingness to create a culture of trust. Beyond the outreach from the manager themselves, employers believe it is also important to build a culture of trust and security around the immigrant employee. Culture is something that the manager influences heavily, and a culture of trust stems first from the manager's relationship with the immigrant. Employers believe that immigrants respond to managers who demonstrate patience with any language or skills challenges they may have and make it safe to make mistakes in the job as part of the learning process. Some employers go even farther and claim that many of their immigrants seem to thrive under a "family culture" that blurs the traditional distinctions between work and home.

FACTORS IN THE COMPANY

The company environment also has an impact on the immigrant's success. Six factors are critical, ranging from the availability of jobs and resources, to the attitudes of senior management and the culture they foster.

Job context and advancement opportunities. In order for employees to advance, there must be positions to advance to. Organizations with a high degree of retention sometimes face a challenge in finding additional positions for individuals to grow into. Industries with higher turnover, or organizations that are part of a broader network of companies often reported more opportunities for advancement than stand-alone organizations in our study. Another element that affects job availability is the company's position on hiring from within. Employers noted that it is difficult for employees wanting to move up into supervisory or management positions to always compete with outside candidates who may have more experience. A commitment to hire from within opens up more advancement opportunities by eliminating this competition.

Resource availability. Many of the formal programs to aid retention and promotion cost money, drawn from individual departments, from human resource budgets or from State or Federally-sponsored funds. One health care facility described creating an innovative Career Pathways system of grants to develop several literacy-based programs to help immigrants increase their value in the workforce (funded in part by WDC). The more resources an organization has available, the more likely they are to provide additional support to this portion of their workforce. The corollary to this is that several of our employers also cited lack of resources as a major barrier to developing formal programs.

Level of supportive culture. As we've already noted, employers believe many immigrants seem to thrive with a sense of security. While the manager's role in creating this environment is primary, the culture of the organization can also engender this sense of security. When the organization as a whole is supportive and encourages risk-taking, the culture lowers the "cost" of failure. We use the word "level" to note that where the culture is in the organization also matters. A culture supportive in only one work unit and not company-wide might actually stunt progression, as the employee is unwilling to move away from their current supportive situation.

Senior management support. The perspectives of senior executives of a company are important because they have a far-reaching

impact in the organization. Whether or not executive management team members interact with, get to know, and advocate for immigrants and refugees, influences how well the workers bond, take risks, and advance. These perspectives can also have impact on the kind of resources senior managers are willing to set aside to support immigrant retention and promotion.

Role of human resources. Several of our interviewees spoke about the value that the organization has for human resources in general, and that value was also expressed in their relationship with the human resource department. One company in our study elevated the Director of Human Resources to the role of “Corporate Advisor” to bring strategic thinking into the way personnel are hired, retained and promoted. This level of attention to human resources as an important element of company strategy can have a positive impact on resources available to further immigrants.

Stand alone versus networked organization. Some of the employers in this study are part of a broader network of organizations, such as a hotel that is part of an overall corporate chain, or a manufacturing site that serves as worldwide headquarters. In some cases, these larger networked organizations create rules and boundaries that control local activities from distant locations, putting limitations on what programs can be made available for immigrants. On the plus side, participation in this broader group aids immigrants by providing them access to more resources and jobs -- key factors mentioned earlier in this section.

EMPLOYER STRATEGIES FOR RETENTION AND PROMOTION

Employers have a variety of both formal and informal strategies to aid immigrants and refugees. In this section we outline some general characteristics of the strategies we studied. We also highlight the various approaches employers take to increase retention and promotion, describing some best practices in more detail.

OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIES

STRATEGIES ARE BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL

Employers in our study often have formal programs in training, orientation, career paths, etc. At the same time, many of the strategies they rely on are informal -- mentoring and coaching, discussions and coordination between managers, etc.

STRATEGIES ARE FUNDED FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES

These strategies involve costs. The largest costs are often the time of the participating employees themselves, which in most cases were covered by the employee's departmental budget.

Additional costs come in the form of management team members or outside service providers who assess, design solutions, research funding options, advocate with organizational directors, administer programs, deliver trainings measure success, and related activities. Still further costs can be found in tuition fees, educational materials, award dollars and gifts, food charges, meeting room fees, etc. These direct program costs are covered in some cases by central human resource budgets, in other cases from the budgets of departments where the immigrant is employed. In the case of ESL programs, a majority of employers in our study rely on a number of outside sources to cover the costs of the trainers.

Some of these dollars come from long-term line items in the budget, such as one organization where there was a set amount each year to spend on employee recognition. Some employers had more transient, discretionary spending -- in one case the employer used an employment tax rebate to fund a series of trainings. Most uniquely in our study, one resident-funded long term health care group solicited funds directly from their

residents to fund both trainings and employee rewards. Regardless of how employers got funds for programs, resource constraints were consistently cited as a significant issue affecting the employer's ability to fund activities.

RESULTS OF STRATEGIES ARE NOT REGULARLY MEASURED

Our research revealed that measurement is not a priority for employers. No employer is systematically measuring the results of their efforts with the immigrant population. Some organizations capture program metrics (e.g. number applied, number accepted, number completed) but do not regularly perform a measurement-based evaluation of the impact of the strategy on productivity, satisfaction, or tangible workplace outcomes.

Even more significantly, many of even the most enlightened employers in our study are not consistently soliciting input about their strategies from their immigrant workforce. As such, this study reports primarily on the employer's perspective about their immigrant workforce, without attesting to the validity of this perspective.

SIZE OF COMPANY DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE AN IMPACT ON STRATEGIES

We did not find a significant difference between those strategies pursued by larger companies versus smaller ones. One exception is we occasionally ran into resistance to labeling and dealing with the perceived special needs of the immigrant workforce. In the case of one organization, their position as a member of a larger chain meant they had to abide by their parent company's human resource policies which prevented them from making any special outreach efforts towards any group in the workplace.

THERE ARE ONLY MODERATE DIFFERENCES ACROSS SECTORS

Although we examined a variety of industry sectors, we found very few real differences between them. Manufacturing, health care, hospitality and retail all approach managing the immigrant population using similar tactics. Based on the companies in our sample, we did note that strategies in the hospitality industry seem more focused around "recognition programs"—efforts designed to recognize certain accomplishments or behaviors, strategies in the healthcare industry stress training as a central component, while our manufacturing interviewees talked more

about informal mentoring and coaching. There was no clear pattern that emerged in the retail sector in our study.

STRATEGIES ADDRESS MULTIPLE PATHS

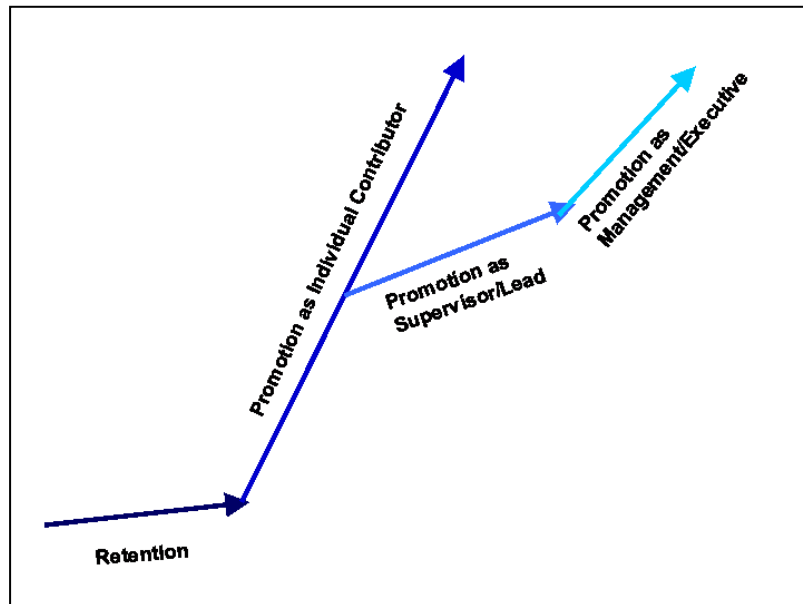
There are multiple paths to promotion that any employee -- not just immigrants -- can take in the workplace. (See Figure 1.) Past the initial retention, they can be promoted based on contributions as an individual contributor, or they can branch off into directing the work of others, first in a supervisory role and then through promotion into higher management.

Figure 1
Promotion Pathways

There are multiple ways an employee can advance in the workplace.

Some employees continue to get promoted as individual contributors as they learn new skills and get new certifications.

Others reach a point where their best advancement opportunities are through supervisory positions followed by more advanced management positions.



These four pathways also emerged in our interviews, and represent a useful way to think about retention and promotion:

- **Retention to functional worker.** For employees to have the opportunity to be promoted, in theory they must first begin with successfully navigating their original trial period to become functional in their current role. Functional in this case refers to being able to satisfactorily meet the demands of the job.
- **Promotion of the immigrant as an independent contributor.** In this case, the value the employee brings is in the work he or she does alone, not in leading others. These contributions can be through both skilled and unskilled jobs. In the case of unskilled work, though, there is less significant wage progression over time. In the case of skilled work, wage progression is usually associated with the acquisition of new

skills or certifications. In some professional job pathways such as engineering, an individual contributor can often make as much or more income as a supervisor or manager.

- **Promotion of the immigrant as a supervisor.** This involves the employee evolving on a separate track from that of an individual contributor. In addition to individual production activities, the role also involves directing the activities of others. For some unskilled and semi-skilled career tracks, promotion to a supervisory role can represent a wage premium over that enjoyed by individual contributors.
- **Promotion of the immigrant as a manager/executive.** When an employee is promoted beyond the role of supervisor, their new role consists mostly of directing the work of others, planning, and coordinating with other departments and senior staff members. In some cases it can also involve financial management, administrative paperwork, and other job duties associated with planning and directing. These roles generally involve significantly more authority, responsibility and accountability, and therefore more monetary compensation.

We examined the employment context for immigrants using this lens. In the remainder of this section, we use the four categories above to 1) outline the key challenges faced by immigrants and employers and 2) describe the major strategies employers are using to overcome these barriers. Wherever we found a best practice of note, we've described it in a sidebar.

STRATEGIES TO RETAIN IMMIGRANTS

Retention is the first goal with the immigrant workforce. As mentioned earlier, the goal is not just to keep the employee in the workforce, but to ensure they are functional in their existing job.

Many employers noted that the trial period, lasting anywhere from 30 days to six months, is the most critical. "We have a motto that if they make it through the first 30 days, they'll be with us for 10 years," said one senior executive in a long-term care facility.

For many of the employers in our study, a tight labor market means lower turnover and fewer retention challenges. It also, unfortunately, translates into fewer resources available to fund strategies focused on retention. Not all employers with low turnover are “taking it easy” on retention, though. Many of those employers in the hospitality industry who currently enjoy high retention rates know that when the market picks back up, the pace of their turnover will too, unless they continue to be aggressive about retention.

Below we’ve noted some of the major strategies employers are currently employing to help retain employees.

REFERRAL APPROACHES

Retention begins with finding the right employees in the first place who have a chance of success in a particular company. Many of the employers believe that when an immigrant works inside a community of employees from their same country of origin, they are more secure and therefore more successful. As a consequence, several of the employers have referral programs in place that encourage existing employees to identify other prospective employees. These referral programs come in various forms, with some paying employee referral cash bonuses up to \$75+ depending on how badly the company needs to fill the position.


Most, if not all, of the organizations interviewed find success in hiring referrals from existing employees—friends and family members from immigrant communities. For non-skilled positions, many employers encourage and actively seek referrals from currently employed immigrants who themselves show an appreciation for having a job and being loyal to their employer. “I would rather hire a friend or family member recommended by a top employee for an entry level job than someone from other sources. That way we get someone with a similar work ethic,” states a local manufacturing Human Resources Director.

ORIENTATION PRACTICES

New hire orientation can be a critical place where the foundation is laid for the worker’s sense of belonging and their sense that they are well-suited for the job. For some

organizations, orientation starts even prior to the employee's actual hire. (See Featured Best Practice 1.)

Orienting the worker involves not only presenting policies, explaining company structure, and familiarizing them with opportunities for growth, but ideally immersing them in the new role with close one-on-one guidance provided by the supervisor. In this way, new hires can determine right away if the type of work and pace are a good fit.

Featured Best Practice 1 – Pre-Hire Orientation ⁴		
	<p>Embassy Suites hotel in Tukwila has a unique approach to orient potential new workers: let them see even before they are hired what the work is like.</p>	<p>“We put them in our room cleaning circuit,” she explained. “One of the managers [or another employee] cleans right with them.”</p>
<p>“The job is fast-paced, and we have found that those from other work cultures are sometimes not aware of our expectations for how quickly and thoroughly the rooms will be cleaned,” explains the head of the housekeeping unit.</p>	<p>The hotel has found that it helps people self-select whether the job is right for them and starts them right away with a sense of the work ethic expected. In this way, retention of workers increases, since those less likely to stay never begin. The idea of exposing the potential worker to the actual job and work setting during the interview process could help other companies find a good fit with their hires.</p>	

We found a wide variety of approaches toward orientation, from elaborate programs lasting a full 90 days to no program at all. Rather than relying on interaction with a supervisor, several organizations link newcomers with other veteran workers who show them the ropes and provide a support system. Many employers pair the new hire with this “buddy” right from the start in orientation so the new hire has someone to turn to for answers to questions. Where possible, employees are linked with others from their native backgrounds. Providing this support for immigrants is especially valuable as they adjust to all the new aspects of the workplace and job culture. In some cases employees are assigned an actual trainer, whose sole purpose is to formally orient them to the company, their work unit, and their job. (See Featured Best Practice 2.)

⁴ Note: All images are meant to reflect the subject discussed and are drawn from a variety of public sources. They are not actual images taken of the employers mentioned in the best practice.

Featured Best Practice 2 – Hands On Coaching with Training Coordinators



At one company, the coaching begins almost immediately after hire. As soon as every new hire completes his or her 1-hour orientation, the

Training Coordinator works one-on-one to coach them during the first few weeks on the job. Depending on what abilities they demonstrate, their training progresses and they move at their own pace.

This emphasis on training aligns with the hospital's approach toward management. The Hospital follows a code of engagement based on a Gallup survey which led to an "Impact Planning Process." This process outlines rules the hospital follows as employees and management work together to utilize the talent of the staff. For example, managers don't assign someone to an area without

ensuring they've had proper training. It is the Trainer's job to make the new hire feel comfortable with new assignments, and having the Trainer responsible for this frees supervisor's time. After they're trained, then the manager holds them accountable for the new task.

From this employer's perspective, this approach also means that when disciplinary issues arise, they're really disciplinary issues, and not training issues. They believe this approach levels the playing field for immigrants by ensuring they always get the training they need for success.

Other employers can use this approach either by establishing an official training coordinator or by making one-on-one coaching an immediate and ongoing part of an immigrant employee's training experience.

BI-LINGUAL SUPPORT

Language skills were overwhelmingly identified as the single most critical challenge in working with an immigrant population. In the absence of a workforce who speaks fluent English, employers need bi-lingual support to aid in basic communication about tasks and procedures, as well as more complex, critical or sensitive communications like regulatory compliance, conflict situations or performance evaluations.

There are several strategies for getting this bi-lingual support:

- Linking the worker with another co-worker or manager who is bi-lingual to learn tasks and new skills
- Writing up task descriptions using visuals and/or the worker's native language to explain procedures
- Providing critical trainings (e.g. OSHA information) in multiple languages
- Using case workers from the organization that placed the worker to deal with issues like conflict or performance evaluations
- Using family members to accompany the worker in meetings with the manager when more complex information needs to be shared.

For positions where English is not a specific requirement for job performance, bi-lingual support is used to help workers function in their jobs. In other organizational cultures where there is more pressure to learn English, this bi-lingual support is seen only as a bridge or stepping stone until the employee develops better English skills.

CELEBRATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Many of the employers design ways to “celebrate the differences” among the employee population.

- Potlucks that highlight foods from the immigrants' native cultures
- Holiday celebrations noted or celebrated from different cultures
- World map posted with various employee origins noted
- Newsletters featuring employee/country of the month and/or multi-cultural stories in native languages
- New employees recognized and encouraged to talk about their country of origin
- Weekly or monthly staff “huddles” to discuss a quote about Black History month, Asian Heritage month, Ramadan Holiday, and the like.

The employers report that employee responses to these strategies are very positive. The immigrant employee appears more engaged and connected to the rest of the workforce. Employers believe that these types of cultural celebrations and cultural recognition demonstrate inclusiveness to develop loyalty among employees. Additional key benefits reported are that the employees demonstrate more confidence, participate in more activities, and speak up more to inquire about learning new skills after being recognized at such events and seeing their cohorts similarly recognized. Participating in such “fun” events seems to help them relax and develop increased levels of trust, which leads to taking more risks to expand their experience.

Even workplaces traditionally not dedicated to teaching “soft skills” report the positive effects of employing these celebration strategies. With the average workforce comprised of ever-increasing diversity, employing strategies to recognize and celebrate other countries and cultures of origin seems to make “good business sense” to the employers following those

practices. Sensitizing not only management but all levels of the workforce seems to help open all to more effective ways of working together and interacting with diverse customer bases more effectively. At least one retirement health care organization also involves their elderly residents in these celebrations, which they report has also helped their largely non-immigrant resident group have more appreciation for the cultural richness of the employees.

LIFE NEEDS ACCOMMODATION

Because immigrants may come from communities far away and leave family at home, when they want to return to their country of origin, they often need to take more time than a traditional vacation. Most employers we spoke with work to accommodate this need, in some cases allowing workers to carry vacation time over multiple years or take time off without pay. These management teams recognize that loyal employees want to return to their jobs after their trips home, and that the employees are happier when they stay in touch with loved ones. These vacations are timed for slow months, and shifts are arranged to cover the immigrant's absence. This can work to the benefit of other workers who want to pick up the additional shifts.

JOB SHARE/CROSS TRAINING

For some of our employers retention means cross-training to ensure that during downturns, workers can be redeployed elsewhere in the company. During a recent economic downturn, one company in our study implemented cross-training and job sharing programs to minimize any downsizing. Not only has turnover been reduced, but employees have benefited by gaining additional skills—preparing them for promotions when business resumes a more robust pace.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE IMMIGRANTS AS INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS

Just as “location” is key to real estate, there are three things most important for the promotion of immigrants as individual contributors: skills, skills, skills.

For some unskilled jobs, there are limited opportunities for advancement because there are no real “advanced” levels of the position. To find opportunities for wage progression, immigrants have to move into more skilled positions. This

means even in some cases going outside their current area to departments with higher skill levels and perceived value to the company.

Universally, language skills were identified as the primary barrier between employees and advancement. Language also has a strong indirect affect on advancement, since it impacts the ability of the employee to learn additional skills. While there are certainly individual contributor jobs where this is less critical, more often than not it is a primary factor of success.

UPGRADING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY


In many of the sectors in our study, employees must wear many hats and often must communicate with each other, if not with customers, as a regular part of their jobs. To further their chances for growth within the organization, many employers provide some connection to English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. These programs have a variety of characteristics and vary from employer to employer. (See .)

Limited-English proficient employees are offered onsite vocational ESL training on paid or partially paid staff time. Some employers offer incentives such as bonuses upon completion and for perfect attendance at ESL classes, along with recognition from top management at company-wide graduation ceremonies, and encouragement to continue their ESL studies.

Other employers not large enough or with no resources to offer in-house ESL trainings refer employees to Community College or social service agency-based ESL courses. In both cases, employers often “go the extra mile” to help employees find and access funding through State-sponsored grants and Federal programs promoting English literacy.

ESL programs range from 6-weeks to 6-month time frames and cover work-related topics such as accent reduction, grammar, conversation and communication skills. To improve language proficiency on the job, some employers allow the employee to re-enroll in onsite ESL programs, progressing from Level 1 to Level 2 classes in order to improve their general ability to communicate in the workplace.

The most successful vocational ESL programs customize the content and use examples of related topics for employees to learn conversation skills. To support immigrants in pursuing ESL studies, the most successful programs enjoy the involvement of executive team members who encourage, coach and converse with the immigrants in English in lunchrooms and in other work settings. Some top management figures who are themselves immigrants participate in general orientation trainings to promote ESL classes, telling new hires about their own progression which included ESL studies. Other Supervisors and Leads who complete ESL training will often tell new hires how their acquisition of English helped them advance, and they demonstrate patience with immigrants who are in the process of improving their English communication skills. In some of the more innovative ESL programs, even the customers are drawn into the program. (See Featured Best Practice 3.)

Featured Best Practice 3 – Using the Customer as an ESL Tutor	
 <p>Immigrants comprise over 50% of the workforce at Park Shore Retirement Home. To facilitate better English skills and more communication with the facilities' residents, the Director of Wellness researched ESL classes through a local refugee placement organization, through a sister property in the organization, and at Community Colleges. Onsite ESL classes were conducted, augmented by a voluntary residents' tutoring program called LIR (Language Institute for Refugees). Following the completion of basic ESL classes, immigrants are tutored onsite by residents each week to improve English skills.</p>	<p>The Director of Wellness meets with tutors monthly or quarterly to assess performance and effectiveness using LIR materials. Park Shore also makes available (and pays for) the twice-monthly tutor training classes at a local Community College to further the employees' ESL training. Not only are the employees more willing to use their improved English skills to converse with residents, but the residents also report more satisfaction in helping to train and in dealing with staff members they get to know better.</p> <p>Not all companies can integrate ESL with their customers in this manner, but a similar approach can be implemented utilizing co-workers or managers as tutors to support learning English. This would have the added benefit of strengthening work relationships.</p>


Some organizations we spoke with combine their formal ESL training with policies at work that encourage employees to speak English while on the job. Several went as far as requiring English only in the workplace. Other employers allow workers to speak their native tongues while in small groups with each other, but require them to speak English when they are around customers.

Employers who help employees find funding for ESL training report that the employees often respond not only with better

Employers interviewed indicated that of those immigrants who enter certification programs, an average of 80% completes their certification in professional/technical fields. In addition to offering job progression, most employers offer recognition for completion of professional certification, with special ceremonies attended in some cases by Administrators, CEOs, Directors, and in which General Managers present awards for achievement.

To advance into more professional positions, immigrants must learn that these programs exist, and then find sources of scholarships and funding to pay for their tuition. Working full time and attending classes present obstacles for any population. Often the immigrants who face these issues are also balancing two jobs and supporting multiple family members in the U.S. as well as in their native countries. Employers help immigrants overcome these challenges with several strategies (See also Featured Best Practice 5 .):


- Partially pay for professional/technical education.
- Help research sources of outside funding to offset education tuition expenses.
- Help find funding to support transportation, child care and other aspects of attending school while working.
- Adjust shift hours to accommodate early or late classes.

Featured Best Practice 5 – “Just in Time” Tuition Support		
	<p>A regional hospital realized that most entry level people don't make salaries high enough to accumulate funds for extra schooling. The Tuition Assistance program is normally based on reimbursing the</p>	<p>employee, assuming that they will provide the initial cash flow. This hospital leverages a WorkSource program to</p>
	<p>support employees so that they won't have to come up with the money ahead of time to start school. The program is not limited to just tuition, but can also include books and transportation. The program pays \$5,200 maximum annually, and doesn't have to appear on the employee's W2. The employee must have exhausted other alternative sources of assistance before asking for this grant. This program has opened up training opportunities to many who would have never been able to take advantage of any</p>	<p>tuition program based on repayment.</p>

COMPUTER ORIENTATION FOR ESL POPULATIONS

Several employers described the dilemma of needing a better way to prepare immigrants for computer-based testing and web-based training. In some cases, immigrants have never worked on a computer. The prospect of doing so is extremely intimidating and prevents them from accessing information or

expressing their workplace knowledge and skills. While several employers identified this as an issue, only one in our study had taken the next steps to address this problem specifically. (See Featured Best Practice 6.) Providing an orientation for immigrants with limited English proficiency to break them in slowly to working on the computer increases their opportunity for success in learning to use computers on-the-job.

Featured Best Practice 6 – Combining ESL and Computer Skills		
	<p>When immigrants employed at Overlake Hospital applied for Community College-based CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant)</p>	<p>By interviewing the employees, she learned that the admissions test was being given on the computer, which the immigrants found extremely intimidating.</p>
<p>courses and grants to fund that training, they repeatedly failed to pass the initial placement test. The Hospital's Manager of Training & Development set out to discover why.</p>		<p>The Training Manager worked with the Community College to develop an orientation course for ESL populations, preparing them to access information on the computer. By coaching and handholding the employees, the employer was able to change the outcome. As a result, a total of twelve immigrants passed the computer-based tests and later completed the CNA training.</p>

NEW JOB EXPOSURE

Line employees are often provided with cross-training opportunities within departments or across segments of the organization. Several organizations we interviewed offered some version of “A Day in the Life Of” program to learn how each person’s jobs affects other departments. Everyone participating gets a better understanding of other employees’ responsibilities and is more prepared to apply for new job openings when they occur. In some cases, employers had more developed programs that systematically expose and train employees into new roles. (See Featured Best Practice 7.)

Featured Best Practice 7 – Lateral Job Development



Crowne Plaza Hotel offers a six-month development program to help line associates move laterally to their next position, even if no current opening exists in the new department. The first half of the program is dedicated to learning about the industry and how all departments of the organization are interrelated.

The second half trains the employee in the basics of a different department within the organization not related to his or her current job. The employee is provided one-on-one attention in the training, and then is given special consideration when an opening in the new department occurs. Immigrants who successfully complete this development program are generally placed in the new area for which they trained, saving recruiting costs and producing higher employee loyalty and morale.

MENTORING AND COACHING

In most organizations interviewed, management recognizes the immigrant who demonstrates potential for advancement, noticing his or her outstanding on-the-job performance and encouraging the immigrant to try learning a new skill. Many immigrants from different cultures are not pre-disposed to ask for advancement opportunities on their own. Coaching, handholding and nurturing the confidence of immigrants are often required before they become willing to try for new positions. As one hotel's Executive Housekeeper believes, "We have to nurture many of the employees to get them to try to go further; otherwise they're scared away by the idea."

Likewise, in many manufacturing and health care settings, immigrants do not automatically initiate the process of learning new skills. Supervisors who have been trained to spot promising performance, give positive feedback, and nurture the seeds of self-esteem are in a unique position to groom top performing first-line workers for advancement.

RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

Employee recognition programs take many forms within the organizations we studied. Some companies give rewards informally on an ad hoc basis, while others institute measured, highly structured approaches as a tool to help achieve corporate objectives. Depending on the nature of the industry, the size of the organization, and the management structure, different workforces in different settings all call for customized approaches to show appreciation through recognition programs.

Such programs may be part of a core strategy to maintain production, or designed to reinforce an “upbeat” atmosphere and to inspire employees to “give more.” In all companies ranging from production-focused manufacturing to customer-facing hospitality and health care industries, employee recognition emerged consistently as a way to achieve positive reinforcement of desired behavior. As may be expected, immigrants are not singled out for distinct awards, but instead “compete” with non-immigrants to be recognized for their contributions.

Approaches to employee recognition programs take three forms: 1) formal programs with awards presentations; 2) informal, “pep rally” ceremonies; and 3) day-to-day recognition by supervisors and managers.

Employees are most often recognized for either longevity or performance:


- Top production
- Exemplary on-the-job performance (Employee of the Week, Month, Year)
- “Above and Beyond the Call of Duty” (Extra effort exerted on the job)
- Special service awards (Innovative contributions to the workplace)

Awards include verbal recognition on-the-job, cash bonuses, additional time off, trips and travel benefits, special lunches and formal dinners, gift baskets and merchandise, and trophies for specific achievements. When formally presented, these awards are often given at either departmental, company-wide, or annual meetings. Families are also encouraged to join in the celebrations. In some cases awards are presented at formal, executive dinners with spouses included, or in other cases are presented at informal picnics or lunches with family members present. (See Featured Best Practice 8.)

Outcomes employers report after implementing employee recognition programs include higher levels of performance and production, greater confidence exhibited by those recognized for performance, more willingness to speak out as a result of being “seen”, increased applications for promotions and new

opportunities, more connectedness within the staff, and less turnover due to increased “family” atmosphere.

Recipients of awards may be nominated by cohorts or selected by management committees. Some companies find that presenting awards with family members present increases a sense of appreciation and loyalty to the organization.

Featured Best Practice 8 – Rallying the Staff		
	<p>In the Doubletree Hotel , “CARE Rallies” (CARE = Caring, Attentive, Responsive, and Empowered) are monthly recognition programs attended by the entire staff and sponsored and planned by a different hotel department each month. Staff members act as “cheerleaders” to communicate the aspect that “People here care about you.” When rallies occur on days that the hotel is booked at full capacity, staff are extremely</p>	<p>busy. So the Executive team cleans rooms, manages the front desk in shifts, and covers other positions to free up staff so everyone can attend.</p> <p>Rallies can include food for everyone, a dunking booth, or a swim party, with different awards given in recognition of different achievements. Each department takes ownership and generates a lot of excitement in presenting a “theme” for the rally. Employees look forward to the rallies and tend to share rallies as the “highlight” of working at the hotel when referring new hires to join the team.</p>

JOB PROGRESSION PATHWAYS

Many organizations provide job descriptions and discuss paths to advancement within their workforces. These discussions occur with employees 1) at new hire orientations; 2) during performance reviews; and 3) when supervisors approach promising employees about specific opportunities.

Only a few organizations we spoke with have formal job ladder programs, but report that such clarity in job pathways helps many advance at a much faster pace than they might without such information. (See Featured Best Practice 9.)

Featured Best Practice 9 – Company Wide Job Ladder Program



While job ladders are more common in technical fields that employ engineers and other highly stratified workforces, a local manufacturing organization, Brandrud, brought that concept into their workplace to aid workers across the company. First all jobs were described in depth, then the competencies for that job were identified. These skills and abilities were organized into levels, and a specific path for advancement in each job was identified. In most cases a

path for advancement as an individual producer, as well as a path for advancement as a manager, were both laid out. The job ladders also lay out specific trainings or outside coursework required to advance to the next level in the position. Advancements are associated with pay raises.

When new employees join the organization, the job ladder associated with their position is explained to them. Employees show more willingness to apply for jobs than in the past because the job ladder system is so clearly defined.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE IMMIGRANTS TO SUPERVISORY ROLES

Employers identified the supervisor or lead role as a great opportunity for immigrants in their workforce. Consistently, the employers we spoke with had numerous examples of immigrants succeeding into these roles. Employers also communicated their desire to see even more immigrants develop along this pathway.

Employers reported some challenges with advancing immigrants beyond individual contributor roles and into supervisory and lead positions. In order for workers to advance into Lead or Supervisor roles, they have to be both willing *and* able -- both areas in which employers noted barriers.

First, some employers believe immigrants aren't always willing to seek out advancements that involve directing the work of others. They attributed this in part to either a lack of drive or fear of failure, one of the key factors we mentioned in an earlier section. Characteristics often attributed to the American business culture, including having an entrepreneurial spirit, believing that "anything is possible through hard work," and having a bold, "bring it on" attitude are all common phrases used to describe American workers. Employers interviewed stated that even though they witness a strong work ethic in their immigrant workforce, not all immigrants demonstrate this drive to "get ahead," perhaps due to cultural differences between their home country and the American work culture.

A majority of the employers we interviewed stated that a significant portion of their immigrant populations do not seek out opportunities for advancement as a matter of course. They report it is often necessary to introduce the immigrant worker to the idea that he or she can contribute more to the common good of the organization by moving into new responsibilities, and that there is nothing to fear by letting go of the existing role and assuming a new one.

Another challenge employers reported was that some immigrant employees were hesitant to direct the work of others in their cohort. Employers believe that for some it may be a gender issue in their culture (usually an issue with women directing men), or perhaps age (young directing older), or just concerns about being advanced beyond others who may have referred them into the organization.

Employers also noted some skills challenges that had to be addressed for immigrants to succeed in supervisory roles. Generally more language proficiency is required to supervise (except in those cases where all subordinates and the superior speak the immigrant's native language). In addition to understanding task descriptions, team leaders and supervisors must communicate tasks and procedures to others. Besides language proficiency, supervisors must have the skills and aptitudes necessary to provide constructive feedback, resolve conflicts in their teams, decide compensation levels, build morale, and handle employee issues. They also manage the work flow in sophisticated positions requiring good communication skills.

Despite these challenges, the employers in our study see the supervisory role as a good opportunity for immigrants in their company and a place where they are already seeing success. Employers have several key strategies they are using to aid immigrants in becoming more "willing and able."

MENTORING AND COACHING

Some organizations interviewed have formal mentoring programs in which Supervisors and Leads encourage and build the confidence required for immigrants to step out of "known" roles and risk venturing into new, unknown areas. In most cases mentoring begins when the supervisor first recognizes an

employee as a good performer and identifies specific skills required at the next (Lead) level. By nurturing the talents effective line employees exhibit, the organization increases their return on the investment in those individuals and prepares to promote from within. One-on-one coaching is provided the employees being mentored on an ad hoc basis, with more structured positive feedback delivered in performance appraisals. (See Featured Best Practice 10.)

Featured Best Practice 10 – Coaching Potential Supervisors



At one printing company, Mail-Well, most supervisory/management skills are learned on the job, where newly promoted employees learn what's expected of a supervisor by being mentored. After the completion of a 3-day management skills class, the manager assigns the manager-trainee tasks to get him/her

up to speed. By reviewing material with the trainee and asking questions from class, the manager mentors the trainee one-on-one in specific communication skills. The trainee sits in on meetings in which the manager handles employee issues so the trainee can see how it's done. By asking questions, the trainee prepares for and soon begins conducting some employee meetings him or herself. This step-by-step "break-in" prepares the trainee for new experiences and provides a strong foundation for long-term success.

To inspire immigrants and encourage them to consider advancing their skills, a number of employers interviewed ask Supervisors and Leads who have completed ESL training to let other immigrants in line positions know how they went about improving their English communication skills to advance into supervisory roles. In several organizations very supportive of immigrants and refugees, executive management team members frequently coach the line employees to "go for it" by sitting with and getting to know them in the company cafeteria at lunch, and by speaking at new hire orientations.

WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION TRAINING

Of the employers interviewed, very few of them offer in-house training in effective communication skills for line employees. In several cases, however, employers do offer Diversity Training to introduce the idea of different styles of communicating and developing tolerance for others' cultures. Most employers participating in this study provide training—informal or formal—for supervisors and managers in workplace communication skills, but have not embraced the idea of training line level employees in those areas. Only when an employee has been identified and is in transition into new Lead

or Supervisory or Management roles does he or she typically get access to such training on company time.

Many of the employers interviewed offer management training for new supervisors in, for example, what one health care facility calls "Workplace Communication," covering management skills, conflict management, and communication skills in an 8-hour track (two 4-hour sessions).

We discovered that immigrants who progress from entry level jobs into Lead or Supervisory roles tend to work closely with their employers to develop not only their confidence but also their supervisory skills. After working one-on-one with their current supervisors to apply for promotions, immigrants generally then receive on-the-job training in learning how to supervise others. Some of the smaller organizations continue informally mentoring the new supervisor to develop skills in communicating with others. Other employers offer in-house or outsourced training in beginning levels of supervisory skills.

Some organizations embraced the concept of a diverse workforce. Rather than general trainings around diversity, at least one organization in our study focuses specifically on the communication skills necessary to create a productive work environment. (See Featured Best Practice 11.) These trainings are geared toward supervisors in general, but certainly aid the immigrant supervisor in their attempts to manage a diverse workforce.

Featured Best Practice 11 – Supervising ESL Populations



two-way day-to-day communications and training between the employees and first line supervision staff. Driven by the costly and potentially dangerous consequences when

To address several issues—especially on-the-job safety and critical needs for following directions—among its largely immigrant population, SeaTac Airport Jobs' Employment Center will offer employers assistance in addressing the

employees do not comprehend instructions, the Center is working with South Seattle Community College to develop courses specifically designed to teach line managers how to communicate more effectively with immigrant and refugee populations who have limited English proficiency. Expected benefits of the program include increased safety of employees' actions, reduced number of accidents resulting from misunderstood instructions, reduced fines and penalties for safety or security violations due to lack of comprehension of rules and regulations, and reduced number of errors in work production from improved communications of crucial information.

CLEAR DESCRIPTION OF JOB EXPECTATIONS

Creating and maintaining clear communications is the hallmark of successful relationships. Some of the employers we spoke with use this guideline in managing their talent to produce the best possible outcomes in business situations. “It’s very important that all employees have clear expectations and are given clear feedback to clarify their own expectations,” says one manufacturing company’s Director of Human Resources. “They need to be given training so they can understand what the game is and how they can win.” To that end, this employer and several other enlightened managers described their successes in defining jobs specifically, tying it to specific training, and communicating those performance expectations clearly on a day-to-day basis.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE IMMIGRANTS TO MANAGEMENT/EXECUTIVE ROLES

Employers in this study face more exceptional challenges in determining how to advance employees from supervisors into senior management roles.

Senior management positions require higher levels of aptitude and abilities in areas beyond tangible task-oriented talents. English language proficiency—required to solve problems and conceptualize solutions—is an assumed skill in those who enter these management roles. The challenge for most employers as it relates to advancing immigrants who possess management potential is how to expose them to experiences that help them gain department-specific knowledge and also build expertise in those intangible areas comprising excellent management skills.

As one manufacturing company Human Resources Director explained, “These types of jobs require problem solving skills, technical expertise, and advanced English skills to communicate with coworkers and some with the public. Currently, many of the refugees and immigrants in our workforce don’t have the English or the engineering skills to progress into those jobs and interact with customers.”

One of the biggest challenges in moving people into these ranks is the lack of available jobs at these senior levels. In this regard, both non-immigrants and immigrants can develop the skills and abilities to be promoted, but may not have the opportunity to move up.

Still, some immigrants do progress through additional education and on-the-job training over the course of time into executive level management roles. For example, from our interviews we found that several employers in the hospitality, health care and food processing industries are immigrants themselves who have risen through the ranks, acquired additional education, and now work at senior management levels (including Vice Presidents and General Managers).

Strategies for addressing all of these challenges and moving promising employees forward -- including immigrants -- involve management skills training, formal management tracks, and providing access to the broader network of jobs across the company.

MANAGEMENT SKILLS TRAINING

Organizations we interviewed generally seek to identify and tap the resources of their workforces by promoting from within. Most organizations provide some kind of process-based management skills training, usually taught in-house by their own training staff, or outsourced to partnering organizations, or administered at other locations within a corporate structure.

Access to this type of training is, for most companies, controlled by the supervisor or manager who must recognize and refer the promising employee for promotion into management. Only a few employers reported immigrants taking

the initiative in applying for management roles and entering management training programs.

Topics addressed for the new manager include providing positive feedback, problem solving, conflict resolution, effective communications, and dealing with special needs populations. Most of these trainings include role playing to explore ways to deal with differences and ensure the inclusion of everyone. (See Featured Best Practice 12 for an example of one program.)

Advanced training explores strategies for other organizational issues such as how to build morale within the staff, how to instill a “customer service” attitude in employees, and other broad issues.

Featured Best Practice 12– Management Development Training



One manufacturing company, Genie Industries, offers a discrete management development track called "Genie University." The courses are required for supervisors and managers, but anyone on the manufacturing floor—machine operators and office workers alike—can sign up for and complete the courses. The classes are taught internally at no cost to the employee. Topics covered include supervisory skills,

communication skills, problem solving skills, and other topics designed to develop leadership qualities in all employees. Supervisors and managers also learn how to interview applicants when hiring and transferring them into new positions. Genie's philosophy is to send "a steady drip" of management development opportunities by offering additional supervisory and management skills training at monthly and quarterly meetings, continuing to build the employees' leadership competencies. Such free, onsite training provides an outstanding way for all employees, including immigrants, to increase their skills, gain more confidence, and prepare to assume increasingly larger responsibilities in managing people and materials.

FORMAL MANAGEMENT TRACKS

A select number of organizations in our study, often those part of a larger network competing in worldwide markets, have formal management tracks implemented in an effort to grow the sophistication of their management teams. (See Featured Best Practice 13.) In some cases the inclusion of immigrants in these programs is motivated by an overall diversity plan calling for more emphasis on the promotion of a diverse workforce.

Featured Best Practice 13– Management Diversity Program



Doubletree Hotel offers a Management Development Program as part of their diversity plan. This informally structured cross-departmental training program is open to any line or supervisory employee with a college degree. The company assigns mentors to employees who have been recognized with potential for advancement to help bring them along, offering

technical training, education, or whatever the employees need. Participating employees state their career goals and work with the Human Resources department to structure a schedule in which to work and learn about different departments to accomplish their career goals. The cross training is designed to prepare employees to perform other jobs in the same property, but also to be open to transferring to other properties. As a result, the company offers unlimited opportunities for advancement and continues to reap the benefits of promoting top performers.

NETWORK OF JOBS APPROACH

One of the biggest challenges faced by many of the organizations in the study was the lack of management or executives jobs into which immigrants (or non-immigrants for that matter) can be promoted. In companies that are part of a larger chain, as in the hospitality sector, some managers actively look at the broader network of jobs elsewhere in their organization on behalf of the immigrant. Their rationale is, “If we don’t figure out a way to accommodate their needs for them to advance, we’ll lose them. We’d rather lose them to another one of our own hotels than to someone else.”

RECOMMENDATIONS TO AID EMPLOYER STRATEGIES

During the interviews and the research roundtables we asked the participants to also generate suggestions for initiatives that would support their efforts. Through their suggestions and our own observations and analysis, we came to some conclusions about areas that could have an impact and support employer-based strategies for immigrants in the workplace. We've summarized and organized those into the sections below.

RESEARCH

This study has laid some important groundwork for understanding the employer-based strategies with this population. As several employers pointed out, however, it is a dynamic puzzle and worthy of ongoing study. There are some additional follow-up examinations that the WDC could support that would further leverage this foundational effort.

INTEGRATE THE IMMIGRANT PERSPECTIVE

This study was designed as a case study of employer-based strategies from the employer's perspective. As we pointed out, many of the employers themselves did not make a regular practice of validating their views with the refugee and immigrant workforce in their company. A further enhancement to this study would be to take the core research themes and identified best practices and interview and/or survey the refugee and immigrant employee base to seek their perspective and test/validate these practices. This would not only strengthen the validity of these or any new findings, but it would be key input for employers and agencies who work with this population.

BEST PRACTICES CASE WRITE-UPS

This report represents an overview of many different best practices. There is a need for more in-depth write-up of certain practices into case studies. These could be 3-8 pages each, outlining the practice, its goals and objectives, its actual impact on the workplace, and reaction from managers and employees to the practice. These practices could be published in paper form as well as electronically, and delivered to employers.

SURVEY OF BROADER COMPANY BASE

From the results of this qualitative study, a broader survey of the employer base could be done to provide a more comprehensive “state of the union” around employer-based strategies. This survey could be part of the WDC’s annual study of the employer community. This broader quantitative study would help validate the findings of the current qualitative study, as well as identify broader trends and differences between sectors.

MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Certain management tools could be developed that would allow employers to better design and implement programs to retain and promote immigrants.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The lack of assessment by employers was due in part to the absence of useful assessment tools. These needs fall into several categories:

- pre-employment screening and assessment, including language assessments, skill and potential assessments
- post-program assessments to address the impact of particular trainings
- assessments to aid immigrants in communicating their previous job experience better to employees

CAREER LADDERS BY SECTOR

Although career ladders are regularly identified as an asset both in the literature and by the employers who use them, it is clear from our study that they are not widespread in the major sectors we examined. Development of some core career ladder examples could help employers by providing a “starters kit” for their own efforts. It could also be used with the immigrants themselves to educate them about the career opportunities inherent in each sector (such tools could also be useful for other populations, including youth and welfare-to-work).

TRAINING

Training is one of the areas where the WDC currently supports employer efforts, and it came up consistently as an area where

employers felt they could use support. There were several areas in particular that would make a difference for employers:

ESL

English as a Second Language courses were universally identified as a key component of their strategy for aiding immigrants in their workforce. At least half of the employers we spoke with rely on outside grants through the WDC and others to provide this training internally. ESL needs to be supported in a number of ways:

- Continue the funding of ESL programs
- Provide a resource that identifies available resources for employers—a website or manual
- Encourage more assessment of the impacts of ESL by insisting that ESL providers institute more rigorous pre- and post-testing, including management assessment. (Assumes such tools are available, see “Assessment Tools” above.)

COMPUTER-BASED TRAINING

Computer skills are critical in many companies for advancement; beyond the skill itself, many employers talked about the wealth of online training offered by their companies that is inaccessible to the computer illiterate. Yet employers reported that their ESL population often lacked these basic computer skills. Computer training was intimidating to many immigrant employees with ESL challenges, employers felt, so developing computer orientations that incorporated ESL techniques could maximize the effectiveness of this training. Existing programs (see Featured Best Practice 6, page 33) or other programs could be developed and piloted across a broader group of employers.

WORK ORIENTATION

Basic job orientation for entry work in each sector would be helpful to many of the employers we spoke with. This orientation could be done by WDC partners and should address the following issues:

- Education on employers’ expectations on resumes and job interviews
- General expectations around work in the American culture, including timeliness, work ethic, personal hygiene, etc.

- Education on how specific workplace cultures can vary, how to understand the workplace culture, and how to be effective in it
- Rights and responsibilities of the worker and employer so that immigrants know that they can expect fair treatment in the workplace
- Specific examples of good employee/management interaction
- Examples of career paths in particular industries and what specific skills and abilities it takes to advance in those industries
- Examples of other immigrants who have been successful in being promoted in a particular industry

SUPERVISOR AND MANAGEMENT TRAINING FOR IMMIGRANTS

While many companies identified the need for training to aid immigrants in making the step to the supervisory/management track, fewer had formal programs to do so. In many cases, it was the absence of knowledge to develop an appropriate curriculum and the lack of resources to employ others to do so. Supporting this area can take a number of forms:

- Providing information on management trainings available at local schools, etc. and encouraging companies to promote the use of their scholarship or tuition programs to leverage these trainings
- Development of supervisory/management trainings specifically for the immigrant workforce
- Validation of existing training done by employers in this study (testing outcomes in the workplace) and developing a pilot for other companies

MANAGEMENT TRAINING TO WORK WITH IMMIGRANTS

Beyond the general diversity training offered in some organizations, culture-specific training would be invaluable to supervisors and managers. Similar to the training an ex-patriot receives when they go to manage in another country, training that orients managers to nuances of particular backgrounds could be a useful tool to aid middle managers in better understanding their workforce.

CONVERSATIONAL LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR MANAGERS

In addition to immigrants gaining more skills, a few employers in the study expressed their desire for language training to become more conversational in the dominant languages spoken by their workforce.

- Making managers aware of the numerous language courses offered at local institutions
- Encouraging managers to set up “brown-bag” lunches with their bi-lingual and ESL employees to hone their language skills

TRAINING MANAGER RESOURCES

Employers also requested resources for a training manager who would be a resource to support the training of immigrants, similar to the role outlined in Featured Best Practice 2, page 26. It is possible that this could be a staff resource inside the WDC or its partners.

COMMUNITY

Many of the employers expressed a desire to build a community where those employers who have an immigrant workforce can connect and share ideas. One of the major roles that the WDC could play is in developing the relationships among employers who manage this workforce to further facilitate sharing and support. There are a number of components to this role, including building an internet support resource, sharing best practice write-ups, and holding formal and informal events to encourage networking. Additional community-building ideas raised during conversations include:

- Newsletter built from contributions by the employers
- Internet resource site that includes information about ESL and other training resources, the latest research, assessment tools, best practices, etc.
- Brown-bag employer meetings with facilitated discussions on retention and promotion issues

APPENDIX A: STUDY OVERVIEW

In the Spring of 2003, the Workforce Development Council (WDC) of Seattle-King County issued a Request for Proposal to study employer-based strategies for retaining and promoting immigrants and refugees in the workplace. The WDC is a non-profit organization dedicated to building a results-oriented education, job training and employment system in Seattle and throughout King County. The WDC recognizes the difficulties that refugees and immigrants face in progressing beyond minimum wage jobs and believes that the sharing of best practices can support employers as they manage this workforce.

The Athena Institute, in partnership with the Refugee Resettlement Office, was commissioned to study refugees and immigrants in the workplace and analyze employer-based strategies for promoting this workforce.

ROLE OF THIS REPORT

This report is intended to provide insight into strategies being used by employers to retain and promote the refugee and immigrant workforce. The information provided serves a number of purposes:

- The WDC will utilize this information to identify additional ways to support employers in their efforts to manage this workforce
- Employers can utilize the summary to identify additional strategies and/or initiatives that they could implement
- Partners of the WDC currently serving employers can better understand the employers' perspective and strategies and tailor their services to better meet employer's needs

THE METHODOLOGY

Athena analysts are research specialists experienced in the study of best practices. During the project they designed and conducted interviews with employers to identify workforce challenges, opportunities, and solutions to provide job stability and progression for immigrants and refugees. Employer-driven best practices were assessed across job types and sector,

compiled into an executive summary and shared with the WDC and employers.

Employer Pool

Names of employers came from the Refugee Resettlement Office (RRO) databases, employer contacts of the WDC, and relations The Athena Institute has with the employer community. Further names were solicited from the employers in the study at the point of interview. Sectors represented include healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, and retail.

Interview Approach

A semi-structured research design addressed several topics, including challenges in the workplace and strategies employers deployed. Anywhere from 1-3 interviewers attended each individual interview. Approximately 75% of the interviews were done in person at the employer's premises; the remaining employers were interviewed over the phone. The interviewees were most often human resource personnel or key managers who worked closely with refugees and immigrants.

Research Roundtables

Once interviews with employers were complete, a subset of employers was invited to attend research roundtables. Other employers who had not been interviewed were also invited to attend. Two roundtables were held, with 6 – 8 people attending. Athena facilitated a discussion that covered all of the major sections of research results (definition of success and pathways; factors in the employee, manager and company; and key strategies and best practices.) The sessions were interactive, as participants were asked to talk about their ideas and then the facilitator presented results from the research relevant to that section. For some sections the ordering was reversed and attendees heard the results and were asked for their reactions.

These roundtables offered not only the opportunity to test the results and get more information, but it represented a chance for the participants to hear useful information and network with peers who also had interests in these same issues.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICE

The Refugee Resettlement Office (RRO) for the Episcopal Church is a not-for-profit organization committed to providing refugee and immigrant asylum and acculturation services. Since 1986, RRO has met the hiring needs of Puget Sound employers by successfully placing refugees and immigrants into jobs. RRO provides job placement, ongoing assessments, trainings, and extensive regional market expertise to help these populations thrive and contribute to the local workforce. Through consistent leadership, RRO has gained keen insights into the issues involved in providing asylum, basic necessities, and employment for individuals fleeing religious or political persecution.

THE ATHENA INSTITUTE

The Athena Institute is a research organization that helps executives and organizations find success. Its *Strategic Leadership* program strengthens corporations and helps individual leaders position their companies to win in emerging markets. Its *Market Power* program helps firms, governments, and regions leverage new opportunities. Its *Partner Assets* program assists those looking to partnerships as a source of competitive advantage. Athena's methodologies and insights have been implemented by many organizations, ranging from Fortune 1000 corporations to public policy agencies.

ABOUT THE ANALYSTS

PS Reilly is a noted expert, researcher, and advisor to businesses on success practices. Her insights and predictions are regularly featured in articles, columns, and keynotes. Most recently she was Vice President of Emerging Markets for Ziff Davis Media, where she provided strategic advice to leading companies, including IBM, Peoplesoft, and many others. She has designed and led numerous large-scale research projects, from analysis of a single market, to investigating the economic impact of regional policy and infrastructure changes.

Madhuri Hosford is a seasoned researcher. She has been involved in numerous national and international studies on workforce performance improvement, including market research and focus

groups designed to identify and capture the key information required to change the behavior of individuals and groups. She has written and edited numerous research outcomes and executive overviews, facilitated consortiums of industry, education and policy makers, and served on multiple advisory boards for environmental and social services causes.

Jesse Berst is an internationally known technology and business analyst. He has authored or co-authored more than a dozen books, written hundreds of articles for leading publications and keynoted dozens of business events in the U.S. and abroad. He combines two decades of professional experience in emerging markets and research.

APPENDIX B: COMPANIES IN THE STUDY

SPECIFIC COMPANIES INTERVIEWED

Company	Sector
Airport Jobs	Retail
Alaska Copper & Brass	Manufacturing
Allied Building Services	Manufacturing
Bonanza Press	Manufacturing
Brandrud	Manufacturing
Caroline Kline Galland Home	Healthcare
Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center	Healthcare
Courtyard Marriott	Hospitality
Covenant Shores Retirement Community	Healthcare
Crowne Plaza Hotel	Hospitality
DoubleTree Hotel	Hospitality
Embassy Suites Hotel	Hospitality
FedEx Home Delivery	Retail
Gate Gourmet	Food Service
Genie Industries	Manufacturing
Grand Hyatt Hotel	Hospitality
Group Health	Healthcare
Highline Community Hospital	Healthcare
HMS Host	Retail
Hotel Monaco	Hospitality
Kinko's	Retail
Machinists, Inc	Manufacturing
Mail-Well Envelope	Manufacturing
Mikron Industries	Manufacturing
Overlake Hospital	Healthcare
Park Shore Retirement Home	Healthcare
Safeway	Retail
Sorrento Hotel	Hospitality
The Gap	Retail

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Core Questions	Probing Questions
<p>Job Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What types of jobs do refugees and immigrants get in your company ▪ How many of the jobs that refugees and immigrants get have a job ladder or career path associated with them ▪ Are R/I progressing at the same rate as the rest of the workforce? ▪ Are there “sticking points” in the organization for refugees and immigrants? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What particular part of the organization are they employed in? ▪ Is this advancement through certification, education, additional competencies? ▪ Rate of advancement changes overall? ▪ Where are the opportunities? ▪ Macroeconomic impact on rates of advancement in the company? ▪ What do you attribute these to? ▪ Why is it harder at this point? ▪ Is there anything that helps/can help?
<p>Major Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe your company’s major programs that aid refugees and immigrants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training/certification (internal/external) ○ Tuition assistance, child care assistance, other training support ○ Job/career ladders ○ Workforce centers ○ Active recruitment/outreach programs ○ Identifying chronic openings ○ Organizational policies that mandate fairness and equity ○ Coaching and mentoring programs ○ Performance appraisal systems that are nondiscriminatory ○ Assessment testing that is nondiscriminatory (specified in advance to staff, relevant, free of linguistic and other bias, reliably administered, valid predictors) ○ Job swaps ○ Career development programs ○ Management training to work with this population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Names, details, scope? ▪ Formal versus informal? ▪ Voluntary versus mandatory? ▪ Are these run from HR or by individual managers? ▪ Relationships with other outside agencies, universities, as part of these programs? ▪ How are they financed? ▪ How often run? ▪ How measured? ▪ How successful?
<p>Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do you measure and monitor performance of these programs? ▪ What is the current performance of the programs you have mentioned? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specific metrics? ▪ Do you believe your programs impact the bottom line?

Core Questions	Probing Questions
<p>Financing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How are you financing these programs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whose budgets? ▪ What process for allocation ▪ Relationship with union negotiations? ▪ What outside resources used?
<p>Best Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Which of your programs do you think other organizations should consider for adoption? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What should they keep in mind when implementing this practice? ▪ What outcomes should they expect?
<p>External resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What external resources do you leverage to help you with the refugee and immigrant workforce? ▪ What additional resources would be helpful? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Source of funding for these resources?
<p>Barriers and Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the biggest barriers to success for R/I? ▪ Which of these do your internal programs try to address? ▪ What are the biggest barriers for your programs to be successful? ▪ What characterizes the R/I who are successful moving up in your company? ▪ What role does the union play in your R/I efforts? ▪ Is anyone in the HR group specifically focused on the R/I issue, or how is it managed? ▪ What hasn't worked and why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills, attitude? ▪ Language? ▪ Knowledge of promotion opportunities? ▪ Lack of part-time training opportunities? ▪ External challenges with training (travel, childcare, time consuming, expensive)? ▪ Career planning—difficulties in identifying career paths, skills requirement, access points for training? ▪ Low self-esteem, poor self image

APPENDIX D: OVERVIEW OF OUTSIDE RESEARCH

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Very little research focused on refugees and/or immigrants per se, however we found relevance in the research focused on ESL population and the diverse workforce more generally. We also found some useful information in the research on welfare recipients. Here are some general observations from the third-party research that we utilized to help generate the semi-structured interview questions:

- There is research on role of agencies with these communities but less research from the perspective of the company.
- Emphasis in larger companies seems to be on strategies to break the glass ceiling for women and minorities.
- Employers are motivated to participate in outside programs when they are convinced it will help them overcome hiring and/or retention problems, either too few qualified job applicants, too many applicants to screen, or high worker turnover.
- Programs that emphasize the needs of a particular sector are more popular, in part because they've had some success with employers. They provide more targeted resource and knowledge, and also seek to change the practices in these sectors by developing skills certification, career ladders or other strategies for advancement.

NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

- Low income workers don't have the time to gain additional skills-too busy with life issues.
- Too often welfare clients are being placed in entry level jobs that don't have career ladders attached.
- Refugees face a lack of English skills.
- Slowing economy has relieved pressures on employers to find skilled workers.
- Other barriers cited in literature: knowledge of promotion opportunities; lack of part-time training opportunities, external challenges with training (travel, childcare, time consuming, expensive); career planning—difficulties in identifying career paths, skills requirement, access points for training; low self-esteem, poor self image.

- Companies need to regularly evaluate “sticking points” (where individuals of a particular group get stuck at various points in their career) to avoid them having a cumulative effect on management perceptions of staff promotability.

STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES—DIVERSITY PROGRAMS

- Six best strategies for managing diversity are training and education programs, organizational policies that mandate fairness and equity for all employees, mentoring programs, performance appraisal systems that are nondiscriminatory, outreach programs, and career development programs.
- Other important recommendations for managing diversity are to obtain top management support, integrate diversity into all company functions, to use a combination of strategies, and create a corporate culture that supports diversity.

STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES—TRAINING

- Training provided at the worksite with training overlapping the employee’s shift—employer pays for one hour and employee contributes one hour.
- Training for language proficiency is key to addressing the challenges of low-wage workers.
- Combining work with education and training can be very demanding, and work supports such as child care subsidies, housing and transportation assistance and health insurance can help welfare recipients and low-wage workers stay in the workforce and advance.
- Strategies that promote work-based learning can improve welfare and low-wage workers to combine work and skill development activities.

STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES—CAREER LADDERS

- Career ladders are worked out ahead of time with employers.
- There is an increasing emphasis from placing welfare recipients into a job to focusing on moving them up the ladder. How do they become economically self-sufficient? Employment barriers have been addressed such as transportation and childcare, but how does a single mother find the time to get the skills to move up the ladder?

- Healthcare and K-12 education are the most cited areas where career ladders have been set up for minorities (move from aid to nurse or aid to teacher).
- There is reference made in the literature to unions having developed a number of career ladder programs in specific companies or sectors within local jurisdictions (e.g. Philadelphia healthcare system). Reference is made to the promotion of women into nontraditional careers. Nothing specifically identified for refugees or immigrants, however.
- The Shoreline Career Ladders program (which identifies career ladders for certain sectors and ties those to trainings and certifications at the college) is held up as a model and is mentioned in reports. (When we explored this program, however, we found that it was no longer operational.)
- Train potential employee in community college, place on bottom rung with targeted employers.

FINANCING OF STRATEGIES

- Budget for strategies are sometimes negotiated as part of labor agreement with unions—no layoff policies are combined with cross-training and upgrading programs.
- Training dollars acquired by agencies from government are directed toward employer’s workforce.
- Some employers cover salary for set amount of study time during work day.
- Tuition reimbursement programs are a benefit offered by companies.
- Public sector is the source for many programs, including work-based training, sector-based strategies, and broader collaborative efforts and credentialing initiatives (e.g. attempts to train and credential health aides from workers in economically disadvantaged or welfare populations).

SAMPLE OF REPORTS REVIEWED

A Profile of the Low-Wage Immigrant Workforce. Capps, R. et al. (October 1997). Urban Institute. This study profiles immigrant demographics in the workplace and focuses on immigrants in low-wage jobs. The authors believe that immigrants can benefit from post-and pre-employment services. They point out that, most publicly funded training programs assume that participants

have 9th grade levels of literacy, numeracy, and basic English skills. They recommend revamping the Workforce Investment Act and tailoring job-training programs to serve limited English proficient populations, build language assessment capacity, and combine job training with English language, basic education, and literacy instruction.

<http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310880>

Career Advancement for Welfare Recipients and Low-Wage Workers, Relave, N. (October 2000). This position paper describes key strategies to promote career advancement and examines targeting, program design, collaboration, and funding issues. The author also notes that there is a dearth of research on career advancement strategies. Strategies they cover include job placement and career planning, skill development through education and training, sectoral interventions (long-term employment and economic development strategies that target an occupation or industry), and support services.

Current Status and Future Trends of Diversity Initiatives in the Workplace: Diversity Experts' Perspective. Wentling, R. and Palma-Rivas, N. (1997). National Center for Research in Vocational Education Graduate School of Education University of California at Berkeley. This study interviewed twelve diversity experts across the United States to address 1) barriers to the employment, development, retention and promotion of diverse groups, 2) factors influencing diversity initiatives, 3) motives for managing diversity, 4) strategies to manage diversity, 5) components of effective diversity training, and 6) future trends affecting diversity.

<http://nerve.berkeley.edu/abstracts/MDS-1082?MDS-1082.htm>

Final DFID Diversity Audit Report Summary of Recommendations. British Foreign Service Office (2002). Focused specifically on the civil service and related organizations in Britain and provides recommendations on a number of topics around diversity in the workforce, including career development and posting, selection and promotion.

http://www.dfid.gov.uk/FOI/hrc/8cot02_diversity_summary.pdf

Family-Strengthening Jobs for Low Skill Immigrant and Refugee Workers: Separating Myths from Reality. Egan, M. and Bendick, Jr., M.

(2002). This report examined myths related to refugee and immigrant employment. They provide economic information to show that America needs immigrant and refugee workers, and that workforce programs need to design programs around long-term demand and long-term supplier relationships. They found that English skills pay off -- English fluency increases earnings by 24%. As a consequence, workforce programs need to develop an explicit career ladder that includes post-secondary education and English language skills, and programs should broker with existing educational/training institutions for clients to receive these skills. They found that there are some advantages to job opportunities in the immigrant and refugee community, but on the average these jobs pay less. They believe workforce programs need to develop a mix of options and facilitate jobs outside the ethnic community, and workforce programs need to assist mainstream employers develop their cultural competency. They advocate that case management is a very important service that goes beyond administration, and programs should consider extending "soft-skills" / work readiness training to all family members, not just individuals going to work.

Immigrants in the United States – 2002: A Snapshot of America’s Foreign-Born Population. Clamata, S. (November 2002) Center for Immigration Studies. This report analyzes the 2002 Current Population Survey by the Census Bureau and finds that 33.1 million immigrants live in the United States, or 11.5% of the population. The study also notes that the low educational attainment and resulting low wages are the reason many immigrants remain in poverty, not their legal status or an unwillingness to work.

<http://www.cis.org/articles/2002/back1302.html>

Immigrant Workers and the Great American Job Machine: The Contributions of New Foreign Immigration to National and Regional Labor Force Growth in the 1990s. Summ, A., et al. (August 2002). Prepared for National Business Roundtable, Washington D.C. The authors provide an assessment of the contributions of new foreign immigration to labor force and job growth. Their findings reveal that the impacts of foreign immigration on national labor force growth in the 1990s were far greater than most labor market analysts have suggested and were the highest in the entire 60 year period for which data are available. There

were a estimated 13.543 million net new arrivals into this country during the decade from 1990 – 1999. They accounted for 65% of the job growth in the Pacific region (Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, Hawaii).

http://www.nupr.new.edu/12-02/immigration_BRT.PDF

Improving the Upward Mobility of Low-Skill Workers: The Case of the Health Industry. Pindus, N.; Flynn, P.; and Smith Nightingale, D. (1995). This report focuses on employer and private sector strategies to support the advancement of low-skill workers. It provides analysis and some case descriptions of initiatives for training and advancement, publicly –funded collaborative efforts for training and credentialing, job restructuring and service delivery innovations.

<http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=406317>

Ladders to a Better Life. Fitzgerald, J. and Carlson, V. The American Prospect Vol. 11 No. 15, (2000). This study examines career-ladder programs across the United States, and identifies several keys to success for ladder programs, including 1) the need for employers to become more explicit about how they structure jobs and routes to career advancement, 2) workers needs for access to job-specific training, and 3) the need for a community college, union, or supportive government strategy to fund and connect the piece. They overview several different ladder programs, highlighting some specific examples in healthcare.

<http://www.prospect.org/archives/V11-15/fitzgerald-j.html>

Lessons for Effective Workforce Programs. Rubin, S. (2000). Excerpt from a report to the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation. These researchers reviewed reports on national workforce initiatives and talked with workforce and welfare-to-work experts and program operators at the national and local levels to identify what makes workforce programs effective in the current economic and policy environment. The report identifies several programs around the country, and then describes the elements that make them successful.

<http://www.mrbfreport.org/resources/pdf/Lessons%20From%20Effective%20Workforce%20Programs.pdf>

New Strategies to Promote Stable Employment and Career Progression: An Introduction to the Employment Retention and Advancement Project.

Bloom, D.; Anderson, J.; Wavelet, m.; Gardiner, K.; and Fishman, M. (2002). This executive summary highlights the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation, which describes the emerging ERA programs and identifies some early lessons on the design and implementation of relatively large-scale retention and advancement programs. ERA projects include some advancement projects to help low wage workers move up to better jobs, where services include career counseling, targeted job search assistance, close linkages with employers to identify or build career ladders, and education and training to help participants upgrade their skills while working.

http://www.mdrc.org/Reports2002/era_conferencerpt/era_orview.htm

The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: March 2002.

Schmidley, D. (2003). This report provides demographics on the immigrant community in the United States based on Census Population Surveys. Among its major findings are the facts that the number of foreign born workers continues to increase steadily. They also note that foreign born workers from Latin America and Asia are more likely to immigrate to the west (which includes Washington) than elsewhere in the United States.

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p20-539.pdf>

The Partnership for Working Families: Successful City Initiatives. The United States Conference of Mayors Best Practices Center. Presented at the Annual Meeting of The United States Conference of Mayors, June 2003. This report overviews programs in several cities across the country that address how to move families out of poverty, including both employment-related programs and others unrelated to employment. Employment programs focus on career ladders, worker training programs, certification programs, and development of an employer-based career center. Some of the sectors focused on included healthcare, printing, publishing, and telecommunications.

<http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/news/publications/>

Workplace Education Guide: The Massachusetts Workplace Literacy Consortium. (1997). From 1994 and 1997 where the Massachusetts Department of Education established a

partnership among seven education institutions, 27 employers and 5 labor unions to provide a wide range of instructional services including ESOL communication skills, problem solving, math and computation. They provided basic skills to assembly and production line workers, hospital and nursing home aides, dietary workers, and university maintenance and food-service personnel. From this experience they produced this guide that covers many topics to help those beginning workplace education programs as well as those programs already functioning.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/other1.htm>