

Religion in the Workplace

Diversity Works!



Diversity at Work
in London

Updates



Dear Readers,

In the upcoming months, you will notice that Diversity At Work will be partnering with other consultants to deliver professional development to the public. If you are interested in working with us to deliver training, please get in touch with me. We will also be involved in some community initiatives.

Diversity At Work is pleased to provide some community service to Youth Opportunities Unlimited in London, Ontario, with their YES program. We will be speaking to youth-at-risk about what they need to do to obtain and retain a job, from an employer's perspective. We look forward to our relationship with this invaluable agency in the community. Diversity At Work has been invited to participate in an Equity and Inclusive Education Parent and Community Workshops with the Thames Valley School Board. It is really exciting to see how our businesses and community institutions are recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion.

In the next few months, we will be sending out a survey asking you for feedback on topics for our newsletter and suggestions for professional development. We welcome your responses.

Our newsletter has an international circulation, and if you have a job that you are having a hard time filling, or a diversity event that you would like to circulate, please inquire about our affordable advertising rates. Diversity Works! is read from Canadian coast-to-coast, and in countries like India, Australia, United States, Germany, Holland, Denmark, South Africa, Israel and many more countries.

In my work, I regularly meet some exceptional people, who are very deserving of work, but for whatever the reason, the prospective employer and candidate never get a chance to meet. I have included three profiles, of such individuals in this newsletter this month. All three of the individuals I have met and would recommend. Please check out the ads under "Jobs Wanted" and contact them if you have an opening, or contact me. I also work with New Canadians helping them to find work placements and we are really in desperate need of employers who are willing to take on a student with a technical background to give them some experience. There seems to always be a shortage of engineering placements and scientists and technicians. If you are in the London, Ontario area, and would like more information about the incentives for employers, please give us a call.

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EDITORIAL

Religion in the Workplace



I admit it, when it comes to talking about religion in the workplace, I want to run! I try to avoid any discussions about religion in any public sphere, because the reality is that there's no other topic that creates so much passion, anger and controversy!

Whenever, I, or one of my workshop participants, raise the issue inevitably there is dead silence. What I have come to realize is that this silence doesn't mean people are not interested in talking about it – quite the contrary. We have so many questions about other people's beliefs and the reality is that accommodating this type of diversity in the workplace makes a lot of people nervous, and for some good reasons.

Let's face it, if you have been living, like me, in a conservative primarily British Protestant city all of your life, there is a good chance that you may have never heard of anyone asking for accommodations. This is because in London, Ontario there were no religious minorities (non-Christians) or so it seemed. Yet, all of a sudden, workers are asking for days off for holidays that no one has ever heard of; they are asking for a meditation room, and/or to have their uniform be compliant with the rules of their faith. This can all be very overwhelming for any individual who has grown up in a city like London, where once no one seemed to ask for these accommodations. (Certainly, London is nothing like Toronto. My Human Resources colleagues have told me that requests for religious accommodation in Toronto is common place).

If you are a member of a religious minority and you find yourself in a situation where you are the first employee who has ever approached the manager about religious accommodation, and they don't know what to do, please don't be offended. In some circles, this is still new and we are all still learning.

Instead, use this as an opportunity to explain the significance of the day and/or the rituals that you may need to engage in at work. Chances are that soon enough there will be another person of your faith that will be hired and you will have helped pave the way.

At present, we have become so embroiled in political correctness that vital dialogue about diversity has been diminished and, as such, we are afraid to ask questions. There is no other area where people are going to feel more uncomfortable about

asking questions because they do not want to offend. Therefore, keep an open mind, and encourage co-workers to ask questions, even if they may not have the right words to express what they perceive your faith as being. Also, talk about your faith objectively without making judgments about other faiths, and you will go a long way in creating a much needed dialogue.

If you are a Human Resources professional, religious accommodation can lead to unintended consequences in many workplaces. Unlike other types of diversity in the workplace, the business case for accommodation is not as strong as let's say as it is for disability or culture. I've never heard of one of my clients or workshop participants discuss how religion in the workplace has enhanced their business in any way. If you are an HR manager, chances are it has made things more complicated, especially in the beginning when you're just becoming acquainted with the issues of religious accommodation. Or, if you live in a small town with little cultural or religious diversity, and all of a sudden, you're, for example, presented with an employee who's asking you, for some time off for a religious observance, you may find yourself with few resources to draw upon.

When I look back at some of my experiences with religion in the workplace, they, in themselves, were quite diverse. I had a co-worker who sat in the cubicle beside me, who used to drape it with pictures of the Madonna, along with rosaries and crosses. For her, it was an expression of her love for her Catholic faith. We worked in a very conservative office and people would occasionally make some remarks, but she never took the religious articles down. Then, I recall my co-worker, Rose, who would sit in her car before work each day and read some passages from the Bible, regardless of how cold the weather got outside. This was her ritual to start off her day. Reflecting back on this, I have to wonder if Rose would have preferred to have gone to a prayer room at work to meditate. Chances are that she wouldn't have because, to her, her faith was too personal.

I guess one of the most uncomfortable spots I've ever been in was back in the early 90's when the word "diversity" was hardly ever spoken in this part of the world, let alone "religious accommodation". Also, I was a new manager. And after many months of being understaffed, I hired an administrative assistant named Rashmi, who was of East-Indian heritage. I

was so pleased that she would be able to start soon. When I offered Rashmi the job and let her know that she could start on Monday, her excitement was a little bit restrained. She was clearly very happy that she was hired, but there was something underlying the offer that seemed bothersome to her. Rashmi began to say that the Hindu holiday of Diwali would be starting that Monday and she was hoping to be with her family to celebrate it.

I began to let Rashmi know that she could start on another week, so that she could observe her holiday. I guess my expression must not have come across as very sincere, since Rashmi said that it was okay, she could start on the Monday. I couldn't help but feel bad. After all, what would it be like for me to give up a holiday that my family and I had been looking forward to all year? I guess I would feel kind of cheated and not so enthusiastic about coming in to work. For me, this was a great opportunity to learn from this experience. I told myself that from then on, I would always ask an employee after I offered them a job if they required any accommodations. I have stuck with this ever since, whether it be a paid employee or a volunteer, and candidates seem to really appreciate that you've thought enough to ask.

Planning this issue became very complicated. Originally my hope was to interview five religious leaders of the fastest growing non-Christian faiths in the London area, with the hope of learning what type of religious accommodations that members of their faith may require in the workplace. Unfortunately, the response was dismal. My calls were either not returned or returned with some trepidation or concern. One leader offered to give me an interview, but I did not feel it was appropriate to only profile one faith in the newsletter.

Instead we will focus on best practices, the legal requirements, resources and the business case for religion accommodation in the work place.

Cheers!

Evelina Silveira

President

Diversity At Work

Ways to Accommodate Religion in the Workplace:

- ◆ Try to find an employee who may be willing to switch shifts with an employee who has a scheduling conflict
- ◆ Accommodate the employee's observance of religious holidays when possible
- ◆ Consideration may be given to offering the employee another position in the workplace that could be less in conflict with his/her religious observances
- ◆ Accommodate religious attire whenever possible

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, protection against religious discrimination applies to the following areas:

- Employment
- Job Applications
- Interviews
- Employment Benefits
- Working Conditions

Employer Best Practices Reasonable Accommodation – Generally

Source:

Compliance Manual Section 12 - Religious Discrimination (An American document)

www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/religion.html

- ◇ Employers should inform employees that they will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the employees' religious practices.
- ◇ Employers should train managers and supervisors on how to recognize religious accommodation requests from employees.
- ◇ Employers should consider developing internal procedures for processing religious accommodation requests.
- ◇ Employers should individually assess each request and avoid assumptions or stereotypes about what constitutes a religious belief or practice or what type of accommodation is appropriate.
- ◇ Employers and employees should confer fully and promptly to the extent needed to share any necessary information about

the employee's religious needs and the available accommodation options.

- ◇ An employer is not required to provide an employee's preferred accommodation if there is more than one effective alternative to choose from. An employer should, however, consider the employee's proposed method of accommodation, and if it is denied, explain to the employee why his proposed accommodation is not being granted.
- ◇ Managers and supervisors should be trained to consider alternative available accommodations if the particular accommodation requested would pose an undue hardship.
- ◇ When faced with a request for a religious accommodation which cannot be promptly implemented, an employer should consider offering alternative methods of accommodation on a temporary basis, while a permanent accommodation is being explored. In this situation, an employer should also keep the employee apprised of the status of the employer's

Quick Links

Ontario Human Rights Commission

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en>

Religious Etiquette Guides

<https://www.tanenbaum.org/resources/etiquette-guides>

Minnesota State University E-Museum-

contains basic information about world religions, terms and related links

<http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/religion>

New Canadian Exhibition

ARTS PROJECT

The ARTS Project is preparing for its tenth annual New Canadians Exhibition, and we would like to invite individuals in your community and organization to submit artwork for the Canada Day Celebration, 2010. This annual exhibition, taking place June 29th until July 10th, 2010 is a unique experience that continues to get better every year!

Applications are invited from both established and emerging artists who are new to Canada to exhibit in a group show. We are interested in professional and non-professional artists living in the London area, who are working in all contemporary fine art mediums. Installations, sculpture, unusual media and abstract art are welcome.

www.artsproject.ca
519-642-2767
203 Dundas Street,
London ON N6A 1G4

Rights and Duties of the Employer and the Person Seeking Religious Accommodation

Remember that the both the employer and the person requesting the accommodations have rights and responsibilities!

Source: Ontario Human Rights Commission

Employer	Person Requesting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect the dignity of the person seeking accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take the initiative to ask for the accommodation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the need for accommodation based on the needs of the group of which the person is a member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain why accommodation is required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reply to the request within a reasonable time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide notice of request in writing, and allow a reasonable time for reply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant requests related to the observance of religious practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain what measures of accommodation are required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deal in good faith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deal in good faith
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be flexible and realistic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If accommodation is not possible because of undue hardship, explain this clearly to the person concerned and be prepared to demonstrate why this is so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual may request details of the cost of accommodation if undue hardship may be a factor

The Business Case for Accommodating Religion in the Workplace

- Improved Employee Morale
- Improved Recruitment and Retention
- Create a Positive Public Image for the Organization
- Financial – reduce your risk of litigation

Religious Denominations, Census of Population Statistics Canada 2001

Last modified: 2005-01-25

Total population	29,639,035
Catholic	12,936,905
Protestant	8,654,850
Christian Orthodox	479,620
Christian not included elsewhere	780,450
Muslim	579,640
Jewish	329,995
Buddhist	300,345
Hindu	297,200
Sikh	278,410
Eastern religions	37,550
Other religions	63,975
No religious affiliation	4,900,090

Ask the Elocution Instructor



Dear Elocution Instructor:

I have a heating & cooling company and I recently hired a technician to join the team. He is punctual, hardworking and very good at what he does. There's just one thing, when he speaks, we're not able to make heads or tails of what he says (he's been in Canada for about eight years). His job doesn't call for a lot of talking. And here in the shop we're all fine with it. It's more when he's on the road answering calls, greeting customers and so on. I knew coming into this that hiring a new Canadian might provide some challenges. I want to know how I bridge this gap.

Signed: **Recently Hired a Technician**

There are many positive aspects to your story: Recognizing the many contributions new Canadians make to our economy is an important one. You state that the shop is also ok with your technician's use of English. This is the thing about opening our companies and ourselves to the experience of having diversity at work; we may hire a newcomer, but end up recognizing and appreciating the individual.

As is the case, Canadians living in major urban centres are entering a period where the majority of people living in them were born outside of Canada. So that English tinged with the flavour of accents is something we

all have to get use to.

I've said elsewhere in this column that everyone has an accent, and that the purpose of elocution instruction is not to get rid of an accent, per say, as accents are a component of personality. But when it comes to sound reproduction, there are sounds we want to keep and there are those that will need adjustment.

Here are some components I've found can be challenging to non-English speakers:

Identifying strong & weak vowel

sounds – use of "ə" (schwa): e.g. she taught it

- she & it contain weak vowel sounds and taught contains the strongest vowel sound

- the tendency is to stress all vowels as strong sounds making the speaker sound robotic

Rising & falling intonation: e.g. the photocopier ran out of paper, didn't it?

- rising intonation in "...didn't it?" (communicates one is unsure if the paper ran out or not)

- falling intonation in "...didn't it?" (communicates one is certain the paper ran out)

Use of consonant clusters: e.g.

Twelfth Nigh

- the /tw/ and /lftn/ are groupings of consonant sounds that are a challenge to get around

You also make mention that there's a challenge understanding him when he's answering the phone and/or greeting customers when he's doing service calls. Some good suggestions would be:

Articulation & Tone (making him aware to slow down as he speaks will communicate his message more accurately; taking a breath before speaking can also improve tone)

Create possible scripted scenarios with focused vocabulary (where he is, why he's delayed, or making introductions, greeting customers, etc.)

Make use of a pad & pencil, cell phones (cameras, texting)

(communication can take many forms - not even all native speakers have strong oral skills)

One needs to be sensitive when approaching issues that pertain to voice because, again, it impacts on personality. And our response mechanisms go into overdrive when the perceptions of who we believe ourselves to be are challenged. It is here where a trained professional can be an invaluable resource.

I'm certain the suggestions above will provide some good guidance. Be sure to address any linguistic issues with your employee privately. For many newcomers conducting their lives in English is a lifelong realization that they wear like a badge of honour (even with some of the grammatical inaccuracies, linguistic fossilizations and sound challenges) and to be told that their language skill is not up to par can deflate their whole sense of progress and, in a way, their sense of identity.

Diversity at work is not a wave of the future; it's already a reality for many companies. It's important for employers to be proactive to the many scenarios that diversity brings to the workforce because in the end we all benefit..

Signed the Elocution Teacher

Alfredo Garcia



INTERVIEW WITH WENDY ROBERTSON



ROBERTSON CONSULTING is a Human Resource Consulting Company that provides customized support to those who wish to maximize the effectiveness of their workforce. Human Resources support is available for successfully implementing HR policies and procedures, managing performance, training staff in a wide range of subjects including Harassment/Violence Prevention (including compliance with Bill 168), Human Rights, Interviewing & Selection Skills, WHMIS, Accident Investigation and other leadership and occupational health and safety and training programs.

<http://www.robertsonconsulting.ca>

D@W: What do you think is most important about religious accommodation in the workplace?

WR: From my experience, once management teams understand their organizations' legal obligations under the relevant Human Rights legislation and the *rationale* for the legislation, it increases the likelihood that those organizations' representatives will fully comply. It is important for all of those in positions of power to understand the legal requirements for the legislation that applies to their organizations - whether it be related to human rights, occupational health and safety or other laws. For organizations that are operating a business in Ontario, the Ontario Human Rights Code applies. Should an organization fall under federal legislation (for example, Crown corporations, banks, interprovincial communications (radio and TV), transportation organizations (airlines, railways), it is required to adhere to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

D@W: As an HR consultant, what are the most common issues that are related to religion in the workplace?

WR: I think that the first

common issue is understanding. Organizations need to understand their obligations and employees need to understand the expectations of the organization. For example, employees need to know and provide what is considered reasonable notice so that alternate arrangements can be made (for example, for an employee to be permitted to observe a religious holiday). Supervisors are busy people and need reasonable notice to cover for someone off work in one way or another. Secondly, I think that the question of what an organization must pay to those they are "accommodating" on the basis of religious grounds becomes important from the organization's viewpoint. Advice is available from The Human Rights Legal Support Centre or an organization may choose to seek advice from its own legal counsel.

D@W: Are the laws about religious accommodation in the workplace the same for each province?

WR: Every province and territory in Canada has its own provincial legislation applicable to provincially regulated organizations (except Nunavut

which is still under federal jurisdiction). All of the aforementioned include religion or creed as a prohibited ground although wording and interpretation may differ slightly.

D@W: What do you suggest an HR professional or other leaders should do if they are faced with an employee who is asking for a religious accommodation in the workplace, and they do not know what to do?

WR: For organizations governed by provincial legislation in Ontario, I would suggest that they consult with The Human Rights Legal Support Centre. Federally regulated organizations should contact the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Alternatively, any organization may choose to consult with their legal counsel.

D@W: In what circumstances, can an employer deny a request for religious accommodation?

WR: An employer may only deny a request for accommodation if those practices present undue hardship to the employer. I would suggest that should an organization believe that this condition applies, that it seek advice from qualified legal counsel as the standards for this definition are very high.

Robertson
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Do You or One of Your Employees Need Help With Your English Pronunciation Skills?

Here are some signs that a pronunciation class may be well-suited for you:

- People tell you that they don't understand you when you speak.
- Errors are frequently made because of misunderstanding.
- Conflicts arise as a result of miscommunication -- the intonation that the speaker has used has been mistaken for anger, lack of interest, lack of self-confidence etc.
- Opportunities to speak in front of others are turned down because of feeling self-conscious.
- Increasing frustration on the part of the speaker, clients and co-workers because of misunderstanding.
- Your boss has identified that you need to improve your speaking skills to advance in your position.
- You are finding it difficult to get past a first job interview.
- You may not fit any of the categories mentioned above, but you feel that a pronunciation class will help you to refresh and recall particular mouth positions and sounds.

Consider Pronunciation Classes with Diversity At Work!

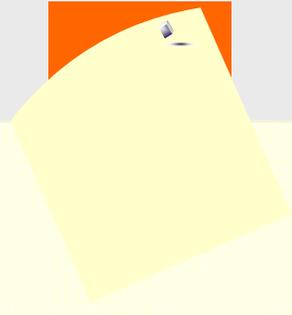
LONDON AND TORONTO LOCATIONS

These classes will help you to become more comfortable with North American English pronunciation and its usage. This is particularly the case if you are unsure of how and when to use it properly. You will learn the grammar rules to help you become a more confident and successful speaker. In addition, learning proper pronunciation will also help you learn the particular mouth positions needed in order to create the proper sounds. The classes suit everyone, and are given in a warm and friendly atmosphere at a pace that will meet your needs, make you feel relaxed and support you throughout the course.

Investing in your verbal communication skills can lead to: improved self-confidence; obtaining and retaining a job; and widening your customer base. Give yourself or your employees the gift of clearer pronunciation.

Call us today and have your name placed on a list for public classes in London and Toronto. Ask us about our onsite classes for a group of your employees.





Dear Ask the Diversity Consultant:

I am a human resources manager working in a large manufacturing company. Most of the employees are immigrants, and I am really finding it difficult to give them feedback on their performance. It seems that I can tell the Canadian-born worker the same thing, but they don't get argumentative or defensive when I do. What could I be doing wrong?

David, Hamilton

Dear Stressed:

You are not alone. I have heard this experience repeated many times in different workplaces.

Their sensitivity to feedback or constructive criticism can possibly be explained in a number of ways. I will suggest a few interpretations.

North Americans tend to be very direct with their communication and that can come across as harsh and rude to a major part of the world! Your Canadian-born worker would be accustomed to this type of communication and he/she would find the directness easy to understand. However, implied or indirect communication is likely more common for your immigrant workers. They would expect you to let them know very politely that you want them to change their behaviour, but in a round about way. These differences as you have experienced can create a great deal of confusion, conflict and misunderstanding in the workplace.

Here are a few tips for intercultural feedback proposed by Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe;

1. Be sure that when you are giving feedback, that you make reference to the observations about the behaviours and conditions,

instead of making judgments about the person. For example, instead of, "The report is incomplete.", you say, "I would like to see a glossary and summary added".

2. Strive to use the passive rather than the active voice. For example, instead of "You forgot to turn off the photocopier", try "The photocopier was turned on all night".

3. Make things simple by telling the employee what you want to see happen instead of what you don't. Instead of "That's not the way to do that", try "How about you try it this way".

I am sure that by following these tips, things should improve. You will also want to be proactive in assisting your employees understand why Canadians communicate the way they do; after all, they are going to come across this type of direct communication wherever they go, and you can help them to prepare for it.

The Diversity Consultant

Diversity and Inclusion On A Budget Seminar

- ◇ Is your organization putting your diversity initiative on hold because of budgetary constraints?
- ◇ Are you hard-pressed for ideas to keep the momentum going without breaking the bank?

This seminar is chock-full of ideas that will lead you to say,
"yes we can make this work!"

Call us today and let us help you put your diversity to work! Yes we do travel outside of Southwestern Ontario.

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- Experience using AutoCAD, Windows, MS Office (Word, Excel), Internet & Email
- Skilled in networking and building positive professional relations with customers and partners
- Effective team player with good leadership qualities
- Hardworking, self-motivated and reliable person with easy-going temperament.

If you have an opening, please contact by e-mail: 6300983@gmail.com

PROJECT MANAGER – telecommunications

PROFILE

- Ten years of experience in project management within telecommunications
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 - Exceptional organization and communication skills, including public speaking
 - Outstanding record of completing projects on time and within budget
 - Skilled in MS Office and MS Project
 - Languages: Mandarin and English
- This job seeker is interested in receiving a work placement or information regarding job opportunities in the field of project management in the London area.

Please e-mail: zouwen99@gmail.com

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT- BILINGUAL

PROFILE

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- An enthusiastic learner, with an ability to work independently or as part of a team
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- Good references from Canadian employers are available upon request.

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