

# Lēad<sup>TM</sup>

Issue No 11

*Brought to you by Adecco, Canada's Leading HR Resource*

## International Recruitment

**Q&A with  
Noémi Poli**  
HR Director for DESSAU

**EXCLUSIVE**

Featuring Alstom Grid  
**International  
Recruitment &  
Sustainability**

**Adecco**

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# Lēad

issueN°11



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Adecco Employment Services Limited

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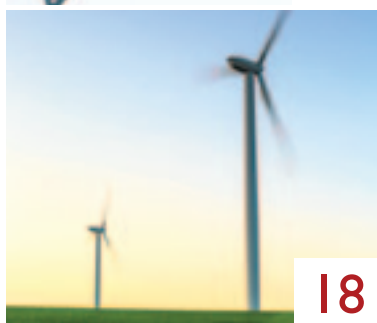
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**SANDRA HOKANSSON**  
President and Country Manager  
Adecco Employment Services Limited



It's 2006/2007 all over again! We're now seeing the same headlines about skill shortages in Western Canada and for skilled trades across the country. Recently, the Globe and Mail ran an article titled "Desperate for Workers, West Seeks Immigration Powers" which discussed the importance of immigration to solving some of our skill shortages and how the provinces need more active immigration control. In addition to immigration, human resource strategies targeting youth, women, aboriginals, and retaining older workers are critical. As well, working with levels of government and educational institutions to fast track the training and educational programs that are required to grow the talent Canada requires represents a crucial skills shortage solution. Many organizations also look to international recruitment options to augment their workforce plan.

The construction sector council, meeting at the Canadian Energy Forum in Ottawa last September, projects continued growth in dollars invested from 2012 to 2019 along with a corresponding increase in demand for construction labour outstripping the availability of supply by over 150,000 workers by 2019.

Similarly, a consortium of construction owners have developed a white paper entitled, "Meeting Construction and Maintenance Workforce Challenges:

## Employers in many sectors and of varying size are experiencing sourcing challenges for skilled candidates."

Construction Owners Strategy 2011 to 2016" in which they lay out a broad strategy involving owners, government, apprentice boards, certification authorities and labour forces. In Canada, construction and maintenance workers build, install, maintain, repair and renovate infrastructure worth more than \$220 billion annually, ultimately driving many of the skilled trades positions that will require talent in the days and years to come.

The labour shortage challenges are not restricted to the construction industry. Employers in many sectors and of varying size are experiencing sourcing challenges for skilled candidates. Additionally, Canada is not alone in its upcoming and ongoing requirement for more skilled talent, due to demographic shifts creating replacement demand in addition to the projected sector growth opportunities. Many developed nations face similar challenges notwithstanding the current economic challenges which have driven

up unemployment rates and may be masking the future problem.

This edition's topic is International Recruitment and its increasing importance to keep countries, markets and companies competitive while delivering ROI to their stakeholders.

Adecco has a unique advantage as a global leader in human resource solutions to foster and provide global talent services to our clients. In addition, Adecco Canada has a well tested and reliable Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program which aids our clients in meeting their critical talent delivery requirements.

We are pleased to share with you various insights into international recruiting as well as a selection of Canadian companies' strategies in using international recruitment as a critical success factor in managing their talent portfolio. ■



# our stories include the stories of others

## **Our story**

Skills for Change is dedicated to employment success for immigrants and refugees. We have become an important first stop for people setting the course for their careers in Canada and are dedicated to providing new and innovative forms of training, tools and expertise to ensure Canada has the culturally diverse workforce that is needed for a vibrant society and economic prosperity.

Our focus on professional communications, workplace culture, skills upgrading and bridging, mentoring and language classes responds directly to the needs of hiring managers from Canada's leading employers.

## **Be part of the story**

Our success depends on the support of our community. Employers, government, community agencies and individuals all have a part to play in helping us bridge the employment gap so we can build a stronger Canada. Learn more at [www.skillsforchange.org](http://www.skillsforchange.org).

**Help us build a Canada where every immigrant succeeds**



**PETER ANDERSEN, PH.D.**, is an independent consulting economist specializing in economic forecasting. Peter spends part of the year teaching Economics at the University of Texas at Austin. The Financial Post has rated Dr. Andersen as Canada's most accurate economic forecaster several times.



**ANDRÉ BERGERON** has been the Director of Human Resources at Alstom Grid Canada Inc. for five years. His main responsibilities are organizational development, change management and work relations. He has also held executive positions at companies including Sherwood-Drolet Corp. Ltd. and Domtar Inc. André is a CHRA and an active member of the *Ordre des conseillers en ressources humaines agréés*' Board of Directors.



**SHABNUM BUDHWANI** brings over 13 years of experience with not-for-profit organizations. Shabnum is currently employed as Manager of Programs and Services at Skills for Change, an organization providing learning and training opportunities for immigrants and refugees to access and fully participate in workplace and community environments. She first started her career as a client with this agency when she immigrated to Canada from Dubai in 1999.



**ISABELLE MARIER** holds a bachelor's degree in industrial relations from the Université de Montréal. She has worked as a Human Resources Advisor at Alstom Grid since 2006. Isabelle has honed her skills in a multi-site and multi-unit business environment working with unionized and non-unionized clients. Isabelle is particularly passionate about the international mobility aspects of human resources, an area she has been in charge of since 2006.



**MARIE-HÉLÈNE MAYER, B.A. HONS.**, pursued a legal career as an employment lawyer because she was interested in helping people and in the administration of justice. Marie-Hélène has spent most of her career in private practice, and has appeared before various administrative tribunals and courts. Her primary focus has been on advising employers and employees on workplace issues under both Ontario and Federal law, termination settlements, employment contracts, wrongful dismissal litigation and human rights complaints.



**NOÉMIE POLI** is Dessau's Director of Human Resources, where she oversees the company's recruitment strategies and HR programs. With a bachelor's degree in industrial relations from the Université de Montréal and a master's degree in organizational management and development from the Université Laval, Noémie has assisted Dessau with numerous acquisitions across Canada and abroad.





EXCLUSIVE

International Candidates:

# Closer Than You Think

BY SHABNUM BUDHWANI





# On the verge of a labour shortage, Canada is faced with a lack of skilled workers to fill current and future job markets.

International recruitment has emerged as one of the most viable solutions, with organizations across Canada increasingly relying on temporary and permanent skilled workers to fill their talent needs. While resourcing on an international level for skilled workers is a practical approach for attracting a specified labour skill set, Canada also currently has an established immigrant population with the appropriate skills and qualifications to contribute to the Canadian workforce. Though international recruitment remains an essential and necessary component to maintain labour demands in Canada, a professional pool of qualified candidates are already here.

Approximately two thirds of the annual 250,000 immigrants who come to Canada do so under the skilled or economic class. The remaining one third, fall under the family class and refugees. Migrants under the economic class come here for various reasons, but one of the primary reasons people immigrate are for the prospects of a better life for themselves and for their families. Canada's high demand for skilled and professional workers qualifies them under the immigration points system, and in turn provides the hope of establishing themselves in a developed and opportunistic nation that boasts a knowledge and skills based economy.

Most immigrants who come to Canada bring skills, qualifications, experience and knowledge. Their hope is to build a better future and find a meaningful place in society. Although people come

with a wide variety of backgrounds and qualifications, the most common professions belonging to immigrated professionals are currently Finance & Accounting, Office Administration and Customer Service, Engineering, IT and Technical Trades, as well as management and supervisory backgrounds. Health Care professionals are also increasingly common. Canada has the unique opportunity not only to recruit qualified talent pools internationally, but also to harness those recently immigrated to Canada that hold the necessary technical backgrounds and skills required to fill the depleting resource markets we are currently faced with.

In order to acclimatize into successful integration into the Canadian workplace, recently immigrated professionals in Canada need to engage in:

- Appropriate training;
- Job searching instruction;
- Labour market navigation;
- Familiarity of workplace culture and environment;
- Professional Insights Education and Certifications;
- Technical & Language Skills upgrades; and
- Bridging the gap between skills and qualifications they currently have to what they need to acquire.

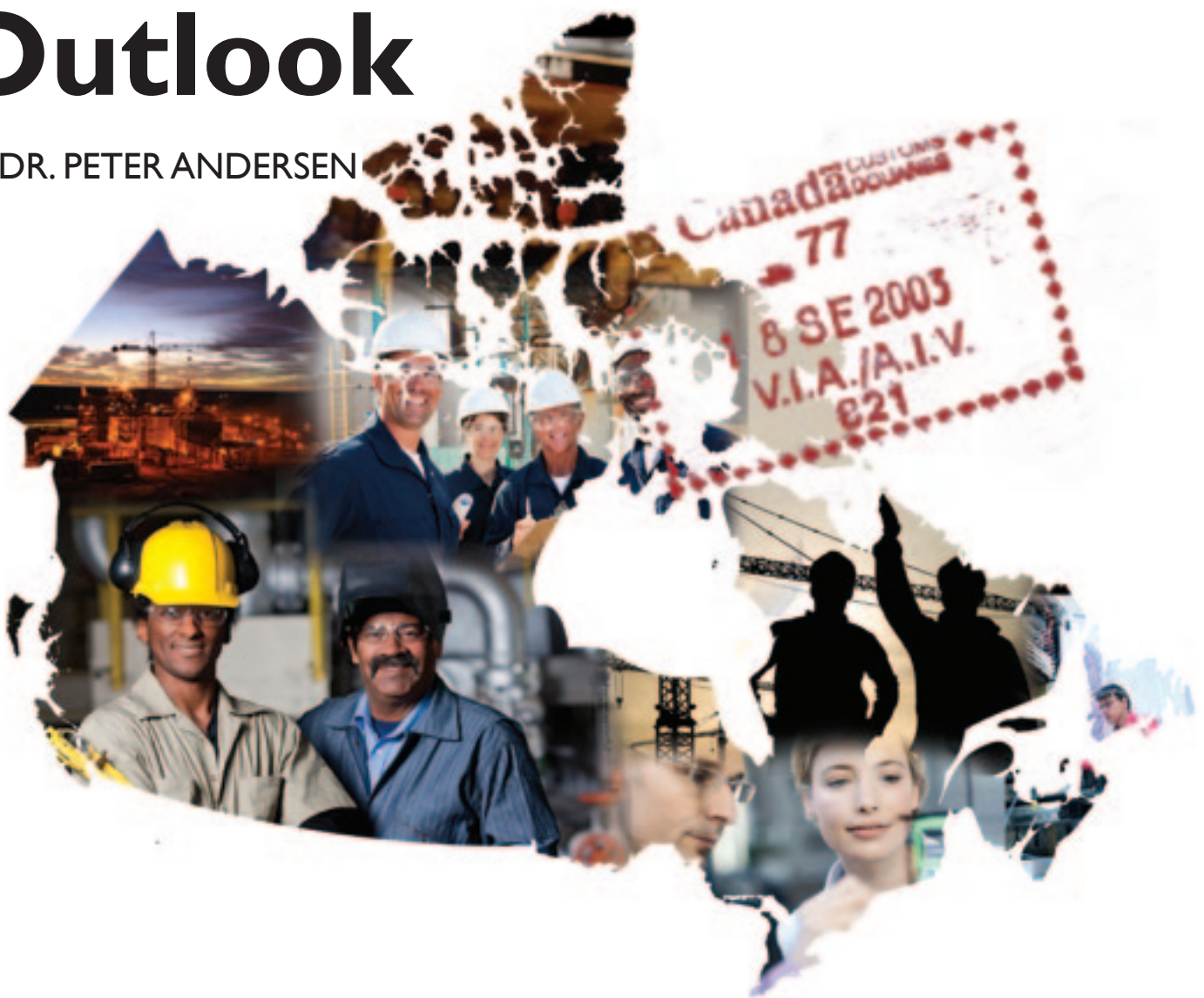
Once here, this qualified talent pool relies on various resources valuable to successful integration into the Canadian workforce. Skills for Change (SfC) a not-for-profit organization, offers a range

of support programming common for newcomers to Canada or those already living here. Resources such as SfC offer employment and professional services to assist job seekers with successful integration into the workforce, along with connecting clients with qualified employers. SfC Employment Consultants liaise with employers to assist them with their human resources needs. Qualified job ready candidates are then pre-screened by the Employment Consultants from SfC's pool of clients and are then connected to employers at no cost. Organizations like SfC play a crucial role in helping to bridge the gap in the labour market by engaging employers and connecting them to potential employees. A great deal of qualified candidates with the necessary skills are already here—they just require the appropriate training and instruction needed to succeed in the Canadian job market.

For many immigrants, Canada represents personal growth and advancement. Canada, in turn, benefits from the opportunity to harness the skills and experiences of so many from across the globe. With a looming shortage of skilled workers in Canada, not only is international recruiting an essential aspect in hindering a potential job market crisis, but utilizing the skills and qualifications of the international candidates we currently have and recognizing them as a viable human resources solution is also a crucial component. ■

# Canada's Labour Outlook

BY DR. PETER ANDERSEN



Considering the unemployment rate, Canada's job market appears to have ample surplus capacity. At 7.4%, the unemployment rate is well above what could be considered normal. However, further investigation of Canada's unemployment rate can be evidence for many examples of labour shortages. The inability of the job market to match supply with demand, and to reach equilibrium, reflects the fact that the education, technical training, skills and experience of the unemployed do not match the needs of those doing the hiring. With the rapid advances in

technology, the economy has become increasingly demanding in its search for skilled workers. Concurrently, there has been a general decline in numeracy and literacy skills in North America, therefore putting limits on vocational training efforts. In addition, North American culture emphasizes the importance of university level liberal arts education over post-secondary non-university applied education. Due to the shortage of technically skilled workers in Canada, employers are increasingly recruiting on an international level for their staffing needs.

In Canada, there are currently two distinct types of labour shortages—resource-related and high tech workers. The resource producing regions of Canada are in the midst of a multi-year development boom, occurring on both sides of the country in B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan and also in Newfoundland/Labrador. This development boom throughout Canada includes similarities to the building of the trans-continental railway system over a century ago where building efforts faced a lack of labour force required to complete the work.

## “Among major industry groups, Canada’s high tech sector shows the strongest sustained employment growth over the past four years.”

The difference today however, is that the work is technically more advanced and skill-related than the manual labour required to build the railways. Seeing large increases since the 2009 downturn, the latest information on capital spending intentions shows a surge of spending in 2012 in Canada’s mining and oil and gas sector. Newfoundland is in the midst of an oil and mining boom and in western Canada, both of the conventional and non-conventional divisions of the oil and gas industry are booming. In addition, capital expenditure intentions in electric power generation and transmission

in British Columbia and Alberta are currently on the rise. Consequently, the pressure and demand to find skilled workers throughout Canada and also internationally is a prominent human resources priority.

The other sector showing robust employment demand is Canada’s high tech sector. Among major industry groups, Canada’s high tech sector shows the strongest sustained employment growth over the past four years. At year-end 2011, high tech employment was up by 15% from the beginning of 2008. In order to sustain this rate of growth as the economic recovery continues, there

will be pressure to find workers with the applicable education, skills and training credentials to meet the demand. This is increasingly relevant given the competition from the United States. American technology companies are also on the search for talent and Canada represents an attractive recruitment ground. Proposed reforms for the H-1B visa system are aimed at attracting more foreign skilled workers to the United States and influential figures such as Bill Gates have been advocating immigration reform for years in order to remain the world’s immigration leader.

The recent federal budget in Canada promises a more flexible Canadian immigration system which will ultimately benefit the technical requirements of Canada’s high tech and resource related sectors. In order to promote growth and technical progression in Canada, our immigration systems need to provide the flexibility required to enhance the presence of skilled and technical international resources. ■





LEGAL

# International Recruitment and the New Global Employee

BY MARIE-HÉLÈNE MAYER



**Suitably tailored employment contracts can help to minimize liabilities. They may also reduce potential conflict between foreign workers and employers.”**

As global trade increases, so do the number of employees working across different jurisdictions. Organizations increasingly require employees with specific expertise to work in various countries, often in large-scale projects. This labour mobility can present legal challenges, especially for companies that may face varying standards and policies across jurisdictions.

### **Employment Law and Foreign Workers: Why does it Matter?**

Employers may be tempted to ask why they should be concerned about employment issues for foreign workers, despite facing significant risks associated with the transfer of workers between jurisdictions. This liability stems primarily from potential ambiguity in the terms governing a foreign worker's employment.

Employment law issues are often overlooked in the rush to prepare an employee for a foreign assignment or transfer. Contracts, if prepared at all, are often basic and do not address potential difficulties. This is a significant concern, since foreign workers entering the Canadian workforce will, in almost all circumstances, be governed by federal and/or applicable provincial law. Accordingly, employers who neglect to prepare a comprehensive employment contract for foreign workers could be faced with significant unanticipated liabilities.

Suitably tailored employment contracts can help to minimize these liabilities. They may also reduce potential conflict between foreign workers and employers.

### **The Employment Contract: Minimizing Conflict through Careful Drafting**

Designing an effective employment contract requires a case-by-case approach to address an organization's priorities. The following sections review key issues that employers should keep in mind when drafting employment contracts aimed at foreign employees who are being transferred or brought on assignment.

#### **• SECURING EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT TO RELOCATE**

Relocation represents a significant change for most employees. Employers should therefore secure and document a clear commitment by an employee to relocate.

One way to clarify an employee's obligation to relocate is to include an explicit provision, either directly in the employment contract or in accompanying policies, indicating that employees may be relocated from their place of assignment at any time. Where the policy approach is adopted, employers should include an explicit reference in employment contracts to those policies which address relocation obligations.

Regardless of the form of documentation, employers should ensure that the employee is aware of and agrees with the clause before signing the employment contract. The clause should contemplate relocation to any office around the world and state clearly that relocation is purely at the discretion of the employer.

#### **• EMPLOYER AND RELOCATION EXPENSES**

Employers often compensate employees for expenses associated with relocation, such as the moving of personal belongings, airline tickets, costs associated with temporary housing, real estate fees, and housing costs for the duration of the assignment. Given the potentially extensive amount of expenses associated with relocation, it is highly advisable for employers to draft policies which explicitly describe their relocation expense obligations. Otherwise, Canadian courts may determine that the employment contract contains an implied term which obligates the employer to provide relocation expense reimbursement.

A clause addressing relocation should also lay out what repatriation costs would be covered in the event that the employee is terminated while on assignment. The contract and/or accompanying policies may also indicate that relocation costs will be the responsibility of the employee in various circumstances, including where an employee resigns, where the employer ends the assignment, or if the employee is terminated for cause. The employer may also consider including language which clearly demarcates between the responsibility for relocation expenses at the beginning of an assignment and upon the end of an assignment. It is also highly advisable that any policies concerning relocation procedures be explicitly referred to in the employment contract. This can help to avoid a charge that the employer did not make these conditions clear to the employee.



#### • TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Severance is a potentially significant liability for an employer upon termination of an employee, particularly in Canada. Severance obligations essentially come from two sources: (a) provincial or federal employment standards legislation, and (b) common law entitlements. While employment standards legislation generally describes minimum severance entitlements through application of the common law, courts can provide terminated employees with significant amounts above and beyond the minimum statutory entitlements, depending on factors such as an employee's age, years of service, and position.

Given the potential liability, employers that either do not utilize carefully drafted employment contracts or otherwise neglect to include provisions addressing severance may be liable for significant payments upon termination. Alternatively, liabilities may flow from a contract which is either inconsistent with the relevant legislation or is deemed vague. Employers should ensure that termination provisions meet or exceed minimum employment standards, since courts will remove language which

does not respect statutory minimums and replace it with common law entitlements.

Employers should therefore take particular care in crafting termination provisions for workers relocating to Canada. Clauses should be clear both in terms of what an employee is entitled to and the law which governs termination. One example of the kind of specificity courts expect in the drafting of employment contracts is clear language regarding the governing statute. For instance, a termination provision which applies to an employee entering the Ontario market should explicitly refer to the *Ontario Employment Standards Act, 2000*.

#### • RIGHT TO PRE-ASSIGNMENT POSITION

An assignment or transfer often involves not only a change of location but also a change in position. Employees may believe that imbedded in an international assignment is a right to return to their pre-assignment position in the original place of employment. If this is not what the employer intends, the employer should include language in the employment contract which confirms that the employee does not have a right to

return to his/her previous position/location. Conversely, if the employer wishes to maintain the flexibility to return the employee to his/her original position/location should it choose to do so for any reason, the contract should specify this.

#### • RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

Restrictive covenants are an area of great concern to employers. Transferred employees are often in management positions and thus privy to sensitive information, including product and client data. These employees often have a comprehensive understanding of an organization across various jurisdictions. Accordingly, employers often negotiate non-competition or non-solicitation clauses in employment contracts for transferred employees or those on foreign assignment.

Canadian courts may be unwilling to enforce restrictive covenants language which might be enforceable in other jurisdictions. Canadian courts often consider whether the covenant is reasonable, whether there is a proprietary interest to protect, and whether the covenant is consistent with principles of competition. Canadian courts are



often unwilling to enforce restrictive covenant language which is deemed to either unduly fetter competition or unnecessary to protect an employer's interests.

- **CLARIFYING ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The demands placed upon foreign workers can differ significantly depending on the jurisdiction in which they work. This stems from the reality that the needs of one country office may differ significantly from those of another within the same organization. Further, companies operating in multiple jurisdictions often require a high degree of flexibility to integrate foreign workers within various local operations while meeting local demands. The skills required of foreign workers can also change rapidly depending upon the evolving needs of local offices and the organization as a whole.

Accordingly, employers should consider describing the role and responsibilities of an employee in the employment contract. Foreign workers should appreciate that any assignment or transfer demands significant flexibility on their part. Possible liability associated with the potential right to the pre-assignment position further serves to underscore the importance of eliminating any ambiguity with respect to an employee's role and responsibilities.

- **CLARIFYING REMUNERATION**

Employers should be clear with employees regarding items such as their gross salary, the currency in which they will be paid, as well as any withholdings which the salary will be subjected to. In some cases, employers may agree to engage in so-called "tax equalization". Here, the employer agrees to compensate employees for any tax differential between their previous jurisdiction and the location of their work. For clarity, any such accompanying agreement regarding taxes should be explicitly referred to in the employment contract.

- **BEYOND THE BASE SALARY:**

- CLARIFICATION TO AVOID LIABILITY**

Employees on assignment or subject to a transfer are often paid through a range of compensation mechanisms. Examples include stock option plans, deferred compensation plans, and bonus or incentive plans. Rules governing these plans are often described within accompanying guidelines and/or policy documents.

Employers must review all compensation documents, and ensure that they are consistent with applicable federal and provincial laws.

- Implementing the Contract: Establishing Agreement**

A well-drafted employment contract is not enough. Even the most carefully drafted employment contract may be unenforceable if not properly implemented.

Employers should provide employees with sufficient time to carefully review all of the terms of the employment contract and policies, and ensure that they have access to legal advice specific to the jurisdiction in which they will be working. To this end, employers should encourage employees to obtain independent legal advice and consider offering reimbursement for such an expense, particularly for foreigners who may not have easy access to legal advice in Canada. Such a comprehensive approach to gaining employee acceptance of the employment contract can reduce conflict and increase the probability that the employment contract will be found to be both clear and enforceable. Ultimately however, employers that are looking to implement employment contracts and/or accompanying policies should seek advice of local employment law counsel to ensure enforceability in the applicable jurisdiction. ■



# Talent Without Borders

AN INTERVIEW WITH NOÉMIE POLI OF DESSAU



“Since we are a multicultural organization, our colleagues are very open minded, and that helps encourage the feeling of belonging and integration.”

**O**rganic growth and acquisitions have allowed Dessau, one of Canada’s largest engineering-construction firms, to break into new markets. To meet the needs of this growth, Dessau’s Human Resources team must rise to several challenges, including the recruitment of specialized labour from abroad. In Canada, this type of labour is becoming increasingly difficult to source and therefore international recruitment is proving to be a viable and successful method of talent sourcing. Learn more in the following interview with Noémie Poli, Human Resources Director, Staffing and International, Dessau.

## **Can you give us a brief overview of Dessau?**

**N.P.:** Dessau was founded in 1957. It is the fifth largest engineering-construction firm in Canada and 57th in the world. We have 4,800 employees working in 57 Canadian cities and active subsidiaries in seven countries. Since the opening of the first permanent Dessau office in Peru in 1998, our international presence has grown significantly. Hence the increasing need to recruit engineers from abroad.

## **Can you describe the current recruitment landscape for international resources?**

**N.P.:** Labour shortages are being felt in all the countries where Dessau is present, so our international recruitment efforts have become two-fold. We recruit resources from abroad to work on projects in Canada, and our international offices also occasionally need to recruit international resources because they are also confronted with the same shortfall in labour. Our office in Chile is currently facing this type of situation. In order to support a flourishing economy, they are recruiting from neighbouring Argentina, whose economic situation is more fragile at the moment.

We also operate by acquiring businesses. This brings us clients, projects and employees all at the same time. In this sense, acquisitions are becoming a way to conduct massive onsite recruitment. In our experience, acquisitions are a winning formula for long-term success.

**What solutions do you recommend for effective recruitment?**

**N.P.:** Recruitment has evolved significantly over the past few years. We are multiplying our strategies and recruitment pools to find talented and qualified labour. Our own network of employees provides us with references and contacts, and they are an excellent source of candidates.

The popularity of social networking sites such as LinkedIn has changed the climate of international recruitment. Resources throughout the world are now more accessible because of these networks. We also collaborate more with local partners including head-hunters and placement agencies. In addition, we hire candidates who have already immigrated but whose training was received abroad. We provide them with assistance in meeting the requirements for professional certification.

We are currently studying the feasibility of recruiting in countries where the economic situation is more fragile. For example, the northern part of the United States which, at the moment, has a high unemployment rate. Such recruitment pools present new opportunities for Dessau.

**Do you conduct targeted international recruitment activities?**

**N.P.:** We have conducted international recruitment “missions” in France and Belgium to recruit candidates for our projects in Quebec. Before leaving, we do a pre-selection of the resumes we’ve received. Once there, we meet with the candidates at job fairs. However, this recruitment and hiring process can be long because most of the potential candidates have not begun their immigration proceedings, which can take at least six months.

Now, thanks to the popularity and accessibility of social networks, geographical boundaries are falling by the wayside, and it is far easier to reach candidates throughout the world. We intend to focus more on this new approach in the future.

**How do you measure the experience of international candidates from abroad?**

**N.P.:** We do it on a case-by-case basis. Each file is different. Our team evaluates their general competencies and checks their technical skills, degrees and past accomplishments. Skype and video-conferencing allow us to conduct initial interviews—it’s as if the candidates were right there in front of us.





“Thanks to the popularity and accessibility of social networks, geographical boundaries are falling by the wayside, and it is far easier to reach candidates throughout the world. We intend to focus more on this new approach in the future.”



**How do you assist with the integration of newcomers?**

**N.P.:** We know that the integration of the newcomer’s family “makes or breaks” the process. We acknowledge that the pressure is enormous for the person making the decision to emigrate because they are uprooting their family. To facilitate the adaptation period, we offer all of the support and assistance we can.

We try to find temporary housing and recommend schools and neighbourhoods to them. That way, our employees and their families won’t struggle through the process of adapting to their new living environment. We also accompany them through the administrative steps required by various levels of government.

Upon their arrival, we provide inter-cultural training to equip them with the tools and information necessary for successful integration. We remain vigilant at work and adapt our management methods to ensure they are culturally sensitive. For example, before we react to behaviour differences, we focus on dialogue and sensitivity to cultural differences. There are no miracle formulas.

Since we are a multicultural organization, our colleagues are very open minded, and that helps encourage the feeling of belonging and integration.

In addition to our assistance, we also guide them toward immigrant organizations that offer training on the new country and cultural differences.

**Further to your point of specialized staff, do you require international recruits to have professional accreditation prior to starting in Canada?**

**N.P.:** No, for example, in Quebec, our new employees work as technicians until they have obtained their accreditation from the *Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec* (Quebec Order of Engineers). We guide them through the process with the Ordre.

In order to make the most of their skills, we focus on the transfer of company knowledge. They use this time to familiarize themselves with Quebec standards and our corporate culture. Although they may not be able to immediately work as full-fledged engineers, their skills and abilities remain valuable assets for the company.

Additionally, international candidates, once fully integrated, need to be offered the same career advancement opportunities as the employees who received their training here. For this reason, we focus our efforts on employee engagement and commitment. This vision will ensure successful retention of our valued employees. ■

# Combining the Globe for the In-demand Talent You Need



Roevin is uniquely positioned to navigate the immigration channels and provide you with access to thousands of qualified international candidates.

This, along with our proven sourcing, recruitment and onboarding processes, sets us apart from our competitors and positions us to provide exceptional service.

To learn more about our Temporary Foreign Worker program, contact us today:

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Vice President, Roevin Engineering & Technical  
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[mmatters@roevin.ca](mailto:mmatters@roevin.ca)



EXCLUSIVE

# International Recruitment and Sustainability

FEATURING ANDRÉ BERGERON AND ISABELLE MARIER OF ALSTOM GRID

Multinational company, Alstom Grid, has developed its niche in the creation and manufacturing of high tension electrical equipment. Due to the nature of the products being produced and in order to sustain the company's current growth rate, employees with highly-specialized technical skills are required. Candidates with the required skills are not readily available within the Canadian marketplace and therefore, recruiting and retaining qualified international candidates has become a key human resources solution priority.

Since 2005, Alstom Grid Canada Inc. has been operating at full capacity in an attempt to satisfy the escalating client demand for improved technical advances, which are proving to be a necessity in order to maximize the opportunity presented by increasingly sophisticated electrical networks. In an effort to ensure adequate staffing levels and to combat the pressure to recruit for the highly specialized roles within their organization, the company expanded its talent search worldwide in 2006. This focus on international recruitment aids in the company's ability to acquire the

150 experts they need in Canada alone. By attracting candidates to a market where the candidates do not otherwise exist, international recruitment allows this multinational company to realize increased progress and consolidation of products, as well as improved quality and innovation in research and development. "In the power transformer manufacturing sector for example, there are only two factories in Quebec. Since the employment market is restricted here, there is a shortage of qualified labour. We have therefore turned to countries such as Brazil, Turkey and France to fill certain key positions in our Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu factory" explains André Bergeron, Human Resources Director for Alstom Grid Canada.

“We also hire recent university graduates from Canada and assign them to our skills centres overseas... Upon their return, they become a great source of information for their colleagues.”

## Targeted Recruitment Efforts

The successful recruitment of skilled international resources involves various components. First and foremost, recruiters and HR professionals must consider where candidates with the targeted skill sets would be available. At Alstom Grid, staffing professionals have researched employers around the globe that hire for the same sought



“Specific to recently immigrated employees, integrating them and their family into the environment, culture and community is a crucial measure in talent retention.”

after skill sets that they require. Isabelle Marier, Human Resources Advisor at Alstom Grid, says “we engage in targeted recruitment in countries and regions where there are factories with a similar labour pool required for our factory in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. Once identified, we use online job boards within the targeted country or region to advertise key positions in that market”.

In addition to the external international recruitment efforts performed, Alstom Grid, present in over 100 countries, has developed a considerable recruitment pool of internal staff. Existing staff embrace the international recruitment efforts, acting as liaisons for candidates interested in global opportunities.

### The Process

Regardless of whether the candidates were sourced internally or externally, identified candidates are put through a thorough assessment process, beginning with a telephone interview. According to André Bergeron, “throughout the discussion, we utilize company engineers to examine the candidate for the desired technical skills while human resources assesses additional candidate attributes. If we determine that the candidate’s expertise is in line with our requirements, we then discuss employment details with them. After this, the candidate comes to Canada for a face-to-face interview. At this point, we explore their motivations for wanting to immigrate to Canada in greater detail. If these discussions confirm that the candidate is a suitable choice, we begin the official immigration process”.

### Beyond Recruitment

Attracting candidates is a significant challenge, but retaining them can be just as difficult a task. Specific to recently immigrated employees, integrating them and their family into the environment, culture and community is a crucial measure in talent retention. Isabelle Marier points out, “we utilize a specialty firm to ensure the candidate and their family are well integrated. When needed, we offer courtesy visits prior to making an offer, during which the family can explore the new environment where they will settle. Upon arrival, the specialist firm assists the employee and their family in acclimatization and landing services. Additional support for the employee includes helping locate suitable housing, assistance with applicable

documentation requirements, and aiding the family in finding day-care centres and school registration, if applicable. As much as possible, we want to ensure a smooth transition so the employee can focus all of their energy on successful integration into their environment and company”.

In some cases, newly hired international candidates’ spouses may even be assisted in finding employment. “This is done informally through our networks and recommendations on the best methods to search for employment opportunities”, Isabelle Marier adds. Being an evolving multicultural company is also a factor in helping make the integration easier. Due to the increase in international recruitment at Alstom Grid, it isn’t





“... Alstom Grid also supports employees who wish to obtain permanent residency in order to promote long term retention within the company.”

unusual for two or three candidates from one country to join the team at the same time. André Bergeron says, “they have a common background and point of reference. For example, in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu our team includes a small group of Turks and Brazilians. We create sub-groups within our organization—we encourage it”.

Human Resources at Alstom Grid also assists international recruits through the *Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec*. To obtain an Engineer’s permit in Quebec, there are rigorous steps and processes involved in order to legally practice as an Engineer. The *Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec* is ultimately responsible for governing access and guiding new recruits to the profession. In addition to assisting with these professional requirements, Alstom Grid also supports employees who wish to obtain permanent residency in order to promote long term retention within the company.

### Ensuring Sustainability

For Alstom Grid, international recruitment is necessary to ensure the company’s desired progression. These internationally sourced technical experts are a critical component to improving company processes, productivity, competitiveness and quality. They also share their knowledge and international experiences with local employees, therefore advancing internal technical competencies.

According to Isabelle Marier, “candidates recruited in other countries have a skill profile without which we cannot function”. International experience is viewed as a highly beneficial development advantage for all. She adds, “we also hire recent university graduates from Canada and assign them to our skills centres overseas for a year or two so that they can acquire additional technical knowledge. Upon their return, they become a great source of information for their colleagues”.

According to André Bergeron, when the Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu factory was first acquired, there were skills shortages in certain technical areas. It became immediately obvious that a strategic recruitment plan would be necessary in order to align the factory with the standards set by the organization internationally.

International recruitment has become not only standard practice at Alstom Grid, it has evolved as a necessity to ensure the organization has the talent, knowledge and skills required for a sustainable future. ■

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