

diversity is working

SPARC BC's *Diversity is Working* project provides seventeen (17) case studies of Lower Mainland organizations that have taken steps to make their workplaces more welcoming and inclusive for employees with diverse backgrounds. The purpose of the case studies is to celebrate successes in workplace diversity by highlighting best practices.

The set of case studies includes examples from organizations with small Human Resources departments to larger organizations with large Human Resources departments and designated diversity managers. The case studies are also drawn from a range of different sectors including businesses, non-profit organizations and government institutions. Some of the organizations being profiled have been implementing diversity and employment equity initiatives for decades while others have started to look at diversity in recent years.

Because of the diverse range of organizations being profiled, there are relevant best practices for any organization that is working to make their workplace more welcoming and inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds. Refer to the adjacent diagram for a list of participating organizations.

The following pieces of information are provided in each organization's case study:

- diversity business case or mandate for diversity;
- diversity initiatives and results; and,
- advice for other organizations considering undertaking similar work.



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About Investors Group

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Investors Group's Business Case for Diversity

Bala Naidoo, a Regional Director at Investors Group, recognized the need for his organization to adapt to the changing demographics of the Lower Mainland after travelling to China on a trade mission with Burnaby's mayor. Naidoo's market area includes the communities of Burnaby and Richmond which are home to a large number of newcomers from China. Many affluent newcomers arrive to the Lower Mainland as investment class immigrants and present an untapped business opportunity within the financial investment sector. This has compelled Naidoo to look into expanding beyond Investors Group's traditional market and investing in services that would cater more broadly to Mandarin-speaking and Cantonese-speaking newcomers.

Through his work with the Burnaby Board of Trade, Naidoo has also developed an awareness of the extensive skills and work experience that many newcomers bring to Canada, and firmly believes that newcomers have the necessary talent and skills to fill the employment needs of Canada and that we should invest more in newcomers.

As a result, Naidoo has made a business decision to focus on the future and how the organization's present actions can prepare Investors Group for future business opportunities. This has involved recruiting a diverse workforce in order to attract a diverse clientele within the communities that Investors Group serves. By hiring new immigrants who speak Mandarin and Cantonese and have an understanding of Chinese culture and traditions, Investors Group is working to develop its intercultural understanding and become well-positioned to provide excellent customer service to an underserved clientele in Burnaby and Richmond.

Investors Group's Diversity Initiatives

Recruitment

In recent years, Naidoo has created a Mandarin-speaking division of Investors Group and has implemented some new recruitment strategies to deliberately recruit advisors who reflect the diversity in the market area he serves. Naidoo has accomplished this by working with immigrant settlement services such as MOSAIC and S.U.C.C.E.S.S. as well as advertising in Mandarin and Cantonese newspapers. As part of the recruitment process, Investors Group invites interested candidates to register for career seminars where they can learn more about the company and what type of candidates Investors Group is looking for.

Naidoo has found that relationship building is key to attracting talented new financial advisors, and is also key to financial investors being successful at recruiting their clients. Naidoo actively works to recruit credible, likeable and trusted advisors who are able to build a strong connection with their clients. Financial advisors who are successful at bridging across different cultures are also in high demand at Investors Group.





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Staff Training

Naidoo has also worked to create a welcoming and inclusive workplace, by providing his team with diversity training. His team recently participated in a workshop called Building Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces. This 90 minute workshop is intended for employers, HR specialists who are looking for information and resources that facilitate the recruitment, hiring, orientation and career development of new immigrants.

Leadership development

While there is no formal leadership development process within his region, Naidoo has provided mentorship to high potential candidates from newcomer communities. For instance, he mentored one high potential newcomer for eighteen (18) months, and she is now leading one of their local Investors Group offices.

Investors Group's Results

Naidoo has already successfully hired newcomers onto his team and created Investors Group's Mandarin division. This has resulted in an increase in the number of Mandarin-speaking customers and increased revenue within Naidoo's market area. The team has also found that they have acquired new knowledge about what types of products and services appeal to their new market, and are tailoring their products and services in response to this new information.

Investors Group's Advice for Other Organizations

- Just because it didn't work in the past, does not mean it's not going to work in the future.
- Small, medium, large, and very big business all have to adapt and change and create a very diverse workforce so that we can serve and realize the full potential of our changing community.
- You just have to be accepting and I think it happens very much more naturally. I think it's cultural awareness and sensitivity but I think you

need to do it on a conscious basis.

- I think with different levels of management, it needs to be discussed, the awareness needs to be raised, and I think there needs to be honest and open communication around these topics.
- Workplace diversity isn't just hiring a few people of different color and saying you have a diverse workforce. No, not really. I think you have to want to learn from it. You have to keep wanting to learn.

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