10 TIPS FOR ADAPTING TO CANADIAN WORKPLACE CULTURE

1. **Know yourself.** We often don't recognize our own culture until we are exposed to something different. Notice what seems unusual in the workplace; rather than assuming others are doing things wrong, consider the possibility that the difference is due to culture.

2. **Embrace diversity.** Canada is an unusually diverse country, so it can be challenging to identify Canadian workplace "norms"; they will be different according to who owns or runs the organization and the types of workers who are employed.

3. **Ask questions.** Canadians are very open to questions and appreciate you asking rather than making assumptions. However, they also expect you to work independently. If you need to get something done, do the best you can with the information you have.

4. **Pay attention to time.** Being "on time" at work means being ready to work by the time you are supposed to start (i.e., not just arriving at work, but actually at your desk or operating your equipment). It's typical to start work a little bit early and leave a little bit late, rather than cutting your day short. Ensure you come back from breaks and lunch on time, too.

5. **Respect senior employees and supervisors, even though they seem casual.** It's not uncommon to call your boss by his or her first name in Canada, but it's typical to begin more formally (e.g., Mr., Ms., Dr.) with senior members of the team until invited to be less formal. Follow others' lead; usually your supervisors or managers will introduce themselves the way they'd like to be addressed (e.g., Hi. I'm Jonah.) Sometimes people are more casual or informal within the workplace but more formal when speaking with customers or clients (e.g., to the patient, "Stephen, Dr. Smith will see you now" but to the doctor, "Jonah, Stephen is in Room 102.")

6. **Practice the local language.** Even if it seems unnecessary to speak English at work or in your community, many more opportunities will be open to you as your language skills improve. Recognize the impact of accents and regional dialects. Even native English speakers have trouble understanding each other if they've learned the language in different countries or parts of Canada. Try not to be offended if people don't understand you. Speak slowly, ask for help, and where necessary consider adopting the local accent and idioms so that you can be easily understood.

7. **Learn organizational rules about relationships.** In some workplaces, it's considered inappropriate or even unethical to have personal friendships, especially romantic relationships, with clients, customers, or co-workers.

8. **Rules are rules, even if they don't always make sense.** Canada is somewhat unique in that our occupations are regulated provincially rather than federally. This means that even if your certificates or degrees are recognized in one part of Canada, they may not be sufficient if you move to another province. This is true for Canadians as well as immigrants and international workers. You may need to take additional training or write specific exams if you want to move to another part of the country.

9. **Discuss your career goals.** Canadian employers expect you to manage your own career. If you are interested in more challenging work, have a conversation with your supervisor. Be patient, as it may take some time to move ahead. However, employers appreciate you taking initiative, so if there's a project you could contribute to, don't hesitate sharing your ideas and letting your supervisor know what other skills you have to offer.

10. **Help people understand your background and your reason for coming to Canada.** Perhaps you're in Canada to stay as an immigrant, or perhaps you're here as one step in your international/global career. Canadians may assume that your goal is to stay, and encourage you to take an entry level position as you get established. This may be a good idea if your goal is to work in a Canadian workplace and settle into life in Canada. However, if you're here as an international worker, your needs and goals may be different.

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