The WorkBC Employer’s Tool Kit:

A Resource for British Columbia Businesses

Booklet 1
How to Attract, Retain and Engage Employees
How to Attract, Retain and Engage Employees

A resource booklet for employers

Why has the WorkBC Employer’s Tool Kit been produced for businesses in British Columbia?

British Columbia has a booming economy and our unemployment rate is at a 30 year record low. Much like the rest of Canada and other developed nations around the globe, B.C. is beginning to feel the impact of an impending labour shortage. Canada is facing an unprecedented change in workforce demographics as the first wave of the baby boom generation begins to retire. In fact, for every two baby boomers who retire, there is less than one person to take their place.

In British Columbia, more than one million jobs will be created by 2015. At the same time, more than one quarter of the current workforce will retire. This is a challenge for which there needs to be both short- and long-term solutions. Both developed and developing countries are experiencing similar demands for skilled labour. With this new global reality, British Columbia is in direct competition with other regions for skilled workers.

This WorkBC Employer’s Tool Kit is provided by the Ministry of Economic Development to supply businesses in British Columbia with the necessary tools and resources to ensure they are properly equipped to attract, retain and, most importantly, engage their employees.

By using this resource booklet and the three labour pool-specific resource booklets, businesses in British Columbia can develop a range of strategies to help address the current and upcoming labour shortages.

How to Use This WorkBC Employer’s Tool Kit

The “How to Attract, Retain and Engage Employees” booklet is part of a series of booklets designed for the Province of British Columbia to help employers attract and retain skilled workers. This foundational booklet provides a general overview of the resources and tools needed to help understand and deal with the perfect labour storm. There are three other booklets, each focusing on a specific pool of skilled labour and the necessary tools and resources specific to that labour pool.
Inside this booklet you will find the following:

- What created the “perfect labour storm” – an overview of how we got to where we are today
- Information on each of the three other booklets
- Material on today’s multi-generational workforces
- Tools for attracting new employees
- Retention strategies
- Why employee engagement is fundamental to attracting and retaining employees
- The value of great leadership

“The ‘perfect storm’ has been created by an aging workforce, a declining 15-24 year old new entrant pool and stiff international competition for talent. Strong economic growth over the last five years has increased the skills gaps in B.C. Small businesses are particularly vulnerable when trying to deal with the impacts of labour shortages.”

The Coalition of B.C. Businesses
Supporting Resources: Summary of the Three Other Tool Kit Booklets

The three remaining resource booklets in the series focus on different pools of skilled labour. Below is a quick summary of what each offers to the employer.

Booklet 2
It’s About Ability – The Mature Worker

This booklet is for employers who are interested in learning more about how to better engage and/or attract older workers. Part I of the booklet touches on changing Canadian demographics and how they are relevant to your enterprise. Part II draws on research as well as feedback from organizations in British Columbia to profile and demystify the mature worker. Here is where you will learn more about what your colleagues in business are doing to optimize this under-utilized labour pool. The final section of the booklet focuses on practical tools for planning and implementing a strategy to include mature workers in your workforce. Here you will learn techniques to uncover the potential in mature workers and to ensure that they play a key role in strengthening your increasingly multigenerational workplace.

Booklet 3
Under the Labour Radar – Aboriginal People, Women, Youth and People with Disabilities

There are several pools of skilled workers in our community who are under-utilized at present, but who have an important role to play in addressing the labour shortage. In this booklet you will find information on the unique contributions and motivations of each group, as well as a selection of customized engagement and recruitment tools. In addition, success stories are shared by local employers who have tapped into one or more of these labour pools. This resource will provide you with insight into these often overlooked groups, as well as a road map for ensuring that your organization is attractive to Aboriginal People, women, youth and/or people with disabilities.

Booklet 4
Diversity at Work - Recruiting and Retaining Immigrants

The Skilled Immigrant booklet is for employers who are looking to gain insight into the countless advantages that are created by consciously diversifying your workforce to include immigrants and temporary foreign workers. By tapping into this rich human resource, you create a competitive and leading edge for your business. As a means to help you on your way to expanding your workforce, the booklet offers resources, tips and ideas on attracting and inviting the applicants that you are seeking, as well as preparing your work environment to enable you to retain new talent.
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The Perfect Labour Storm

The impending labour crunch is referred to as “the perfect labour storm” for good reasons. The competition for good employees will become as fierce as the competition for customers. Today’s competition for talent is not a short-term trend; it must be viewed as the beginning of a true long-term change in our labour force. Simply put, there are a limited number of talented job seekers who are being sought by an increasing number of employers. Welcome to the dawn of a new era where historical practices of recruiting and retaining your employees are now obsolete.

Here are the key factors that have helped to create such a labour shortage.

- Baby boomers are starting to retire and within the next decade, for every two people who are retiring there will be less than one person to take their place. ¹
- Birth rates have been declining for the last 25 years and B.C. has the lowest fertility rate in Canada at less than 1,500 births per 1,000 women. ²
- More than one million job openings will be created in B.C. between 2005 and 2015, with only 650,000 young people progressing through the province’s K-12 school system during the same period. ³
- B.C.’s unemployment rate was a low 4.5 percent in May 2008 while Canada’s unemployment rate was 6.1 percent. ⁴
- In Canada, less than one in five (17 percent) employees are highly engaged at their work. ⁵ At a time when retaining talent is considered critical for Canadian employers, it is important to note that engaged employees are far less likely to leave for another job than their peers. With only 17 percent of Canadian employees engaged, and intense competition for employees, retention is at an all time low.
- A change in workplace culture with four generations of employees working side-by-side for the first time, each with its own set of values and expectations and markedly different attitudes towards work, authority, careers and work/life balance.

Rapid changes in the working-age population will continue to present many challenges for the business community of British Columbia, which will have to adjust to a high rate of turnover among its employees. Employee retention and engagement, knowledge transfer, ensuring the health of older workers and continuous training of new and existing employees will be key to dealing with the labour shortage.

The perfect labour storm has arrived.
Multi-Generation Workforce

Take a look at the next couple of businesses you frequent. Organizations large and small in British Columbia and the rest of Canada are experiencing a phenomenon never seen before. Four generations of employees are working side-by-side.

These four generations are commonly called the Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y/Millennials. Each generation brings its own set of values and expectations and markedly different attitudes towards work, authority, careers and work/life balance. It is an ongoing challenge for businesses in British Columbia to meet the diverse needs and expectations of these four generations. To attract and retain these four groups, you must meet their needs and expectations and understand what keeps them inspired and engaged.

People who study demographics and the workplace understand the differences between the generations and what is central to attracting and retaining employees of each generation. This resource tool kit can help you to understand as well.

By gaining a better understanding of the four generations, employers can:

- Create and market specific attraction and recruitment strategies;
- Begin to develop retention and engagement tools that value each generation;
- Implement strategies to create a workplace culture that ensures highly engaged employees; and
- Reduce conflicts that arise in the workplace due to different values and expectations.

Creating “Four” Generations

It is less important to focus on specific dates than it is to concentrate on what organizations can do regarding generational differences. Members of a generation are linked through the shared life experiences of their formative years. Each of the four generations develops similar values and approaches to how they deal with their lives, family, beliefs, attitude and most importantly – their views around work and organizations.

J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman in Rocking the Ages, (Harper-Collins, 1997)

The division of the four generations is as follows:

Traditionalists: Born between 1922 and 1945
Baby Boomers: Born between 1946 and 1964
Generation X (Gen Xers): Born between 1965 and 1980
Generation Y/Millenials: Born between 1981 and 1999
TRADITIONALISTS (1922 – 1945)  

Traditionalists were heavily impacted by World War II and the Depression. The youngest of this cohort have reached retirement age. Many are leaving the workplace even though experts estimate that more than half would rather keep working.

How to engage and retain Traditionalists

• Ensure they are valued for the knowledge they have gained
• Offer on-going training
• Offer flex time and temporary or part-time employment
• Consider mentoring rolls with Generation X and Y

BABY BOOMERS (1946 – 1964)

This post-war generation marked the beginning of an upward trend in birthrates. This baby boomer cohort, the largest ever, is now entering or nearing retirement with many of them planning on continuing to work in some capacity.

How to engage and retain Boomers

• Offer assistance in retirement planning, and realize that many boomers would prefer gradual retirement
• Offer part-time work, job sharing and flex time
• Create various opportunities for training and development

Understanding what makes each generation tick is critical to optimizing your attraction and retention strategies
**GENERATION X (1965 – 1980)**

Generation Xers are small in numbers but have a distinct attitude towards lifetime employment and leadership. This is the generation of latch-key kids who witnessed their parents being downsized after decades of loyalty to their respective employers. Because of this, they are said to have lost their confidence in institutions. Generation Xers are described as cynical and unconcerned with authority, rules and process. The independence that this group so fiercely retains makes them very resourceful and self-directed.

**How to engage and retain Generation Xers**
- Give a lot of feedback, but avoid micro-managing
- Provide tangible rewards (cash, gift certificates) for successes
- Provide a variety of different career opportunities
- Support their needs for a balanced work/life schedule

**GENERATION Y (1981 – 1999)**

Optimistic and techno-savvy, Generation Y is taking on the workplace with a whole new attitude and high expectations. The oldest of this cohort are starting their careers. They are the largest generation since the baby boomers and are tomorrow’s leaders.

**How to engage and retain Generation Y**
- Mentor as well as manage
- Give them challenging and rewarding projects and tasks, and guide them along the way
- Treat their new ideas and strategies with respect
- Provide flexibility with respect to the use of internet, cell phones and instant messaging
Quick survey

Is your business experiencing

- Older staff frustrated by the lack of work ethic in the younger generation?
- Younger staff who think their managers are rigid and inflexible?
- New hires who resist company policies and procedures?
- A lack of loyalty among staff?

Do you find yourself

- At a loss as to how to best recruit and retain quality talent?
- Looking for ways to connect with a diverse vendor and client base?
- Trying to navigate vastly different motivations and expectations?
- Wishing the new workforce was a little less challenging?

The existence of the multi-generational workforce poses unique challenges for British Columbia’s business community. A key to thriving within this blended workforce is to raise the organization’s awareness about generational differences and how they can be used as a great resource for attracting and retaining employees.
# A Snapshot of the Four Generations

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<td>o Divorce rate tripled</td>
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<td>o Competitive</td>
<td>o Self-reliant</td>
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<td>o Question authority</td>
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<td>o Prefer hierarchical</td>
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<td><strong>Feedback Strategies</strong></td>
<td>&quot;No news is good news&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Once a year with lots of</td>
<td>&quot;Excuse me, but how am I doing?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Feedback whenever I want&quot;</td>
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FINAL WORD ON MULTI-GENERATIONS

1. The generational differences and their broad generalizations can provide employers with helpful information for developing recruitment and retention strategies.

2. Employers need a deep understanding of the generational differences unique to their workforce to get a head start in the attraction and retention race.

3. Regardless of the generation, leadership plays a significant role in employees’ engagement level and desire to stay with the company.

4. The biggest impact employers will have on dealing with the demographic challenges is to ensure on-going training and development for their leaders to effectively lead people from all four generations.

8 Tips for Leveraging your Multi-Generational Workforce

1. Create an awareness of the different attitudes towards work and flexible employment options

2. Fill the leadership pipeline with Gen Xers

3. Train managers and leaders on the generational differences

4. Implement a variety of “family-friendly” programs or policies, such as child-care and elder-care services, and parental leave

5. Consider offering career development workshops that target the unique needs of each generation

6. Give prompt and useful feedback, letting each employee know what you see as his or her individual strengths and opportunities for growth

7. Encourage informal or formal mentoring

8. Communicate often and in as many different ways as possible. Each generation responds to different methods of communication - use them all: e-mail, blogs, newsletters, staff meetings, and a favorite of the Boomers: management-by-walking-around
Attracting and Recruiting Strategies

Businesses today are playing in a whole new ball park, and accordingly, attracting new talent has to become a key business initiative.

Businesses large and small need to begin developing and implementing continuous recruitment strategies that will ensure an influx of talented employees.

It is important to understand that attracting new talent to your business is just one part of your strategy in ensuring you are meeting required staffing levels. The amount of work, time and expenses put into attracting new employees is magnified tenfold if they leave three months later.

To be successful at attracting new employees to your business, you need to ensure that your organization is committed to creating engaged employees. The simple fact is that engaged employees are retained employees. Also, engaged employees are one of your most effective and powerful recruitment tools. Creating a business where the majority of your employees are engaged impacts your business positively in many different ways, including the reputation that your company is a great place to work. Developing a reputation as an “Employer of Choice” or “Best Employer” is one of the most effective recruitment strategies you can have.

Business leaders and owners need to understand that attracting and retaining are one and the same. We will present some great ideas for attracting new employees to your business, but understand that this is just the first of many steps when it comes to developing a strategy around attracting and retaining employees in today’s shrinking labour pool.

Consider Two-Way Mentoring!

If your organization consists of both Traditionalists and Generation Y, then consider two-way mentoring. It can be an opportunity for your Generation Y employees to provide training to your Traditionalists in technology, while the Traditionalists will most certainly share with your Generation Y people some great information and stories about your organizational culture, including their years of invaluable work experience.

Providing such an opportunity will clearly demonstrate you respect Gen Y, and allow Traditionalists to pursue new learning opportunities. These two cohort groups have been known to work quite well together, and your business will reap the benefits of increased employee engagement and reduced turnover.

If the term “employee engagement” is new to you, it won’t be for long. Create an environment where people are highly engaged in their jobs and it will be smooth sailing when it comes to dealing with this labour storm.
Fundamental Strategies for Attracting Talent

There are many different and effective strategies for attracting new employees. There are also some key fundamental strategies that all businesses should consider embracing as part of their long-term commitment to attracting and retaining key talent. The other three booklets will provide specific attraction and recruitment strategies for each of the target groups.

The following strategies should be considered part of your basic building blocks when it comes to attracting new employees.

1. Start within
Start by communicating to your staff via e-mail, staff meetings, phone or casual conversations that you are looking to fill a position within the company. Employees are looking for opportunities for growth and career development and by offering the job internally, you will not only increase employee engagement, but you will also build a reputation that your business is committed to developing its people from within.

2. Talk to your employees
Your employees are a goldmine of free information. Ask them why they stay. Find out the real reason people have left. Don’t be shy. Take people out for lunch and find out why they are working for you. If someone is leaving, be sure to take them out for lunch and find out exactly why they are leaving. If this is not an option, consider getting a third party exit interview done. Get right down to what people like and don’t like about the business. Again, this is a great retention strategy, but it will also provide you with some very interesting ideas around attracting the type of talent you are looking for.

Five Common Characteristics of Best Employers

1. Inspired Leadership
2. Unique Company Culture
3. Focus on Growing Talent
4. Strong Sense of Accountability
5. Aligned HR Practices and Excellent Execution

Hewitt’s Best Employers Study
3. Form an employee referral program
Regardless of the size of your business, you need to create an employee referral program and make it front and centre within your organization. Consider your employees as ambassadors who already have a huge network of fellow peers outside the business. In a world where instant communication is effortless, and staying in touch with peers from around the globe is a quick keystroke away, employee referrals can be extremely effective and very inexpensive when it comes to finding necessary talent. Be sure to create some type of reward system. It can be a financial reward, days off with pay, gift certificates or other small prizes. Ensure your referral program is well communicated and that you adequately acknowledge those that do find great talent.

4. Talk to your best customers and suppliers
Your customers are an integral part of your success. Don’t hesitate to ask your clients to refer possible employees to your business. Your top customers should have a good understanding of the type of business you are running and the type of person that would enjoy working for you. Your suppliers can also be another great untapped resource when it comes to finding and attracting talent. They meet with multiple companies throughout their work day and might just know someone who is looking for a change.

5. Offer fair compensation
Research shows that money plays more of an important role when it comes to attracting new employees than it does to why employees stay with a business. With the understanding that the ability to attract new employees goes far beyond the salary offered, it is still an important recruitment piece. It is important that employers offer a balanced compensation package that encompasses competitive pay and benefits. Be sure that it is competitive with what your rivals offer.

Besides money and benefits, remember that employees are also looking for a great work environment, opportunities for career growth and skill development, work/life balance and great leaders who are willing to build strong relationships. It is no longer just about money.

6. Market British Columbia as the ultimate place to live and work
Location sells, and it is no different when it comes to selling potential employees on why they should come and work for your company. No matter what medium you intend to use to attract new employees, always include some information that captures the incredible lifestyle that British Columbia offers. Today’s employees are looking for more than just a job that can provide them with financial security. It is an employee’s market, and finding work is not a concern for most job seekers. Most employees want to work for a great company and live in a community where they can raise a family and/or pursue their hobbies and passions.

Developing a reputation as an “Employer of Choice” or “Best Employer” is one of the most effective recruitment strategies you can have.
7. Consider employer branding
Consider the possibilities of employer branding. Most people can capture what is unique about a company, usually from the product it makes or the service it delivers. But an employer brand is the image of the business as seen through the eyes of the employees and potential recruits. Businesses are constantly looking for ways to increase their profits through marketing and branding. Why not consider doing the same for attracting new employees? Employer branding plays a critical role in effective recruitment by creating a desire for potential employees to want to learn more about the business. Your goal is to have your employees and potential employees view your business as a great place to work.

Recruitment and retention go hand in hand. Recruit well, and retention will be less of an issue; retain well and recruitment will be less of an issue.

Other Sources of Potential Job Candidates

- People looking to immigrate
- Recent immigrants
- Former employees
- Homemakers
- Stay-at-home moms and dads
- Retired or semi-retired workers
- Family, friends and contacts of your current employees
- People with disabilities
- Ethnic minorities
- Newcomers to your community
- Telecommuters
- Part-time employees

“We pay our employees a percentage of our annual net profits.”
Simmons Black and Emsland
Taking Steps to Build your Employer Brand

- Have your website heavily weighted toward why your company is a great place to work.

- Make sure your Employee Referral program and the success you have had with it are clearly communicated to all staff on a regular basis.

- Involve staff in your recruitment and retention strategies.

- Become actively involved in job fairs and community events.

- Let the local papers and magazines know of any awards or interesting stories that relate to your company being a great place to work.

- Create a local in-house newsletter that captures the unique culture of your business including stories, events, milestones, birthdays, births, etc.

- Celebrate and acknowledge any goals, targets, new clients, year-ends, etc., with your employees and let them know that they were the reason it happened.

“The engineers and technicians who have young families know that we offer flexibility and give time off for maternity and paternity leave.”

*Urban Systems*
You have secured some great employees and now the next step in the process is developing strategies to ensure that they will stay with you for the long term.

Considering how much time and money goes into finding, hiring and training new employees, the impact of watching employees walk out the door can be a very large financial and psychological loss to the organization.

The reality in today’s labour market is that businesses are going to lose employees. However, there are some excellent strategies that businesses of any size can implement to ensure that they are doing the best job possible to retain employees.

At the very heart of any retention strategy is the simple rule

**Engaged employees are retained employees.**

Engaged employees are not only easily retained, but they are also going to have a positive impact in all areas of the business.

“The more highly engaged employees are, the more likely they are to put customers at the heart of what they do and how they think about their jobs, and the less likely they are to leave the company.”

- Towers Perrin Talent Study, April 2003

**Marketing 101 - Creating your job ad**

Remember, employees are looking for more than just a job. When it comes to advertising a position, you need to market to the whole person, not just to their specific job skills. On top of the fundamentals, you want to also deliver a clear message that will separate you from the rest of your competitors who are also trying to attract new employees. Consider incorporating some of the following messages when you design your next employment ad:

- Challenging and varied work
- An environment that fosters a spirit of creativity and innovation
- Recognition and reward for high performance
- Work schedule flexibility
- Opportunities for advancement
- Mentoring and coaching opportunities
- Organizational values that align with personal values
- A culture that supports diversity in the workplace
- Fair compensation with a great benefits plan
- The ability to have a great work/life balance
- Personal bio or success story of an existing employee
Engaged employees are

- committed to the organization
- far more productive than disengaged employees
- extremely profitable
- going to provide excellent customer service
- much safer in the workplace
- going to inspire fellow employees to do great work
- very effective in attracting new employees

Ten steps to retaining and engaging your employees

1. Be clear about what is expected from employees
2. Ensure employees have the materials and equipment needed to do great work
3. Never stop creating ways for employees to do what they do best every day
4. Remember that nothing is more important than a leader who cares about his or her people
5. Create a work environment that is filled with employees who share a commitment to the values and vision of the business
6. Provide endless opportunities for career and skill development
7. Provide ongoing performance feedback, recognition and acknowledgment
8. Instil a sense of purpose and direction in each employee
9. Provide constant communication and transparency between the leaders and the employees
10. Look for ways to support the need to have a balanced work/life schedule

See specific tips for engaging each of the four generations on page 11.

“We have made significant changes to our shift patterns to ensure that our workers get quality time with their families and pursue their interests. We have a very positive retention in our company.”

IRL, International Trucking Company

Engagement = Retention

“When I began to focus on employee engagement as a key component of our business strategy, I saw an immediate impact on the way our employees took pride in their work and how that was translated into excellent customer service.”

Danny Boughton, Oxylife
Out with the old, in with the new!

When it comes to engagement practices, understand that some of the ways employee development was handled in the past could be having a negative impact on employee engagement.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Decisions about employees are based on experience, intelligence and determination</td>
<td>Decisions are based on talent, the right fit, passion and attitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment and recognition tends to be infrequent and usually very formal with lots of structure</td>
<td>Acknowledgment is ongoing, frequent and informal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with the employee to identify their weakness and then try and change them</td>
<td>Focus on what they are great at and continue to find ways to ensure they do what they do best everyday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify the disengaged employees who are performing poorly and leave your talented employees alone</td>
<td>Focus most of your attention on your best employees who will inspire others to do great work</td>
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<td>See career development as climbing the career ladder</td>
<td>Look at establishing high levels of success and achievement that support career development at every level of the organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implement and define the necessary and structured steps that employees must follow</td>
<td>Discuss the desired outcome with employees and then allow for flexibility, input and creativity in their approach to achieving the agreed upon outcome</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role of the employee is viewed in isolation by management</td>
<td>Management creates opportunities for continuous dialogue around how each person’s role supports the overall purpose of the business</td>
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<td>Work hard and one day we will trust you</td>
<td>The trust is yours to lose</td>
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The True Value of Great Leadership

Leadership can be considered the number one reason why employees stay with an organization and also the number one reason why employees leave an organization.

Consider this simple but effective statement:

“People don’t leave the organization, they leave their boss.”

Regardless of whether or not you own or operate a small or large business, your leaders are the lynchpin of employee engagement. To attract, retain and engage employees, you need leaders who are inspirational and are willing to participate in regular and ongoing conversations with their employees. These conversations involve

- Coaching
- Feedback
- Learning opportunities
- Career growth
- Performance reviews
- Acknowledgment of great work
- Active listening

Consider the opportunities for leadership development at all levels in your organization. Leadership training and development can provide many necessary skills required to retain and engage employees. You might be surprised by how many of your supervisors or managers would welcome the opportunity for leadership training and development.

The following list is a small example of training themes to consider when looking at what type of training your leaders could participate in when it comes to developing their retention and engagement skills.

- Conflict resolution
- Interpersonal communication
- Leadership coaching
- Change management strategies
- Building great teams
- Diversity training

“You have leaders are the lynchpin of employee engagement.”

Ryan Moffett, Employer

“With today’s labour shortage, the role of leadership is more important than ever before when it comes to attracting and retaining employees.”

Ryan Moffett, Employer
“We have a program called ‘The Leader’s Way’ that recognizes best practices among our staff and also provides mentoring and coaching by those who are doing a great job.”

Barton Insurance Hub International
Way Forward…

“How to Attract, Retain and Engage Employees” is the foundation booklet of a series of four designed specifically for the business community of British Columbia. The other three booklets build on this foundation and focus on the tools and resources required to attract and retain specific labour pools.

There are a number of short- and long-term solutions to this skills and labour shortage challenge. Competition for skilled labour is fierce and will be an ongoing challenge for the foreseeable future.

The businesses who embrace and commit to employee engagement, developing great leaders, becoming employers of choice and tapping into specific labour pools will be the ones who have the greatest success in dealing with the challenges of the labour storm that British Columbia and the rest of the business world are facing.

*Good luck in your journey!*
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