



feature

Breaking Down Borders

LABOUR MOBILITY AND TALENT EXCHANGE IS INCREASINGLY CRITICAL IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING GLOBAL ECONOMY – AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ARE THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP UP

By Liz Bernier

For knowledge workers in a brave new global marketplace, many of us are still surprisingly reluctant to venture far from home. Despite the ever-increasing prevalence of international opportunities, satellite offices, temporary work rotations and the importance of international experience to gaining a coveted seat in the C-suite, at least one in two Canadians (54 per cent) report that they will not move for work under any circumstances, according to a 2014 survey of 2,000 Canadians by the Canadian Employee Relocation Council (CERC).

Talent that's rooted in one place, reluctant to move, is perhaps one significant factor behind the skills gap, according to the Canadian Council of Chief Executives. Over one-third of companies experiencing talent shortages believe the cause to be that Canadians simply won't move for work, according to a 2014 survey.

"If you're looking at the big picture, there's a global shortage of skills. Here in Canada, it's expected that there will be a shortage of about two million skilled workers by 2026 – and just in British Columbia, for example, there's going to be about a million job openings in 2019, and about 75 per cent of those are going to require post-secondary education. The reality is that we just don't have the people who can fill those positions," said Stephen Cryne, president and CEO at CERC.

"We're competing with other jurisdictions for the same skills. From every corner of the earth, people are complaining that projects aren't going forward, business is being lost as a consequence of not having skills."

That's why integration and mobility are really an important part of the solution.

"I'm not saying it's the full solution – it's a lot of other things (as

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– STEPHEN CRYNE, CANADIAN EMPLOYEE RELOCATION COUNCIL





well). But when you look at mobility and migration, I think that as policy makers and as businesses and associations or regulatory bodies, I think we've got to do a far better job going forward. What worked in the past is certainly not going to work in the future if we want to attract those people," said Cryne.

CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION

Cross-border reciprocation and credential recognition are crucial pieces of the puzzle, but there

is still plenty of ground to gain on that front, says Cryne.

Credentialing is critically important, as is recognition of credentialing, especially when there is labour mobility and globalized labour mobility, says Elizabeth Kwan, senior researcher at the Canadian Labour Congress.

"On the higher-scale national and international level, we have seen the issues with credential recognition with immigrants who have come to Canada and that difficulty in having the credentials recognized, but also



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– BILL GREENHALGH, HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION

working within a system where you have both the federal and provincial governments having different jurisdictions over credentialing and recognition of credentialing,” she said. “This whole idea of credentialing has always been important and tied to immigration – and not just permanent immigration, as in immigrants coming to Canada, but also in temporary immigration in terms of migrant workers from the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.”

WHAT’S HR TO DO?

This entire quandary is difficult enough as it is, but it becomes increasingly complex if professions do not have a solid foundation of competencies and credentials to work from. In HR in particular, much work has been done over the past two decades toward establishing,

reevaluating and building on a strong competency framework for designated professionals.

Currently, there are only a handful of countries that have comprehensive and detailed core competency frameworks in HR; these include Australia, the U.S., the UK and the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA)’s in Canada. HRPA’s competency framework is the newest in the world.

Last fall, HRPA made a key move toward establishing an internationally recognized competency framework for the human resources profession. HRPA presented its comprehensive core competency framework to a technical committee (TC260) of the International Standards Organisation (ISO) with a recommendation that ISO should mandate a multinational working group to develop global



standards in HR, integrating competency frameworks from various countries into a single global framework. The committee approved HRPAs' proposal unanimously, and created a new working group to develop that harmonized framework. HRPAs CEO Bill Greenhalgh was named chair.

Having a global competency framework will help enhance the human resources profession worldwide; create a common basis for education, training and

talent selection; and facilitate the mutual recognition of designations between countries, says Greenhalgh,

“Once it becomes a standard, any country that wants to be considered to have a professional HR function will at least have to factor this new standard into their thinking,” he said. “Ultimately, competency frameworks support designations and those are very important because they are an objective validation of someone’s

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capability. They tell an employer that if you have that designation, you have the ability, the skill, the background and the experience to be able to function well in a specific job.”

The goal of the working group is to establish a single framework that all countries could accept in order to accelerate HR as a true global profession.

The next steps in the process will be for each national standards association to issue a call within their countries for subject matter experts to provide input. The timeline on establishing the framework to completion is estimated to be three years.

STRATEGIC STEP FORWARD

Working to establish a global competency framework supports HRPAs’ strategic direction by seeking to initiate programs and

support global agreements for the mutual international recognition of designations, standards and HR professionalization.

“This is not only a huge recognition of HRPAs’ credibility as a global thought leader but it is also difficult to overestimate its importance as a major advance in our intent to develop common standards for HR professionals around the world and build a foundation to advance HR as a true profession,” said Greenhalgh.

“It’s a very useful tool to have agreements or memorandums of understanding with other countries in terms of a particular profession... we’re talking about human resources professionals, but it would apply to a lot of other occupations, as well,” said Kwan.

“Where it’s important and helps (ease) some of the difficulties around recognition of credentials

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is when you have an agreement in place with another country... then it's sort of a tool to help facilitate that process a lot more, and people can assess the competencies of this, let's say, temporary worker coming into the country. They can right off the bat assess, 'Oh, okay, this person has this set of skills' or is particularly competent or experienced with x, y and z.

"It's a very useful tool to help with the process, because when you have someone go to another country to gain more experience or for whatever reasons... there are many steps to it, and... when you have a common way of understanding what those skill sets are, it's very helpful."

Liz Bernier is a communications specialist with the Human Resources Professionals Association.

PEOPLE IN CANADA DON'T WANT TO MOVE FOR WORK, RESULTING IN A SKILLS SHORTAGE. CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION IS A BIG ISSUE FOR IMMIGRANTS COMING TO CANADA.