

# Hiring in a talent shortage - how to get the right team in place

*“81% of business leaders report that it is more challenging now than five years ago to find suitable candidates... Employers should strike the right balance between experience, skills and personality – only through planning can they evaluate gaps in a team, rank the required characteristics and tailor training accordingly.”*

Forbes [<https://www.forbes.com/sites/sallypercy/2018/07/11/how-to-hire-the-right-people-to-help-your-organization-succeed/#515389a83624>]

Ian Tostenson, President of the BC Restaurant & Food Services Association, is creating a new initiative to do just that. Earlier this summer, 3 high-profile Vancouverites visited El Salvador to source high quality and qualified workers for the BC restaurant industry which is currently short 14,000 people.

Ian, along with Daniel Frankel (owner and CEO of Tap & Barrel restaurant) and Jeff Moore (Honorary Consul General of El Salvador), are developing a bilateral temporary foreign workers program to address the staffing shortage in British Columbia's restaurant sector, which will be launched before the end of 2018.

We caught up with Ian to learn more about the success of the trip, and how it will help the labor shortage in his industry.



**TC:** Ian, what stood out to you most about your trip to El Salvador?

**IT:** El Salvador is a third world developing country; there is not a lot of middle class, but the education system is very disciplined and students are so well-trained, both in skills and English proficiency. What they aspire to do is leave the country and work abroad, and they know they need these skills to do so.

What stood out to me most was how heartwarming it was to see such dedicated students. One culinary school that we visited had six rooms with ten students each; each one prepared a dish, and each one was incredible.

On our short trip alone, we identified at least 1,500-2,000 workers who are ready to come to Canada today!

The most poignant moment of my trip was when two 19-year old girls looked me right in the eye, dressed in their whites, and asked “when can we come to Canada and participate in your economy? This would be a great honor to us.”

Their honesty and sincerity blew me away. It made me realize - this is a precious program that we can't screw up. It has to be executed perfectly.

**TC: Why is there such a labor shortage in the restaurant industry in B.C.?**

**IT:** We are currently short about 14,000 people of a base of 175,000, and the primary shortage is in the kitchens. To combat that, we met with El Salvador's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labor; they agreed to help vet and find workers who meet criteria such as English proficiency, criminal and psychological checks, and credential checks. So, every time an employer in B.C. identifies a need, we'll pass along the job profile to El Salvador, and they'll work with the institutions to find suitable candidates.

We really want to make it easy for the employers here, *and* easy for the El Salvadorian workers to know about our industry and what its needs are. Currently, Canadian employers look to other countries to fill jobs which is costly and not very strategic.

If we can find Canadian workers here, we will. But currently in B.C., for every 3 people who leave the workforce, we're only replacing it by two. There's a huge labor gap - in the next ten years, 900,000 people will leave the workforce only to be replaced by 600,000. The remaining third of that has to come from immigration.

We've noticed that there's a bit of attitude problem in B.C., too. People are aspiring to get into jobs that they may not be ready or qualified for. There is a lot of turnover in the restaurant industry, and there's a major adjustment starting to occur. It's important to strive to become an employer of choice and look at your human resources program, benefits, predictive scheduling, etc.

**TC: When will the program be rolled out?**

**IT:** We recently met with the B.C. government to make sure they're onside. They saw the wisdom in this and like the program design (especially that the El Salvador government is working with us). We head into test mode within a month with about six restaurant groups, including Tap and Barrel.

**TC: Are there any takeaways from what you've learned that you think could help employers in other industries?**

**IT:** This type of labor program could work well for the construction industry, too.

What we're also learning here is that it's important to design great jobs.

For example, a B.C. restaurant group was having problems getting workers. They decided to do something different, so they gave the job titles fun names (i.e. Director of Sanitation rather than Dishwasher), offered competitive wages and perks, added funds for continuing education, and great benefits. This made a huge impact on their workforce. As a side note, predictive scheduling is huge perk, especially for part-time workers.

It's important to respect employees and their aspirations, and not just view them as a tool to get the job done.

*"People leave jobs, and it's up to managers to design jobs that are too good to leave."*

Lori Goler, Head of People, Facebook

Read full article here <https://hbr.org/2018/01/why-people-really-quit-their-jobs>