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Recruitment and Retention

Dealing with labour shortages

In a recent Greater Halifax Partnership survey, 89 per cent of employers surveyed report difficulty in finding skilled workers, but only 38 per cent of employers questioned have any existing plan to deal with these labour shortages. Future staffing problems can be solved with some investment in advance planning.

Although the exodus of skilled workers to Alberta has slowed, it never hurts to be prepared for potential shortages. One great way to do this is through effective succession planning.

- **Create a workable succession plan before you have a staffing problem. If you already have a labour shortage, act immediately.**

Succession planning should be part of your company's overall strategic plan. Senior management should devise a succession plan on how to deal with expected and unexpected vacancies. Any plan should include strategies on handling the loss of personnel in key positions, scheduled retirements, identifying top performers and finding new workers for the industry. It also should include internal postings (of between five to ten days) of all jobs before they are advertised externally. A good succession plan should include on-the-job training options. It should also encourage employees to seek trade or professional designations and certifications.

Management must stay aware of employment trends in their business in order to foresee any hiring or recruitment problems before they occur. Business owners and operators should also make talented employees aware of opportunities for advancement in the company. In the annual performance review, discuss the employee's future goals and the organization's future needs – and find ways to accommodate both.

The Business Development Bank of Canada's website is a very good source for basic, user-friendly, free information on succession planning. You can find this resource at:

www.bdc.ca/en/my_project/Projects/articles/succession_plan.htm

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