Fidelity Canada building on company success through innovative, inclusive hiring practices

Fidelity Canada has built its success by innovating over the years. A key ingredient to this success is ensuring a diverse and multi-faceted workforce that is empowered, able to blossom on the job and feels enriched at the end of the workday.

Fidelity's advantage is bolstered by a strong summer student program that sees the company working with universities across Canada to recruit candidates. It then provides rich training and mentorship opportunities with a goal for successful students to return in the future and add to its skilled workforce.

In 2017, Fidelity recognized the advantage of capitalizing on a largely untapped market for talent and partnered with the Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital's Ready to Work program. The strategy to was to link talented youth with disabilities to Fidelity's summer student program.

Combating employer myths

Young people with disabilities may face barriers in finding work due to employer perceptions that their organization's costs will increase due to accommodation needs, higher turnover and other human resource challenges.

However, Fidelity found that the accommodations needed to support youth with disabilities in its summer work program were not much different, nor more costly than its existing orientation for promising summer students.

Fidelity continued to follow a flexible and individualized recruitment approach to ensure this new stream of talented students had the best opportunity to succeed. This included working alongside Holland Bloorview to meet with recommended candidates at the outset of the hiring process to discuss the student's interests, strengths and experiences. Then Fidelity staff matched chosen candidates with appropriate student roles on a variety of teams. This approach ensured equitable consideration from the start because Fidelity knew that structural barriers often limit experience opportunities for youth with disabilities.

This personal attention continued as individuals were selected to join a company team. Managers and teams at Fidelity openly welcome discussions of what exactly employees need to do their best work. They engage in a wide range of accommodations according to individual need. For example, including a student's parent in onboarding and

scheduling discussions, examining modified work schedules, implementing structured daily schedules, ensuring ongoing collaboration with job coaches, and more.

Fidelity also prioritizes the need to ensure students are included in social activities and events. In addition to the typical training and mentoring program for students, it has organized special coffee breaks and other “meet and greet” opportunities to help the Ready to Work students get to know other team members.

Cameron’s example

Cameron is a neurodiverse individual who experiences challenges at school with prioritization, time management and setting limits for when work is sufficiently completed.

Cameron was given the opportunity to work over three summers with Fidelity’s Advisor Sales team. Over this time, he supported a variety of different projects including creating data reports, developing presentations and training materials for new staff, and inputting data into an important customer database.

Holland Bloorview coaches worked with Cameron and his Fidelity team to identify and implement what was needed to support his success in the workplace. Personalized accommodations were as simple as sending written instructions to him in advance of meeting with a supervisor, holding regular meetings to review priorities and plans, developing guidelines for how to respond to emails and when to follow-up, and connecting him with a mentor to help build social connections in the workplace. Not only did this help ensure Cameron’s success while at Fidelity, but Cameron was able to summarize these accommodations with help from his supervisors and mentor into a document that could be shared with any potential future employers he may have.

Cameron says that as a high school student, working at Fidelity allowed him to explore possible career paths in the financial sector, “I have been able to build my financial knowledge from the ground up, to a point where I am infinitely more aware of the world of finance and how markets, as well as how different financial instruments work… I know I still have much to look forward to learning... [but] my time [at Fidelity] has awakened in me an interest which I can see myself pursuing long into the future.” Cameron has since moved on to pursue a BA in economics at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Impact on Fidelity

The company itself also benefited greatly from having Cameron and other promising youth with disabilities on its work teams. As Fidelity teams worked with individual students and the Holland Bloorview team, they were able to help embed promising new approaches into standard processes across the organization with the assistance of the company's Chief Accessibility Officer.

Fidelity supervisors and staff comment on the joy of teaching, mentoring and seeing growth and potential in the students. Staff also highlight that inclusion promotes understanding of differences in communication and learning styles, which helps the company implement overall strategies to improve team functioning across the organization.

"One of the most valuable aspects of our partnership with Holland Bloorview is that our Fidelity teams learn just as much from the students as they learn from us," says Mira Ioannou, Director, Talent Acquisition Fidelity Canada. "Each student has a unique story, and they bring their perspectives to our corporate environment. Diverse perspectives are critical to any successful business."

Not only is Fidelity Canada debunking common myths about the challenges of hiring people with disabilities, it is setting both the company and its employees up for success well into the future.