Billion Dollar Benefit

Welcoming Tech Talent

AN EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO RECRUITING AND RETAINING SKILLED MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES INCLUDING 10 TIPS TO WELCOME TECH TALENT

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

ACS and SSI acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands we call Australia and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge with respect the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Ancestors have walked this country, and we recognise their special and unique place in our nation's historical, cultural and linguistic identity.

About this report

This is a guide for employers with practical tips on recruiting and retaining tech talent from migrant and refugee backgrounds. It is part of the Billion Dollar Benefit series, a campaign to support skilled migrants and refugees to work in their fields of expertise and, in doing so, contribute billions of dollars to the Australian economy. The first Billion Dollar Benefit report, launched in June 2023, outlined a roadmap of five actions for governments, employers and NGOs to implement by 2025 to break down employment barriers and unleash the economic potential of migrants and refugees. This guide complements that with practical actions employers can take to welcome and tap into Australia's full diversity of tech talent.

For more information about this guide, the Billion Dollar Benefit report, or to join the movement in support of migrant and refugee employment, please email billiondollarbenefit@ssi.org.au

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Foreword

Australia's tech sector is booming. But one major challenge is holding it back: the tech talent gap.

Around 60,000 tech workers are needed in Australia annually to meet the industry's growth needs, but only 7,000 students graduate with IT degrees each year. We don't deliver enough domestic graduates to meet the tech industry's needs. And as transformative technologies (including Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing) revolutionise how we work and the technology we use, the gap between the talent we need and the talent we produce from our universities and training providers will increase.

ACS and Deloitte's ninth Digital Pulse Report finds that, by 2030, the tech industry will need an additional 237,000 workers if Australia is to keep pace with our international peers[1].

Employers are quick to look overseas for tech talent, and that's undoubtedly a source we should value and draw on. But what if we told you there is a skilled, motivated, hardworking pool of untapped tech talent in Australia?

Many migrants and refugees already resident in Australia are highly skilled and bring a wealth of tech expertise, qualifications and experience from their countries of origin. While tech is the fourth most common pre-migration qualification held by migrants in Australia, newcomers continue to experience barriers breaking into the industry, with only 2 per cent of skilled migrants working in the sector in Australia[2].

The business case is clear. Harnessing untapped migrant and refugee tech talent presents an unrivalled opportunity to plug critical skill gaps while supporting newcomers in building fulfilling careers in their areas of expertise. It makes dollars and sense. The question, then, is how can tech employers best attract, recruit and retain this underutilised talent pool?

Many migrants and refugees already resident in Australia are highly skilled and bring a wealth of tech expertise, qualifications and experience from their countries of origin.

We are proud to present this guide with 10 evidence-based tips to help employers welcome tech talent from migrant and refugee backgrounds. This how-to guide has been developed with experts in diversity and inclusion, industry leaders and tech professionals with lived experience as newcomers. It includes clear, practical steps employers can take along the tech talent pipeline – from recruitment to onboarding to career development – to embrace migrants and refugees.

Evidence suggests that implementing these ten tips will help the tech sector become more diverse, productive, and innovative, expanding the growth horizons of the entire industry. On top of that, becoming a welcoming workplace will support newcomers in achieving their full economic potential and building fulfilling careers. It's a win-win scenario.

Violet Roumeliotis AM
SSI CEO

Chris Vein MACS (Snr) CP
ACS CEO

Unlocking Hidden Tech Talent:

Australia's tech sector is booming but faces critical skills shortages

60,000
tech workers
are needed in Australia each year[3]

Only **7,000 students**
graduate with IT degrees in Australia each year[4]
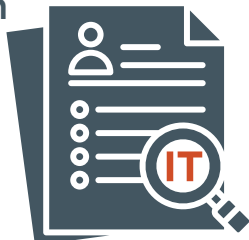
1 in 3
occupations experiencing shortages are related to ICT[5]
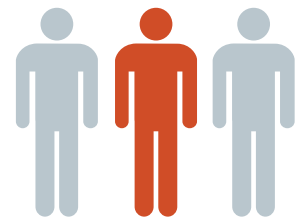
Skilled migrants and refugees are a largely untapped pool of tech talent

4th most common pre-migration qualification
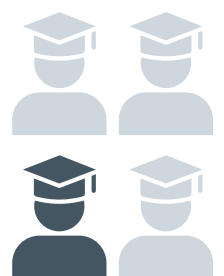held by migrants in Australia is IT (12%)[6]

Only **2%**
of skilled migrants in Australia work in the ICT sector[7]

1 in 4
permanent skilled migrants work below their skill level[8]

Why hiring skilled migrants and refugees is smart business

Recruiting and retaining migrants and refugees is good for business

✓ **Productivity:** 85%+ of Australian employers report their refugee employees are as productive or more productive than the rest of their workforce[9]

✓ **Retention:** 73% of US employers report higher retention rates for refugees than for other employees[10]

✓ **Innovation:** Inclusive teams are 10x more likely to be innovative[11]

✓ **Diversity dividend:** A diverse workforce enables organisations to understand better, connect with, and serve the needs of an increasingly diverse customer base[12]

We consulted newcomers about how employers can embrace the full diversity of tech talent

Top 10 tips to welcome tech talent

1 Lead from the top, backed by goals and policies

2 Recognise and manage unconscious bias

3 Engage experts to roll out diversity training

4 Craft clear, inclusive job ads

5 Reimagine hiring practices

6 No local experience, no problem

7 Try new initiatives

8 Go overboard with onboarding

9 Support tech careers, not just jobs

10 Celebrate and advocate

Implementing these 10 tips will help the tech sector unleash the full economic potential of skilled migrants and refugees and expand the growth horizons for the entire industry. **It's a win-win scenario.**

LinkedIn®

Talent is everywhere.

People from all countries, regions, backgrounds, and walks of life may possess equal potential or natural abilities. However, they do not all have the same access to circumstances or resources that would allow them to develop and leverage these abilities.

Equal talent, unequal opportunity: how LinkedIn is bridging the gap

Opportunity is missing when people don't have:

+ Access to quality education and training
+ Availability of financial resources or funding
+ Connection to networks or mentors that can open doors
+ Exposure to growth and development prospects
+ Supportive infrastructure or institutions
+ Freedom from systemic barriers such as discrimination or social inequality

ACS and SSI welcome LinkedIn's endorsement of this guide for employers and its efforts to support refugees and skilled migrants to build networks, develop and apply their skills and knowledge, and access new career opportunities in Australia.

With more than 985 million members globally, LinkedIn aims to redress the imbalance between talent and opportunity by providing access to networking, skills and knowledge, and access to employment for refugees and migrants.

LinkedIn has donated grants and free advertising to a network of nonprofit partners who support coaching, upskilling, mentoring, and entrepreneurship programs for refugees.

LinkedIn has also launched a Refugee Resource Centre, providing resources for refugees and employers and showcasing the experiences of businesses worldwide that have opened their doors to refugee and migrant talent and seen the benefits for themselves.

Learn more about employing refugees, listen to employer success stories, and discover why hiring refugees and migrants is a win-win scenario for industry.
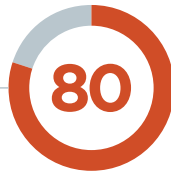
🌐 www.socialimpact.linkedin.com/refugee-resource-center

97

97% of hiring managers whose companies have hired refugees recommend it to other companies

86
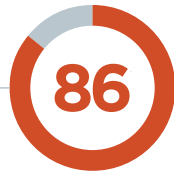
86% of hiring managers agree that refugees bring valuable perspectives and ideas

80

80% of hiring managers say that refugees have the right skills or experience

According to the Red Cross, the number of people around the world displaced from their homes has doubled in the last ten years, with the rate of global displacement now outstripping population growth.[13]

Refugees have fled their homelands and sought sanctuary (or asylum) in another country. They may have already been granted asylum and moved to a new country, or they may be living temporarily in another country, waiting to move.

Migrants leave their homelands to seek better opportunities and lives in another country. Most often, the decision to migrate is influenced by a mix of personal decisions and external factors.

At LinkedIn, we believe in the power of our platform to connect job-ready refugees with employers looking for talented individuals. We encourage employers to consider hiring refugees who are looking for opportunities to rebuild their lives and establish themselves in their new communities. By hiring refugees, employers provide people with an opportunity to rebuild their lives whilst gaining access to a talented and diverse workforce that can bring new perspectives and skills.

How to hire skilled migrants and refugees in Australia

Australia's visa and migration system can be complex to navigate and understand. The good news for tech employers is that you don't have to be an immigration and visa expert to hire great talent.

Research by ACS found that 95 per cent of tech-skilled migrants already have permanent residency or are taking steps to obtain it, and 56 per cent intend to apply for citizenship.

While visa names and codes can change over time, you can access diverse and immediate talent, as many visas allow migrants and refugees living in Australia to work without restrictions.

Consider the visa categories below:

+ **Temporary Visas** (some provide up to 6 years in duration)

+ **Skilled Visas** (depending on the category, these visas provide work rights up to several years and offer potential pathways to permanent residency)

+ **Family, Refugee or Humanitarian Visas** (providing for long-term stays and potential pathways to permanent residency)

+ **Bridging Visas** (supporting a migrant's transition from one visa to another)

The process for hiring a skilled migrant or refugee who is already in Australia is not as complex as you might think. And there's support to help you navigate the pathway to employing a skilled migrant or refugee and building diversity in your workforce.

More applicants for IT skills assessments are based onshore than offshore – these candidates are in Australia and ready to work once their visas have been issued.

According to ACS statistics:

+ Just over 30 per cent of people applying for IT skills assessments are female – compared to the number of women graduating from tech studies in Australia.

+ The most common ANZSCO codes applicants apply for assessment against:
  – Software Engineer
  – ICT Business analyst
  – Developer Programmer
  – Computer Network and Systems Engineer
  – ICT Security Specialist

+ The top 5 countries skills assessment applicants were born in:
  – India
  – Nepal
  – China
  – Pakistan
  – Sri Lanka

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS OUTLINES A THREE-STEP PROCESS:

1 See if they have a visa with work rights

The Australian Government's Visa Entitlement Verification Online makes it easy for visa holders, employers, education providers and other organisations to check visa details and conditions. If their visa has no work restrictions, you can be confident that the person has unlimited rights to work in Australia[14].

VEVO will tell you the visa start date and expiry date of the candidate's visa and whether the person can work while they are here. It will also tell you any conditions or work restrictions on their visa. You can hire a person if:

+ Their visa has started
+ It hasn't expired or been cancelled
+ The conditions on the visa don't show the words "no work"
+ They are allowed to do the work you want them to do.

2 Check their visa status regularly to make sure their work rights are still valid

Use VEVO to check your employee's visa within two days of the visa expiry date or if their circumstances change. If they have a bridging visa, check it every three months on VEVO to ensure their work rights are current.

3 Know your responsibilities as an employer

All workers in Australia have rights and protections at work. Skilled migrants and refugees have these same rights. The Fair Work Ombudsman protects those rights, ensuring that visa holders cannot be exploited and receive the same rights, pay and conditions as all other employees.

FINDING TALENT

Social enterprises that specialise in helping skilled migrants and refugees gain employment can link you with professional and motivated talent ready to start work. They can provide support and assistance to help your new employee settle into the workplace.

COSTS

Hiring a skilled migrant or refugee already in Australia doesn't cost you any more than hiring a permanent resident or citizen. If they hold a visa with working rights, they are entitled to the same pay, superannuation and conditions as a permanent resident or citizen.

Employers can also sponsor a temporary visa holder for permanent residency. More information is available from migration agents and the Department of Home Affairs.

HIRING FOR SKILLS

In Australia, Assessing Authorities have been appointed to advise the Department of Home Affairs on the skills and qualifications of people applying for skilled migration visas. Australian Computer Society (ACS) is the assessing authority for the tech sector. If you employ a candidate with a skilled migration visa, you can be assured that they have demonstrated their skills and capabilities.

Many refugees face hurdles when employers hesitate to recognise or value overseas-earned qualifications and international experience. Some may have fled their homelands without papers or evidence of their education or employment. Businesses can offer candidates practical opportunities to demonstrate their skills and capabilities on real-world projects or via skill assessment tools.

Supporting migrants and refugees

Supporting skilled migrants and refugees to settle into the workplace requires a few adjustments. Upskilling your workforce in cultural competence, beginning with your supervisors and managers, will deliver dividends for your employees and your business. Settlement agencies and social enterprises specialising in supporting migrants and refugees can help you build your business's cultural competence and confidence.

Demystifying visas and employment: Business, Industry and Regional Outreach Officers

The security offered by employment is fundamental to a refugee's ability to settle into their new country and to feel connected. In return, employees from refugee backgrounds often demonstrate high levels of loyalty.

Many employers opt to sponsor a valued employee on a temporary visa for permanent residency, offering them a level of security and stability that a temporary visa could never provide. Employers can access advice, information and support from the Department of Home Affairs' Business, Industry and Regional Outreach (BIRO) Officers.

BIROs don't work directly with visa holders – they are focused on the needs of businesses, industries, government agencies, and stakeholders in regional Australia. They can provide you with information about visas and migration and about Government visa programs, including the Global Talent – Employer Sponsored program, the Global Business and Talent Attraction program and the Global Talent Independent program, which offers a fast-tracked process to permanent residence in Australia for highly skilled migrants in ten priority industries – and tech is one of those industries.

Information about BIROs, visas, immigration and employer obligations can be found at www.homeaffairs.gov.au

From refugee to top tech exec:
Zaheda Ghani

Zaheda Ghani (also known as Zoe) fled war-torn Afghanistan as a child, learned English from reading newspapers, and taught herself how to make websites. She is now one of Australia's top technology executives and works at software giant Atlassian as a Product Management leader in Technology.

Her story is remarkable.

After initially fleeing to India during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1970s, Zaheda and her family resettled in Australia in the hopes of finding a more permanent home. Zaheda attended primary and high school in Sydney and graduated from the University of Western Sydney with a degree in Journalism and Creative Writing.

Beginning her career as a journalist at a small local newspaper focusing on women in business, Zaheda quickly discovered her love of technology and the internet. She taught herself how to make websites and even produced a digital radio show, embracing tech's ability to forge connections with people across geographies.

Zaheda went on to build a career around technology and product development, becoming the Chief Technology Officer at one of Australia's largest online fashion retailing destinations, The Iconic.

In 2022, Zaheda published her novel Pomegranate & Fig. Taking us from Afghanistan to Australia; it is an evocative and beautifully written debut novel about tradition, family, war and displacement. Shortlisted for the 2018 Richell Prize, it heralds an exciting new Australian literary voice.

Driven by a passion for supporting other refugees, Zaheda and her husband returned to Afghanistan in 2004 and 2006 to give back and utilise her technological skills to raise awareness of the work of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) through a documentary.

In 2017, Zaheda joined the board of Australia for UNHCR. She became a Founding 50 member and key advisor to the Leading Women Fund – a network of Australian women passionate about empowering female refugees.

Combining her technology skills and advocacy, Zaheda was fundamental to developing UNHCR's Connecting Worlds app, allowing donors to directly connect with Syrian refugee women in Jordan.

Zaheda sees diversity as a critical strength for the tech sector to embrace and hopes for other migrants and refugees to be given the opportunity to build meaningful careers in the industry.

In 2023, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science from Edith Cowen University for championing humanitarian causes and positive change in diversity and inclusion.

> Zaheda sees diversity as a critical strength for the tech sector to embrace and hopes for other migrants and refugees to be given the opportunity to build meaningful careers in the industry.

A journey of resilience and determination:
Abd Almassih Alsaad

Syrian-born Abd Almassih Alsaad enjoyed a successful IT career in his homeland for over two decades. A proficient programmer specialising in design, development, and integration, Abd Almassih built on his experience with prominent corporations and government entities in Syria to establish his own IT company.

But Abd Almassih and his family were forced to flee Syria when civil war erupted. They eventually found safety in Australia in November 2022.

Like most highly skilled refugees and migrants, he has encountered obstacles when attempting to break into the tech industry in Australia. "I love IT; it's my area of expertise – my specialty. It's what I know best," he says.

Since enrolling in SSI's Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP), Abd Almassih has received support in navigating the Australian job market but is still facing challenges of having his overseas qualifications recognised here.

> **I've found that many IT employers won't acknowledge a degree from overseas, thinking it's not strong enough, and often insist on a local degree from Australia. I am even being rejected for volunteering unpaid roles in the industry.**

Abd Almassih has secured a job in retail for the moment but remains committed to pursuing a career in IT in Australia. He will soon complete his third TAFE course, earning a Certificate 4 in Web Development next month.

> **We have consistently found our migrant employees hardworking and committed to their roles. They often exceed expectations, positively impacting our productivity and work environment.**

Employer profile:
ISW welcomes tech talent

ISW is an Australian tech company that has seen first-hand the business, cultural and social benefits of hiring skilled migrants and refugees.

Headquartered in Hobart with offices across Australia and internationally, ISW delivers specialist digital capabilities and services, including Cloud Computing, Workplace Collaboration, Application Development, Monitoring and Analytics, Data Intelligence, AI & IoT and Industrial Solutions.

"Hiring migrants and overseas talent has provided us with many advantages," says Angela Robinson, Head of People and Culture at ISW.

"One of the most significant benefits is the fresh perspectives migrants and refugees bring to problem-solving, often generating innovative solutions. Their diverse cultural backgrounds enable us to connect with international clients but also help us better understand the various cultures within other Australian organisations."

ISW has always been firmly committed to promoting diversity and inclusivity in the workplace, and recruiting and developing migrants and refugees is a central component of its diversity strategy.

"We've established strong partnerships with specialised organisations which help connect businesses with skilled migrants. We have also found the ACS Professional Year program to be a streamlined way to find great candidates. Through these collaborations, we can tap into a talent pool that not only possesses the skills we need but also adds to the rich cultural diversity of our team," she says.

Angela says ISW wouldn't hesitate to recommend skilled migrants and refugees as employees.

"Based on our experience, we highly recommend recruiting migrants to other organisations. One of the main reasons is their strong work ethic. We have consistently found our migrant employees hardworking and committed to their roles. They often exceed expectations, positively impacting our productivity and work environment".

10 TIPS
to welcome tech talent

TIP 1: Lead from the top, backed by goals and policies

Leaders play a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity and support for skilled migrants and refugees. Their commitment to championing inclusion at all levels sets the tone for an environment where migrants and refugees feel valued and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and expertise. This inclusive leadership creates not only a welcoming atmosphere but also substantial business benefits.

According to research by Deloitte, positive leadership behaviours directly influence whether or not employees feel a sense of belonging in the workplace[15].

A leadership team that understands inclusivity's human and business value can build a robust organisation. Drawing on and valuing the cultural intelligence, technical skills, and motivation of migrants and refugees promotes innovation, creativity, and problem-solving within organisations. Top-level leadership ensures policies and programs are implemented throughout the organisation to address any barriers or biases that prevent or limit inclusivity.

Precise goal setting is crucial, and SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-constrained) are invaluable for success. SMART goals provide clarity and reference points for hiring and developing skilled migrants and refugees. For instance, a SMART goal might be to increase skilled migrant employees by 20 per cent within a year, allowing you to create and communicate concrete strategies and actionable plans.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) give you insights into whether your actions effectively create change. Metrics like retention rates and employee satisfaction among migrants and refugees, along with measures that report on internal recruitment, promotion and career progression, help you to gauge your progress and refine or redesign your strategies, addressing barriers or issues within the promotional and recruitment processes.

> " I think here it is a very open-door policy, so you can just talk to your manager very comfortably. "

Rujuta Mokashi: a CRM Engineer in Melbourne. Rujuta came to Australia from India.

> " You are not just technically talented, but throughout the time you have faced all these challenges and you have always been contributing to the society. You bring the same skills to the organisation, and that's where they can actually value you as a person as well, not just [for your] technical skill. "

Rushabh Pancholi: a Software Developer in Melbourne. Rushabh came to Australia from India.

TIP 2 : Recognise and manage unconscious bias

Everyone has biases – both conscious and unconscious. Both individuals and organisations find that biases creep into every area of decision-making, from workplace recruitment to retail decisions. The important thing is to recognise and manage these biases.

Acknowledging your own biases is the first step towards addressing them. Find out your bias hotspots by making time for self-reflection. Recognise the biases that exist in your workplace and broader society. Provide training and education on unconscious bias for all employees. Create an open and inclusive culture where employees feel comfortable discussing bias and its impact.

To manage unconscious bias in recruitment, refocus your hiring lens to acknowledge that difference is a positive. Encourage a culture of questioning assumptions. Avoid assuming, for example, that a temporary visa holder does not have the right to work or will only be around for a short time. The Department of Home Affairs VEVO service is a free service for checking work rights for different visa holders.

While many businesses have traditionally included anti-racism statements in bullying and harassment policies, an explicit policy on racism demonstrates that the organisation is committed to diversity and creating a safe workplace for migrants and refugees. This policy then provides the basis for implementing organisation-wide anti-racism and cultural competence training.

Unconscious bias leads us to make snap judgements about who we feel comfortable with, trust, and are open to. These decisions, which occur without us even realising, influence our decisions about connection, communication and relationships—being inclusive and welcoming means consciously recognising those micro-judgements and overriding unconscious bias, recognising that diversity brings richness, learning and value.

A 2021 report on tech sector diversity in the US found that 68% of respondents aged 18–28 felt uncomfortable in their workplace due to their unique identity markers such as ethnicity, gender, neurodiversity or socio-economic background[16].

> " I don't want to put it all on bias, but I believe there is a bias. People might hesitate to connect or communicate because of communication skills. "

Nayan Jain: an IT Systems and Solutions Officer in Melbourne. Nayan came to Australia from India.

TIP 3 : Engage experts to roll out diversity training

The benefits of a culturally diverse workforce are only unlocked when your people experience inclusion and feel they contribute their unique knowledge and talent. This is achieved through quality cultural diversity training led by experts. Employers can partner with specialist organisations to conduct cultural diversity and inclusion training at all levels. Specialist providers can deliver tailored diversity training courses and workshops on culturally responsive practice and facilitate reflective conversations to foster empathy and create connections across teams. They can train recruiters on how to attract, recruit and retain a culturally diverse workforce.

Employers have said that working with diversity and inclusion experts has enabled them to better integrate people from migrant and refugee backgrounds into their workforce.

A good starting point is the guide on cultural competence produced by the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia. It provides an overview of cultural competence training programs across the country. SSI Diversity Training, for example, has trained more than 6,000 people across various organisations, including Suncorp, Ausgrid, and Deloitte, drawing on more than 20 years of experience in providing services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Training is central to embracing diversity and turning it into a competitive advantage for your business. According to Deloitte, when organisations have inclusive cultures, they are eight times more likely to achieve better business outcomes and six times more likely to be innovative and agile[17].

TIP 4 : Craft clear, inclusive job ads

Inclusive recruitment starts with inclusive job ads. This means using plain English, avoiding industry jargon, clearly outlining step-by-step directions for making an application, and encouraging people from diverse backgrounds to apply. Emphasising your desire to create an inclusive and equal workplace in the job description is essential to make migrants and refugees feel more welcome. Avoid using generic sentences on diversity and inclusion, as it can appear tokenistic. Be willing to support your claims with practical examples of what your organisation is doing to promote diversity and inclusion.

Inclusive advertising is not just about the words on a job ad – it is about people (including the images you use) and places (the channels you use for promotion). Use diverse imagery to connect candidates to others like them and different. Rather than posting job advertisements solely on websites such as LinkedIn and Seek, think about promoting your opportunities through local refugee community networks, migrant resource centres, community newspapers (including ethnic media) and social media.

It's safe to assume that English is not the first language of migrants and refugees. Whilst proficiency will vary between individuals, job ads that are direct, clear and concise make it easier for everyone to understand. Be conscious of the words you use and avoid idioms and colloquialisms: often, the cultural context of common sayings in Australia cannot be translated for people with different cultural backgrounds.

Encourage your recruitment teams to shift from a focus on ICT qualifications and local work experience to a focus on skills. Overseas tech experience should be acknowledged and valued as much as local experience. To signal this, you could include "local and overseas work experience is equally valued" in your ads.

Many employers make citizenship or permanent residency a default requirement on their job ads, closing the door to talented applicants with valid visas with working rights. Consider whether there are legitimate legislative, security or regulatory reasons to limit your candidate pool to citizens or permanent residents or whether you could reach more talent by asking for a visa with working rights.

'G'day'

'No worries'

'It's stuffed'

'Knock off time'

'Have a crack'

'All good'

These are just a few of the many common Australian phrases and words used in our workplaces that may leave migrants and refugees confused. Migrants and refugees are also learning the acronyms, abbreviations and slang we use for government agencies, processes and procedures. As an industry, tech is loaded with abbreviations, acronyms and terms that might be meaningless to migrants and refugees. Using them without providing explanations can result in people feeling excluded and uncertain. Consider creating a workplace dictionary that defines abbreviations, acronyms and company-specific words and phrases to make it easier for refugees and migrants to build their understanding and workplace vocabulary.

TIP 5 : Reimagine hiring practices

The hiring challenges faced by skilled migrants and refugees often stem from a lack of recognition of their qualifications, language barriers, and cultural differences. Dismantling these obstacles means rethinking how we recruit, hire and communicate with prospective employees.

Focusing on skills is essential in opening your hiring practices to welcome migrants and refugees. Consider working with organisations that specialise in skill assessment, credential evaluation and recognition to ensure you fairly assess a person's skills and any qualifications they bring.

Traditional hiring processes often fail to recognise the diverse skill sets possessed by these individuals, hindering their engagement and acceptance into the workforce. To address this issue, consider other assessment mechanisms beyond formal qualifications and practical experience gained in different contexts.

It's important to remember that candidates may have had short or extended periods where they could not work or study. Challenge assumptions that a gap in a resume is a red flag for hiring a candidate.

Coaching and training your managers and interview panels in diversity and inclusion in hiring processes is essential. Establishing your interview panels with a mind to diversity on the panel can help to counteract groupthink while using both qualitative and quantitative ratings on interview reports can help to counteract bias.

Training for your recruitment teams should also address creating an inclusive and respectful environment when a candidate engages with the business. It includes finding ways to ensure that all candidates feel comfortable explaining and demonstrating their skills and experience at the interview. This might mean giving candidates more time to answer questions, allowing them to submit a video response or written response, or offering language and communication support.

By equipping your panels with the necessary knowledge and skills, you can build their confidence and ability to recognise and appreciate the talent beyond borders, ultimately leading to more diverse and inclusive workplaces.

> " I had about 7-8 years of job experience as a graduate programmer in academia. So I had a wealth of experience and that contributed towards making me eligible to apply for skilled migration. Unfortunately, one of the biggest challenges I faced was the employers didn't recognise my international experience. "

Atin Chaudary: a Professional Learning Specialist & Associate Lecturer in Melbourne. Atin came to Australia from Fiji.

> " There were quite a lot of companies which were like talking about 'oh we want uniqueness, we love your uniqueness'… And then when you apply with your unique characteristics (which is like a different kind of resume or different style or maybe a different thing), it will get stuck in the ATR system itself or the automated HR system. And it does not go further. "

Nayan Jain: an IT Systems and Solutions Officer in Melbourne. Nayan came to Australia from India.

> " When you are not in touch with your skills, it just makes it difficult to talk to recruiters because you have to explain what you did during the break or when you were searching for opportunities. "

Rujuta Mokashi: a CRM Engineer in Melbourne. Rujuta came to Australia from India.

TIP 6 : No local experience, no problem

Employers are rethinking their talent acquisition approach in a rapidly evolving global marketplace. Traditionally, employers have highly valued local experience when assessing potential candidates. However, this mindset gradually shifts as companies increasingly recognise the transferability of skills and the value of hiring for skill and potential in a global market.

In the tech industry, occupation-based skills and capabilities are geography-agnostic: employees who have demonstrated a particular skill or ability in another country carry that skill when they come to Australia.

Employers now understand that individuals with diverse backgrounds and skill sets bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and adaptability to navigate complex business landscapes. Tapping into a broader range of expertise and capabilities, rather than hiring for local experience, can drive growth and success in an increasingly competitive environment.

We need employees with diverse skill sets who can adapt to different markets and cultures. A candidate with relevant occupational skills and potential can quickly learn and adapt to new environments if provided with the proper support, making them valuable assets in an ever-changing business landscape. Furthermore, emphasising agility and potential allows employers to tap into a wider talent pool.

In Australia, nearly half our population has a parent born overseas, and 27 per cent of our population were born overseas. Our industry serves a culturally diverse community that will be better served when our workforce reflects that diversity. Organisations with a workforce that reflects their customer base are more profitable. In 2019, top-quartile companies for ethnic and cultural diversity outperformed those in the bottom quartile by 36 per cent in profitability.[18]

By not overemphasising local experience when considering new employees, hiring teams are more likely to attract candidates from various backgrounds, building the diversity and strength of the workforce.

66 It's my skills and experience that defines how I am right [for the job], not the exactness of my past work because there are always transferable skills that someone can use. 99

Swagatika Biswal: an Agile Business Analyst in Sydney. Swagatika came to Australia from India.

66 And the other thing is that when you don't have a reference from Australia, that's another big challenge because they want to talk to someone that is local over here, not international. 99

Atin Chaudary: a Professional Learning Specialist & Associate Lecturer in Melbourne. Atin came to Australia from Fiji.

66 Immigrants always have a feeling that they are not good enough. It's the mindset of being an immigrant that is inhibiting in a way. 99

Con Stepanov: a Cyber Security Specialist in Adelaide. Con came to Australia from Russia.

TIP 7 : Try new initiatives

Businesses today stand at the cusp of a transformative era where they can become effective agents of societal change. By adopting innovative strategies to improve hiring rates for migrants and refugees, businesses can effectively enhance diversity, drive innovation, and contribute to social stability and cohesion.

Blind recruitment has evolved as a powerful strategy to mitigate unconscious biases during the hiring process. By anonymising candidate information such as name, age, gender, ethnicity, and location of previous employment, organisations can ensure that selection is based purely on qualifications and experience, enabling migrants and refugees to compete on a more level playing field. You can also try anonymising candidate details during the preliminary shortlisting stages, concealing identifiers that could allude to a candidate's migratory status or nationality. By focusing solely on the skills and experiences that candidates bring, businesses can give all applicants fair and unbiased consideration, amplifying opportunities for migrants and refugees.

Collaborations with specialist settlement services and social enterprises can help businesses connect with migrant and refugee communities. By engaging in partnerships, businesses can gain insights into the unique challenges faced by these communities, subsequently allowing them to devise strategies that are sensitive, supportive, and adaptive to their specific needs. These collaborations can also help build training and development programs that recognise and respect socio-cultural nuances, fostering a more inclusive work environment.

Interested in how other organisations do it?

+ **Learn while you earn** is an inclusive strategy through which migrants and refugees can acquire new skills and local experience while working. This approach benefits those who may not have formal qualifications but possess a wealth of experience.

+ **Internship programs** tailored for migrants and refugees can allow them to display their skills, learn organisational culture, and contribute effectively to the workplace. By providing a structured and supportive environment through internships, businesses enable them to transition into the regular workforce more efficiently.

+ **Specialised recruitment pathways** for skilled migrants and refugees can be instrumental in harnessing global talent. Tailored induction programs, mentoring, and supportive networking opportunities can further facilitate their integration into the workforce, ensuring their transition is supported, and they can fully realise their potential.

> "I got into the IT Code Fair employer...speed dating. In there, I got to present myself and meet the employers. And I got the job. And it sounded exciting."
>
> **Tracy Tran:** a Digital Officer in Darwin. Tracy came to Australia from Vietnam.

> "Eventually, I did the professional year that was required over here and, along with that, I did internships as well. One of the internships I did for a while, they liked my work and...I continued working with them. That was my very first experience over here, getting a complete understanding of the team culture, how the companies operate over here, what are usually the client's requirements when they're looking for someone to hire."
>
> **Rushabh Pancholi:** a Software Developer in Melbourne. Rushabh came to Australia from India.

TIP 8 : Go overboard with onboarding

Your business might be someone's first experience of an Australian workplace. It could look and feel very different to workplaces in their country of origin. A comprehensive onboarding process helps set them up for success.

While good onboarding should cover core content for all new staff (such as your company's mission, structure, values, benefits, products or services, and business operations), great onboarding goes further.

Onboarding starts before your new employee arrives on their first day. Call a few days before to connect and allow the new employee to ask questions. Consider an orientation day before formally starting work to enable them to meet their manager and team and tour the workplace.

Explicitly covering details and arrangements you might consider obvious (like dress codes, lines of reporting, or work hours) will help new employees feel more confident. Avoid workplace jargon, metaphors, and Australian slang and explain any commonly used technical acronyms. Provide plenty of time and low-risk opportunities for your new employees to ask questions.

Onboarding should be ongoing, like professional development. Employees from migrant and refugee backgrounds will need time to absorb onboarding information, so demonstrate patience and expect to repeat yourself. Be mindful that newcomers may also be taking in new information outside the workplace simultaneously, from learning how to access health services to navigating public transport and opening bank accounts.

Where possible, try to use multiple modes of communication to share information with migrant employees. This could include offering e-learning and interactive workshops (online and in-person), ensuring clarity in your written information, checking understanding with open-ended questions, and offering support and information through a buddy or mentor.

Some organisations provide ongoing support to new migrants and refugees even after they secure employment. Contact your local settlement service provider, local council, chamber of commerce, union, or migrant resource centre for more information.

> A buddy or mentoring program can be a great way to provide ongoing, personalised support to newcomers. A mentor can explain how things are done in your workplace, explain Australian slang, and connect the employee to others. If possible, it can sometimes be helpful if the buddy is someone from the same cultural background or who speaks the same language.

" Onboarding was a pleasant experience with a well-structured organisation. There were training modules and a focus on operational health and safety... The Australian work culture emphasises work-life balance, which is what I came here for. It aligns with my priorities and values. "

Nayan Jain: an IT Systems and Solutions Officer in Melbourne. Nayan came to Australia from India.

TIP 9 : Support tech careers, not just jobs

Tech businesses have long been at the intersection of innovation and diversity, and the industry is uniquely positioned to offer well-paid, fulfilling, long-term careers for migrants and refugees. Rather than merely creating jobs, businesses across the industry see the value in setting out career pathways, matching individual capabilities and aspirations with organisational needs and delivering long-term opportunities for career growth for migrants and refugees.

The first step is to set out transparent career progression pathways. Identify specific job roles and the skills and accomplishments required for upward mobility within your business. Orientation and career development sessions help migrants and refugees understand their potential trajectories within the organisation and know the requisite milestones.

To help individuals reach their potential and move your business forward, find ways to understand and match their skills to their career aspirations. Implementing robust assessment tools can give you data about their competencies and career desires, allowing you to plot a path for career progression with them. Personalised development plans, addressing specific skill gaps and promoting ongoing learning are invaluable in supporting migrants and refugees in the workplace. From tailored training programs and workshops to certifications, the aim is to continuously nurture their skills, propelling them towards their career ambitions. Aligning skills and capabilities with training, development and future goals enhances job satisfaction, fosters retention, and helps build a workforce to achieve your business goals.

Career outcomes and trajectories for skilled migrants and refugees are improved when managers and leaders understand how power and respect are valued and communicated differently worldwide. In some cultures, making direct eye contact can be viewed as unfriendly, whereas in others, it is seen as a display of honesty and trustworthiness.

Similarly, speaking directly to a superior in some countries may be seen as impolite or disrespectful. In contrast, a flatter hierarchy in other countries encourages and values a more open communication flow regardless of position.

Navigating career progression can be challenging, and mentorship can play a pivotal role in encouraging migrants and refugees to seek and take up promotional and development opportunities. Mentorship facilitates knowledge transfer, skill development, and awareness of organisational opportunities.

Many organisations facilitate mentoring programs for migrants and refugees; some also provide ongoing support post-employment for new arrivals. Settlement services providers, local councils, chambers of commerce, and migrant resource centres can help you set up and run an effective mentoring program.

> So it is always good to have someone who has been through the process and someone who can guide you a bit and then you kind of have those rejections and failures and just learn from it.

Rujuta Mokashi: a CRM Engineer in Melbourne. Rujuta came to Australia from India.

> Here, it's not [just] the focus on the technical skill. On top of that, you need to do the networking and get yourself known.

Tracy Tran: a Digital Officer in Darwin. Tracy came to Australia from Vietnam.

TIP 10 : Celebrate and advocate

Celebrate successes, internally and externally. You will find that employees from migrant and refugee backgrounds will enrich your business. Spread the word so others in your industry follow suit.

If employees are willing, let them tell their stories and discuss their significant contributions to the workplace. For example, the website 'Move to South Australia' features video success stories of skilled migrants living and working in South Australia[19]. You could do something similar for your company, celebrating staff from diverse backgrounds with a focus on their skills.

In addition to celebrating the contributions of diverse individuals, you may like to consider ways to acknowledge cultural and religious events. Attend or sponsor community events and celebrations. Workplace celebrations of events, such as Diwali lunches or Lunar New Year events, can be meaningful and build connections. However, be mindful of the cultural load that these events can carry and be careful not to assume that employees from a particular background are willing and eager to organise cultural events.

Many organisations offer cultural leave so individuals can commemorate special religious and cultural occasions that are not public holidays in Australia. This can help employees feel more welcome and give them a sense of belonging and acceptance.

The power of connection:
Michael Makhoul

Former refugee Michael Makhoul always wanted a tech career. Before leaving his home in Syria, the now-25-year-old was focused on his goal, undertaking online courses and exploring opportunities to gain a formal education in tech.

But when he arrived in Australia, the challenge of entering the industry seemed insurmountable. Michael spent months applying for more than 100 jobs without success.

> 66 There was always someone who was more qualified and experienced than me and English language was a big barrier for me, as well as the job application system. I had never written something like a cover letter before. 99

But everything changed when Michael signed up for the Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP), which assists refugees in building a professional network, connects them with training and education, and supports them in navigating the Australian job market.

RESP connected Michael to UST Global, a digital transformation and solutions company that offers paid training to help people from disadvantaged and underrepresented communities enter the tech profession.

After a series of assessments, UST offered Michael a place in their Step IT Up program, enabling him to hone his skills, learn on the job, and prove himself to be an effective and valuable full-time professional.

After six months of training and experience, Michael successfully applied for a position as a full-stack software engineer at UST and was welcomed into the team.

"I love my job. I do just the same work as everyone else in the team now," he said. "I don't think it would have been possible for me to get a job in IT without the opportunity."

Michael is now studying computer science at university and believes everyone benefits when refugees get the chance to demonstrate their value as tech employees. "I think it is really important for more companies to give people like me opportunities like this. It makes a big difference."

"Based on our experience, we highly recommend recruiting migrants to other organisations. One of the main reasons is their strong work ethic. We have consistently found our migrant employees hardworking and committed to their roles. They often exceed expectations, positively impacting our productivity and work environment."

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