

## **Vos' Your Independent Grocer Uses an Untapped Labour Pool to Avoid Turnover Troubles**

As the old saying goes, "Good help is hard to find." That can be especially true in the retail sector, where it's tricky to find dedicated employees who will stay with a company. The high employee turnover rate means that labour is top of mind for retail employers. Finding, hiring and keeping quality staff is a costly challenge.

After more than 35 years of experience in the retail industry, Terry Vos knows what he wants in an ideal employee: someone who is punctual, productive, reliable, committed and works safely. Terry opened Vos' Your Independent Grocer in Port Perry, Ontario in 2009 after being offered a franchise opportunity and holding several management roles in stores operated by Loblaw.

Terry is always on the lookout for great employees for his supermarket, which is home to services including a flower shop, dry cleaners and wine shop. During his long history of hiring staff for Loblaw's and now his own store, he's found that people with disabilities are a largely untapped labour pool to fill vacancies. Vos' Your Independent Grocer currently has 169 full- and part-time workers, including 15 people with disabilities. Not only has hiring people with disabilities been a smart business decision that's consistently helped his bottom line—it's also helped his community.

### **Benefits for the business**

Savvy employers constantly monitor their operating costs. Keeping labour costs down and productivity up is so important in running a successful business. Terry has found that hiring people with disabilities has helped reduce operating costs. This is largely because his employees with disabilities typically have the qualities mentioned above. Terry values that these employees are punctual, committed and productive. They also prevent injuries by working safely and minimize sick time. These are all important qualities to a cost-conscious employer like Terry. In fact, he monitors and records the operating costs related to human resources for his store himself, so he's well aware when issues come up and need to be fixed. Over the more than 20 years that Terry has been hiring people with disabilities for various stores, he's never needed to take corrective action with an employee with a disability.

### **Benefits for the community**

Terry and his wife, Christine, enjoy giving back to their community. They engage with fellow residents through fundraising events, serving on local boards and committees and being active in the Rotary Club. It's also very important to them to reflect Port Perry's diverse community in their store. They find that customers are eager to support local businesses that hire their friends and relatives, including those with disabilities. Representing and reflecting the community itself helps the store's continued growth and its reputation as a community leader.

### **Today's youth are more job ready**

Terry has noticed a number of positive changes in the workforce over the past few years. He finds that young people, including those with disabilities, are now more job

ready when they finish their post-secondary education. For example, Terry recently filled a vacancy in his bakery department with someone who learned cake decorating from a local community college.

**Numbers you need to know: retail sector**

Ontario's retail sector is facing a labour shortage. According to a recent survey by the Business Development Bank of Canada, almost 40 percent of Canada's small and medium-sized businesses are having difficulty hiring new employees.

According to Government of Ontario labour market and information statistics, there are significant retail sector job openings projected for 2017 to 2021. This includes more than 20,000 job openings for retail salespeople and wholesale trade managers. Plus, up to 15,000 job openings for retail sales supervisors.