

# Integrating Foreign Workers

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# Presentation outline

- What do foreign workers need to learn in order to integrate into Canadian organizations?
- How do we bridge the gap?

# What is the issue?

- The issue is  
**cultural / group differences.**
- Foreign workers try to get their work done thinking that Canada operates according to the same unwritten rules as their home country.
- When they come from countries that are very different from Canada, this approach does not produce the expected results because of cultural differences.

# Cultural Differences in the Workplace

*Dress code, Org chart, Office layout, Presentations*

*Concept and use of time, time consciousness*

*Communication: Negotiation, persuasion, feedback*

*Relationships between men and women*

*Education, approach to problem solving*

*Manager / partner - employee relationships*

*Giving and receiving feedback, teamwork*

*Career management*

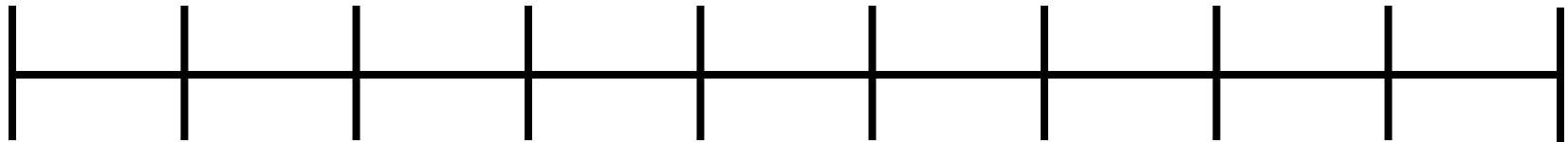
*and many more....*

# What is the issue?

**I prefer working for managers who**

**give me enough freedom  
so that I can determine the  
best direction for myself**

**give me clear directions  
so that I know what  
they want me to do.**

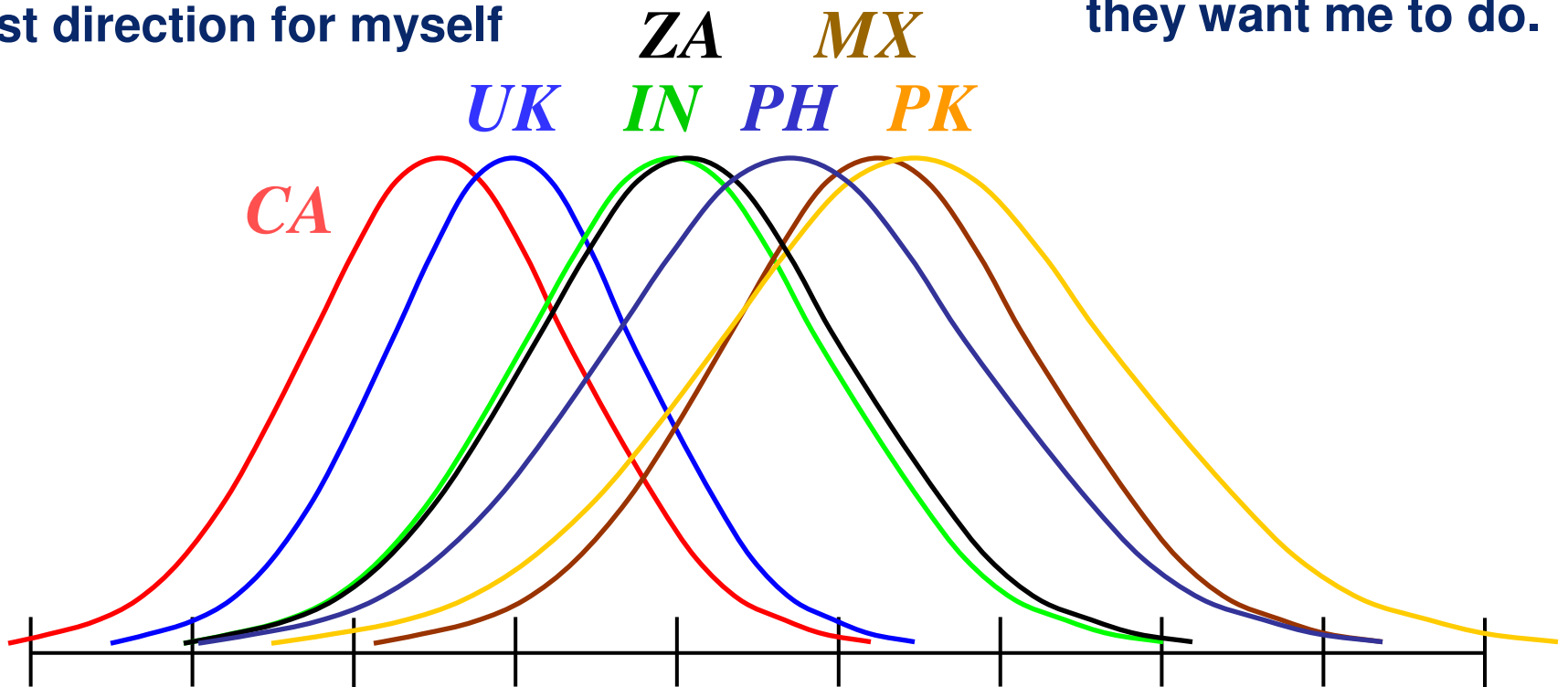


# The real issue

I prefer working for managers who

give me enough freedom  
so that I can determine the  
best direction for myself

give me clear directions  
so that I know what  
they want me to do.



# What do immigrants need to learn?

Foreign workers need to learn:

- How to “canadianize” their technical skills
- How to “canadianize” their soft skills
- How to deal with culture shock
- How their life partners can find a job

# What do immigrants need to learn?

Adapting their technical skills to Canadian labour market requirements:

- Learn Canadian-specific:
  - Software
  - Programming language
  - Drugs
  - Tax laws
  - Etc.

# What do immigrants need to learn?

Learning new soft skills:

- Communication skills: verbal and non-verbal
- Time management
- Writing reports / executive summaries
- Making public presentations
- Giving feedback
- Manager-employee relationship

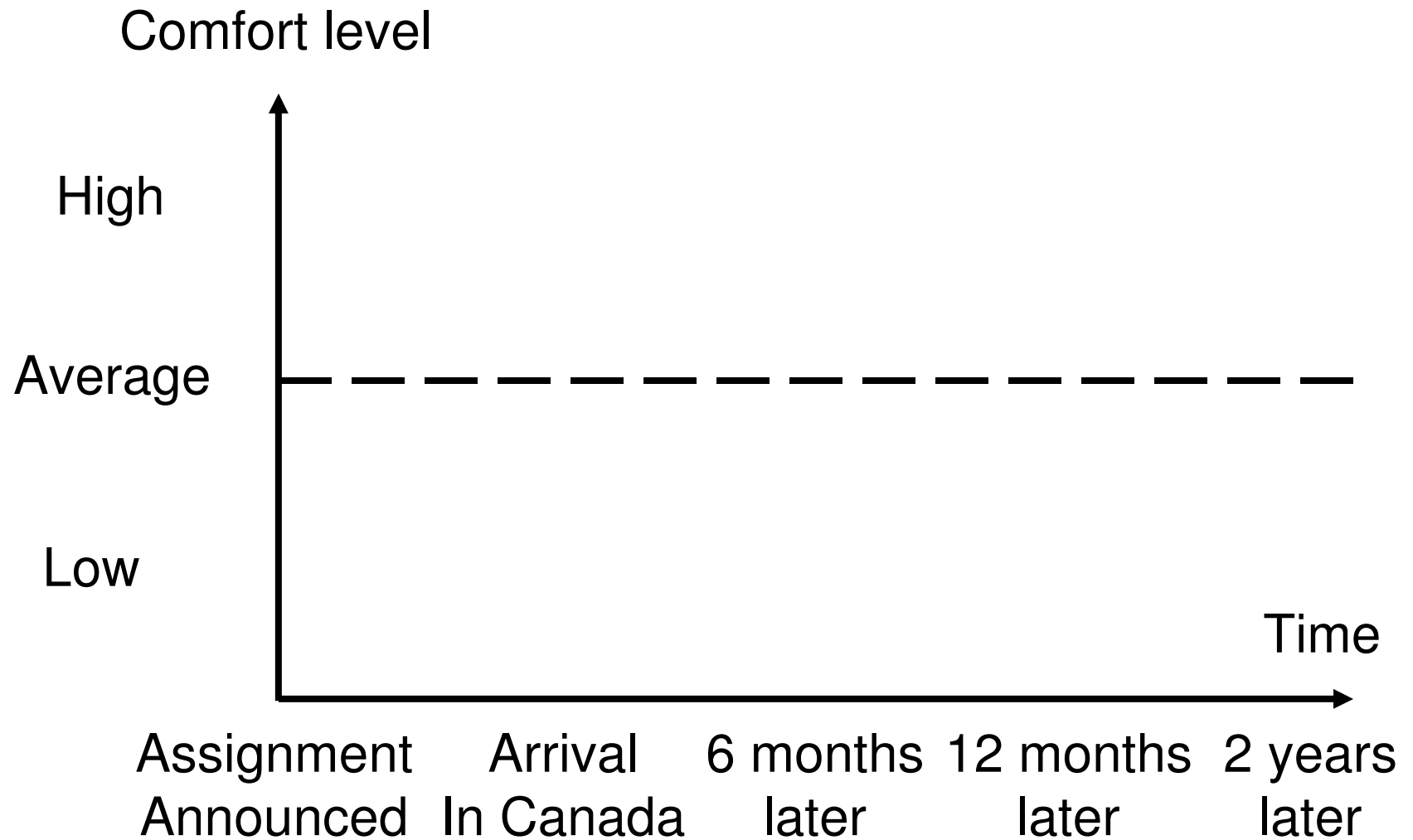
# What do immigrants need to learn?

Learning new soft skills:

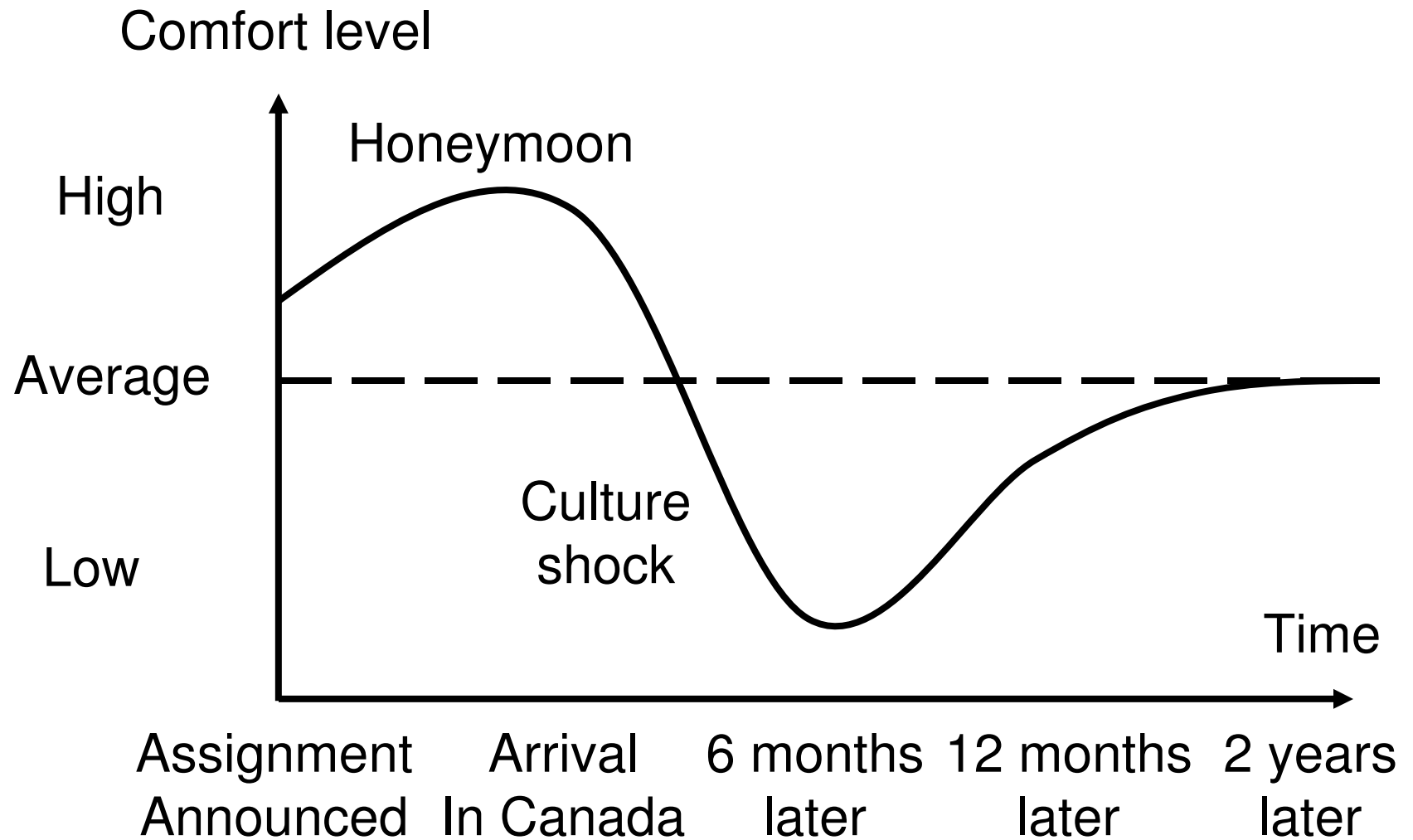
- Prioritization
- Team work
- Client relationship management
- Influencing people
- Networking
- Leadership

**Teaching them these skills is the hard part!**

# Dealing with culture shock



# Dealing with culture shock



# Helping life partners find jobs

Life partners often want to find a job that matches their skills and experience and face challenges at every step of the job search process:

- Resume writing
- Interviewing
- Probation period

# Bridging the gap

- In Canada, the responsibility for bridging the gap is shared 80/20
  - In the U.S., it is 90/10
  - in France and Germany, it is 99/1
  - In Japan, there are no foreign workers.  
Japanese do not expect outsiders to become Japanese
- Foreign workers need to make the first step;  
Canadians are happy to reciprocate

# Bridging the gap

- Compare two professional service firms that are both trying hard to attract diverse people, both in Canada and overseas:
  - A is trying to create an inclusive environment by focusing the majority of its efforts on its employees
  - B is trying to help its new hires understand and adapt to its current workforce by focusing the majority of its efforts on new hires

# Bridging the gap

- B is getting better results than A:
  - A significant fraction of A's employees respond negatively to the efforts of the organization
  - Many people hired by A think that they do not need to adapt to the organization
  - The failure rate of foreign workers is higher in A than in B
  - The number of international new hires was higher in B than in A

# Bridging the gap

- 80% of the organization's efforts to bridge the gap should be focused on helping foreign workers integrate
- 20% should be focused on helping employees understand the challenges of foreign workers and help them integrate
- Work on foreign workers first, employees second
- Focus on managers just above the glass ceiling

# Bridging the gap

- One approach that lead to significant success in one organization consists in a combination of several action steps:
  - Use of tools that help specific audiences understand the impact of cultural differences
  - Mandatory group training for foreign workers
  - Buddy system
  - Cross-cultural coaching

# Bridging the gap

- Cross-cultural training for all HR professionals, particularly those involved in recruiting
- Shorter, targeted training and coaching sessions for middle and senior managers delivered on demand (pull rather than push)
- Career management coaching and training for foreign workers delivered on demand (pull rather than push)

# Conclusions

- Foreign workers don't just look different or speak a different language, they think differently and have different values.
- Cultural differences create both challenges and opportunities.
- The challenges come first!
- If your organization brings foreign workers in positions where they supervise Canadian employees or interact with Canadian clients, you may consider preparing them.