

## **How Accessible Recruiting Helped ROCKWOOL Succeed**

One of the key functions of any successful business is keeping up with demand. And when products are in very high demand, it's often time to boost production and hire more staff. But finding and bringing on new talent that will excel at your company isn't always straightforward – just ask ROCKWOOL.

The company is a global manufacturer of stone wool insulation. The manufacturing sector is a major economic driver for Ontario's economy. It makes up roughly 12 percent of provincial GDP and supports about 30 percent of Ontario's economic activity. But, like so many other manufacturing sector leaders, ROCKWOOL has faced the common business challenge of labour shortages.

In 2016, demand for ROCKWOOL's product grew dramatically — normally a manufacturer's dream situation. But ROCKWOOL faced a serious problem. It was having a very hard time finding the right employees to work at its plant in Milton, Ontario. Efforts to bring on new talent to help increase production fell flat.

### **Making small recruitment revisions was a huge help**

Then, the company took a new approach to recruitment. After teaming up with the Ontario Disability Employment Network and the Bob Rumball Canadian Centre of Excellence for the Deaf, ROCKWOOL made a few changes to make its hiring practices more accessible. ROCKWOOL staff did some practical orientation and training, made interviews accessible with ASL interpreters and job coaches, and extended their training period to allow for more on-the-floor learning to ensure successful onboarding.

By learning more about people with disabilities who are looking for work, the company tapped into a skilled and dedicated labour force.

The result? The company held interviews with candidates from the Deaf community and ended up hiring six new staff for its Milton location. The plant made some low-cost changes to become more accessible. For example, it installed mirrors in several places so that Deaf workers can see each other and use sign language to communicate. Beyond helping the new employees, this change also improved visibility and safety for all of the employees in this noisy plant.

### **Accessibility is good for business**

The company's new employees have shown great skills, attitudes, and commitment to their jobs.

The company's Milton plant has also benefited in another important way. Many ROCKWOOL staff are now keen to learn sign language and to make their workplace more inclusive and accessible.

As production continues to grow, the company will likely need to hire more employees. Over the next two years, ROCKWOOL is committed to hiring more people with disabilities. Meanwhile, it continues to work with the Bob Rumball Canadian Centre of Excellence for the Deaf.

By changing its recruitment strategies, ROCKWOOL opened itself up to a talented and often overlooked labour pool that has helped it become a more productive and diverse workplace. Bringing on talented new employees has helped the company boost its bottom line and satisfy the growing demand for its products. Now that's smart business!

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

Ontario's manufacturers are reporting labour and skills shortages. 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 manufacturing sector job openings projected for 2017 to 2021. For example, that means up to 7,000 positions for shippers and receivers, up to 5,000 positions for food and beverage processing labourers, and up to 4,000 positions for metal working and forging machine operators.