

# the employer CHALLENGE

A Human Resources Newsletter from Employer to Employer



Quality of Life  
CHALLENGE

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## Essential Skills definitions help improve work relationship

The sound of female laughter floats out the door at Baja Rosi's Consignment Cabana in Langford. Inside, two women dig through a box of rings adorned with huge, rectangular black and gold embellishments.

Playfully, Carolyn Barter gives Tara Ouellet a mock-punch, her knuckle heavy with the prizefighter-style ring. As they laugh again, it's clear the two are fast friends, but both readily admit their relationship hasn't always been easy.

Barter is Ouellet's employer, and a few months ago, neither one was sure if their professional relationship would continue.

"There was a growing friction between us and we couldn't see a way to address it," Barter says. For Ouellet, who has been at Baja Rosi's for a year and a half, workdays were becoming stressful and frustrating. Neither woman could pinpoint the problem, let alone solve it.

Barter knew they needed help. She turned to the Community Council's Álvaro Moreno to find out more about the SkillsPlus Project he had previously interviewed her about.

"Álvaro had told me about the definitions of the nine Essential Skills and I thought they might be helpful." For the first time, Barter had a way to define and explain the skill sets she requires of employees. "Instead of having this friction in my head, I now have a way of asking for what I need."

The Victoria READ Society's workplace educator Helen Thomas was also called in to show both women how they could use the Essential Skills definitions to create a plan to improve job performance.



Tara Ouellet (left) and Carolyn Barter enjoy working together at Baja Rosi's Consignment Cabana



## Employer Quote

"When I think of where we could have been sitting if we hadn't had this opportunity, I am just so grateful."

Carolyn Barter, Owner  
Baja Rosi's Consignment Cabana



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## For Employers

Who Works in Victoria's  
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[Click here](#) to read the first in a series of four socio-economic reports prepared by SkillsPlus.

Canada to 2058: Projections of Demographic Growth & Change for Canada and its Regions.

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BC Asset Building Collaborative (BC ABC) supports and encourages low income earners, and others in poverty, to accumulate, develop, and preserve all types of assets through asset building programs delivered through local community service agencies.

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provides information about the labour market for job seekers, employers, education and training providers and organizations delivering employment programs and services.

"After I spoke to both Tara and Carolyn, it became clear that we needed to concentrate on the Essential Skills of communication, problem solving, and working with others," Thomas says.

Barter likens the experience to job counseling, with Thomas acting as a go-between, meeting with the two separately during regular work hours at a nearby coffee shop. "Helen facilitated the relationship between us and completely clarified the issues," she says. Barter will be able to use the knowledge to help retain her other six employees as well. "The business grew so quickly that I didn't have a plan to manage my employees."

Thomas also helped Ouellet with the store's computer system so that she can now navigate her own way through. "When I had a line-up of customers, I wasn't concerned with learning the steps because I just wanted to move people along," Ouellet says.

Today, both women feel their working relationship is only going to get better. "When I think of where we could have been sitting if we hadn't had this opportunity, I am just so grateful. It's tremendous that this resource was available to us at no cost, Barter says. "Now we have so much fun together."

Local and international research shows that addressing Essential Skills in the workforce helps both businesses and employees. Training helps manage change, retain promising employees, and improve productivity and safety.

SkillsPlus training is offered by the Victoria READ Society and the Community Council, with funding through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement (LMA) for small business in the Capital Region with less than 50 employees. Currently seven businesses in the retail/wholesale/grocery and tourism/hospitality sectors have signed up and others are on a waitlist.

Employers can find more workplace learning tips, tools and resources on READ's website at [www.readsociety.bc.ca/workplace.htm](http://www.readsociety.bc.ca/workplace.htm) and through the Community Council, <http://www.qolchallenge.ca/resources/skillsplus.php>.

*We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development as provided by the Canada - British Columbia Labour Market Agreement.*



#### [HR Toolkit](#)

for the non-profit and voluntary sector

READ Society's research on workplace learning is available: [Bridging Employer and Employee Needs in BC's Capital Region: Phase I Report & Literature Review and Bibliography](#)

#### [Ten Ways to Keep and Attract Your Staff](#)

Successful hiring and retention strategies of 10 employers of choice in BC's Capital Region.

For more **HR options** and local business examples, read the [HR Options for Action booklet](#).

#### [Addition, Recovery and the Workplace: an employer information guide](#)

A guide to employing individuals in recovery from addictions



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### **Ten Ways to Keep and Attract Staff - #3**

#### **"No resume required"**

At the heart of Value Village's success in attracting and retaining employees - especially those with many barriers to employment - lie a number of innovative strategies.

A banner hangs outside the store inviting people to apply for positions - no resumes required. Inside the store there is a table where people can apply for jobs on the spot.

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