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EMPLOYER FEEDBACK CHANNEL

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Checking for Understanding the Supportive Way

Checking for job understanding with newcomer hires requires **shifting from an "evaluation" mindset to a partnership mindset**. Newcomers often face immense pressure to navigate cultural differences in the Canadian workplace, which can lead to hiding a lack of understanding to avoid appearing incompetent.

Building a Safe and Supportive Work Environment

1. **Normalize Misunderstandings:** Explicitly state that your organization expects people to ask questions. Reframe questions so that any lack of clarity is your responsibility as the trainer.

   For example: Instead of "Did that make sense?" say, "I want to make sure I gave you clear instructions. What parts should we review together?"

2. **Teach-Back Method:** Instead of putting a new hire on the spot, ask them to guide you through the process as a collaborative exercise. Have them walk you through a task you just taught them.

   For example: "To confirm we both have the same understanding, can you walk me through the first three steps you're going to take with this project?"

3. **Multi-Modal Communication:** Don't rely solely on spoken instructions, as processing a new job in a non-native language can be exhausting for new hires.

   For example: Provide a living document for bulleted summaries after training sessions or encourage visual tracking through software like Trello or Asana.

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Implement a Buddy System: Pairing a newcomer hire with a non-management peer or workplace buddy who has no influence over their performance review can reduce intimidation around asking for clarification.

For example: Define the buddy's role and establish clear boundaries and time caps to emphasize that the buddy is a cultural and navigational guide rather than a substitute manager or technical trainer.

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Establish Predictable Check-Ins: If you pull a newcomer into a room randomly to ask how things are going, their immediate assumption may be that they are in trouble. Instead, schedule a daily 10-minute check-in at the end of the day, and gauge understanding using a scale to lower the barrier to vulnerability.

For example: "On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'I don't understand' and 5 being 'I could do this while sleeping,' where do you feel you are with the new software?"

Sources: online.hbs.edu/blog/post/psychological-safety-in-the-workplace | *factorial.com/blog/buddy-system/* | *www.aihr.com/blog/buddy-system-at-work/*

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