

# Hire a Worker program a great recruitment tool for Ventana Construction



When labour shortages during the pandemic made finding the right workers challenging, it meant Justin Leisle, director of health, safety, environment, and quality at Ventana Construction had to explore other recruitment options. He reached out to a WorkSafeBC contact for ideas, and that's when he discovered the Hire a Worker program.

WorkSafeBC's Hire a Worker is a free service designed to help B.C. employers overcome recruitment challenges by matching them with experienced workers who have recovered from a workplace injury and are ready to return to the workforce.

Justin was connected with Shirley Caldwell, one of the job developer and employment specialists on the Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) team, who explained how the program worked and the roles of everyone involved.

## Looking beyond your industry

Since Ventana started participating in the program in the Spring of 2020, they've hired four workers: three are site health, safety, and environment coordinators and one is a manager in the equipment division. Even though the workers didn't have much experience working in the construction industry before coming to Ventana, Justin says that, with instruction, training, and supervision, they've come to be very effective in their roles.

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**Justin Leisle**  
director of health, safety, environment,  
and quality at Ventana Construction

“Sometimes workers have all the technical skills but they’re not the right fit with the team or the company’s approach,” says Justin. He adds that one of the most unique aspects of the program is having the opportunity to hire individuals who come from entirely different industries and have skills they would never have thought would be transferable to a construction site.

“Another key part is that the workers we’ve hired through the program are very eager to return to work and motivated to learn,” he says. “We’ve found we get much better employees when we hire people that have the right attitude, and then develop their technical skills through training.”

## Thinking about the why — not just the how

As it was new for Ventana to hire people that didn’t have any direct previous experience, Justin says they had to re-evaluate how they approached orientating and training new workers.

“It was eye-opening for us to realize how big the gap was between what we assumed people knew about coming to work on a construction site and how much they actually knew,” he says.

“They would ask why we did things a certain way and it would sometimes completely stump us. But then it occurred to us that other workers with more experience than them probably have the same questions but just don’t ask them.”

The questions have been so valuable that Justin has included many of them in their monthly team meetings and is incorporating them into an accelerated development program he’s working on to help with training future new workers.

## Another smart way to recruit

For Justin, the Hire a Worker program has turned out to be a great option to add to Ventana’s recruitment strategies. He especially appreciates that the program pairs him with a job developer and employer specialist from the VRS team who has been incredibly helpful with the hiring and onboarding process.

Shirley walked him through the support WorkSafeBC would provide, from subsidizing workers’ wages and training to assisting with developing on-the-job new worker orientation and training plans. In addition, Shirley communicates regularly throughout the process with both Justin and each new hire to see how they are adjusting.

Looking ahead, Justin has no doubts Ventana will continue using the Hire a Worker program to supplement its recruitment efforts. It’s been a worthwhile investment that benefits both the company and the workers they hire.



“We get access to a pool of workers we wouldn’t otherwise reach, which allows us to hire good people who are driven and excited to work and learn. These individuals get the opportunity to start a new — and hopefully, lifelong — career with us.”

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