

# Skilled Migrant Integration into Local Organizations: Focus on Small & Medium Employers

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# Agenda:

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Research up to date:

## **Migrant Career Transitions:**

Individual challenges -> to Organizational Integration

- Highlights from the SME study: Preliminary results
- Some practical suggestions based on research

# Brief Summary of Research Findings since ~2010:



# Individual vs. Employer Perspective:



Migrant Career Experiences: Lack of local social networks, settlement/career challenges, feeling lack of belongingness and losing status/career downshifting



But what can Employers/Society/Cities Do?



SME challenges & practical tips

Society/City: Integration success -> early migration experiences & Systemic Approach to Integration

(Zikic & Voloshyna, 2023)

# Examples of Relevant PAPERS:

- Zikic J. & Voloshyna, V. (2023). Untangling space and career action: Migrant career recontextualization in the host city. *Academy of Management Discoveries*.
- Usanova, K., Zikic, J., Vaiman, V. (2023). Being an “outsider in”: Skilled migrants’ career strategies in local organizations. *Journal of Global Mobility*.
- Zikic, J. & Klehe, U. (2021). Going against the grain: The role of skilled migrants' self-regulation in finding quality employment. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 42(8), 1023-1041.
- Hajro, A., Caprar, D. V., Zikic, J., & Stahl, G. K. (2021). Global migrants: Understanding the implications for international business and management. *Journal of World Business*, 56(2),
- Zikic, J. & Richardson, J. (2016). What happens when you can't be who you are: Professional identity at the institutional periphery. *Human Relations*, 69(1), 139-168.
- Zikic, J. (2015). Skilled Migrants Career Capital as a Source of Competitive Advantage: Implications for Strategic HRM, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26(10), 1360-1381.
- Zikic, J., Bonache, J., & Cerdin J.L. (2010). Crossing national boundaries: A typology of qualified immigrants’ career orientations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31(5), 667-686.

# What do we know about integration into local organizations?

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- **Larger Employers** (i.e., banks) typically have more resources, more developed DEI practices; as well as more experience with diversity management (Banerjee et al., Oreopoulous, 2018).

## *WHY FOCUS ON SMEs?*

- SMEs employ 8.2 million individuals in Canada (Ravanera & Kaplan, 2019).
- Less resources to focus on elaborate HRM practices
- Easily affected by changes in the labour market/economy
- Focus on innovation; geographic location matters; small teams, different power structure, owner/founder decides often.



# Business Case for Diversity:

## **Classic Business Case for Diversity:**

- Changing composition of the labour market and a diversified customer base (Konrad 2003, Prasad & Mills 1997).
- Diverse groups outperform homogeneous groups in solving complex problems and in creative tasks.

***"Diversity isn't just fair; it makes business sense"***  
(Thomas & Ely, 1996)

## **New/Desired Approach:**

- Increasing diversity ('add diversity & stir approach'), by itself, does not increase effectiveness
- Maximizing shareholder returns is no longer the main goal

***"What matters is how an organization harnesses diversity, and whether they are willing to reshape its traditional power structure."*** (Thomas & Ely, 2020)

# The Current Study: Qualitative Approach

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**How do SMEs in our region (Toronto/York) understand, manage, and potentially leverage human capital diversity?**

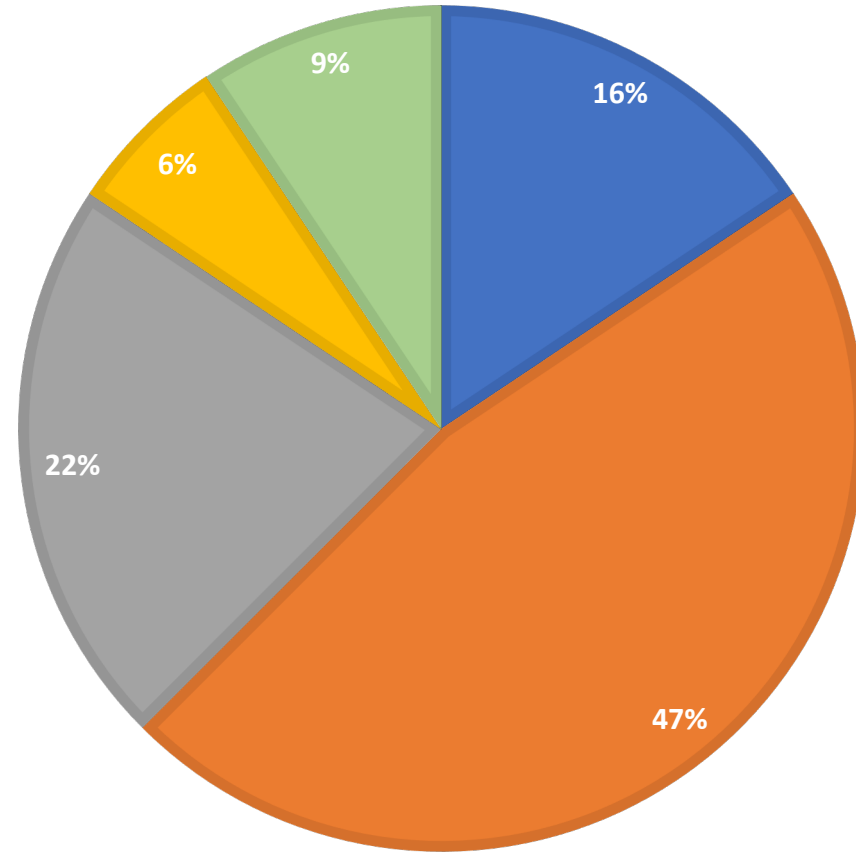
## **Methods**

- 32 Employers - semi-structured one-hour interviews
- Participants: HR or Organizational Leaders; Health, Manufacturing, and IT sector in the Toronto/GTA region.
- We utilize grounded theory principles (Corbin & Strauss) and proceed in three stages (open, axial, and selective coding).
- Comparative method: going back and forth between interviews and the literature.



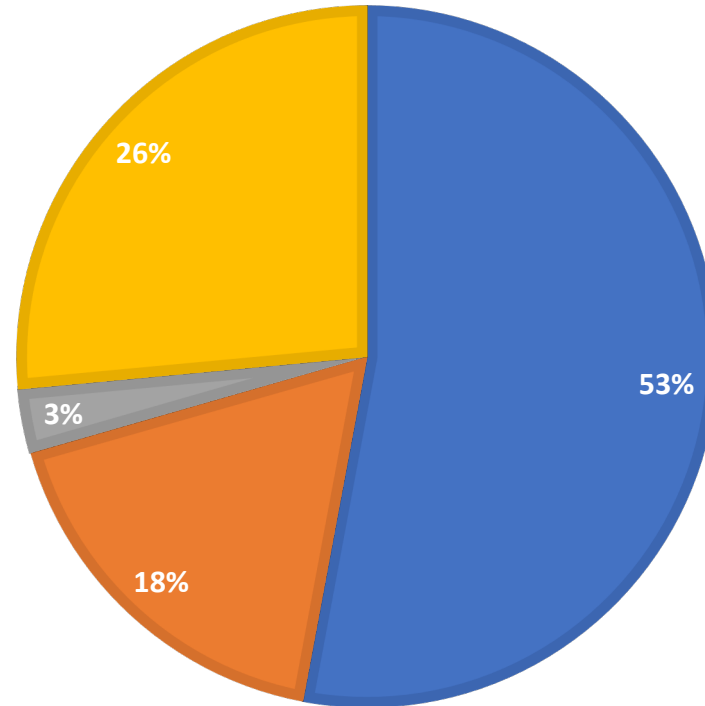
# INDUSTRY

■ Manufacturing ■ IT ■ Health ■ Retail ■ Other



## POSITION

■ HR Role   ■ VP/Director/President/CEO non HR   ■ Snr Business Analyst   ■ Owner/Founder

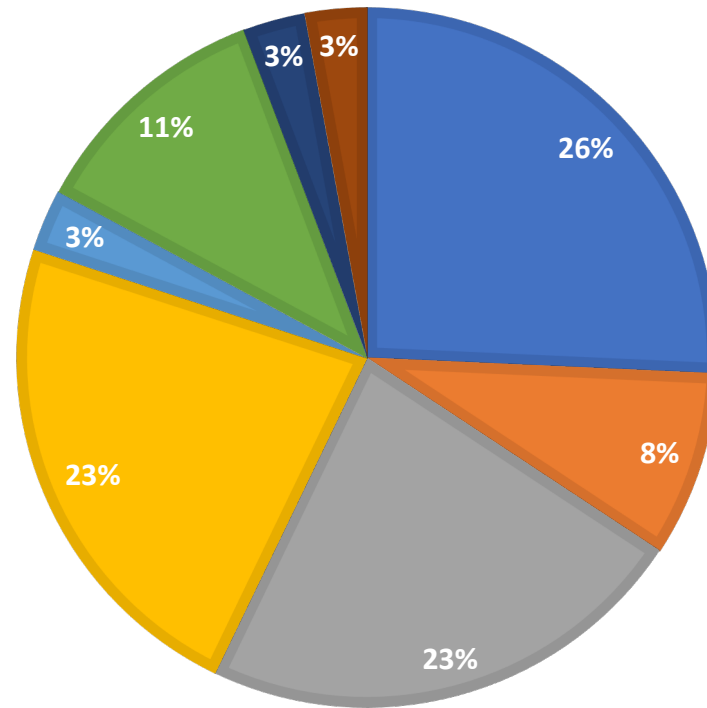


### Note:

- HR roles include different levels, including directors. HR classification assumes their role is **only** HR-related. The VP/director/president/CEO classification is broader and includes other roles.

## COMPANY SIZE

■ 0-10 ee's 
 ■ 11-25 ee's 
 ■ 26-50 ee's 
 ■ 51-100 ee's 
 ■ 101-200 ee's 
 ■ 201-300 ee's 
 ■ 301-400 ee's 
 ■ 401-500 ee's 
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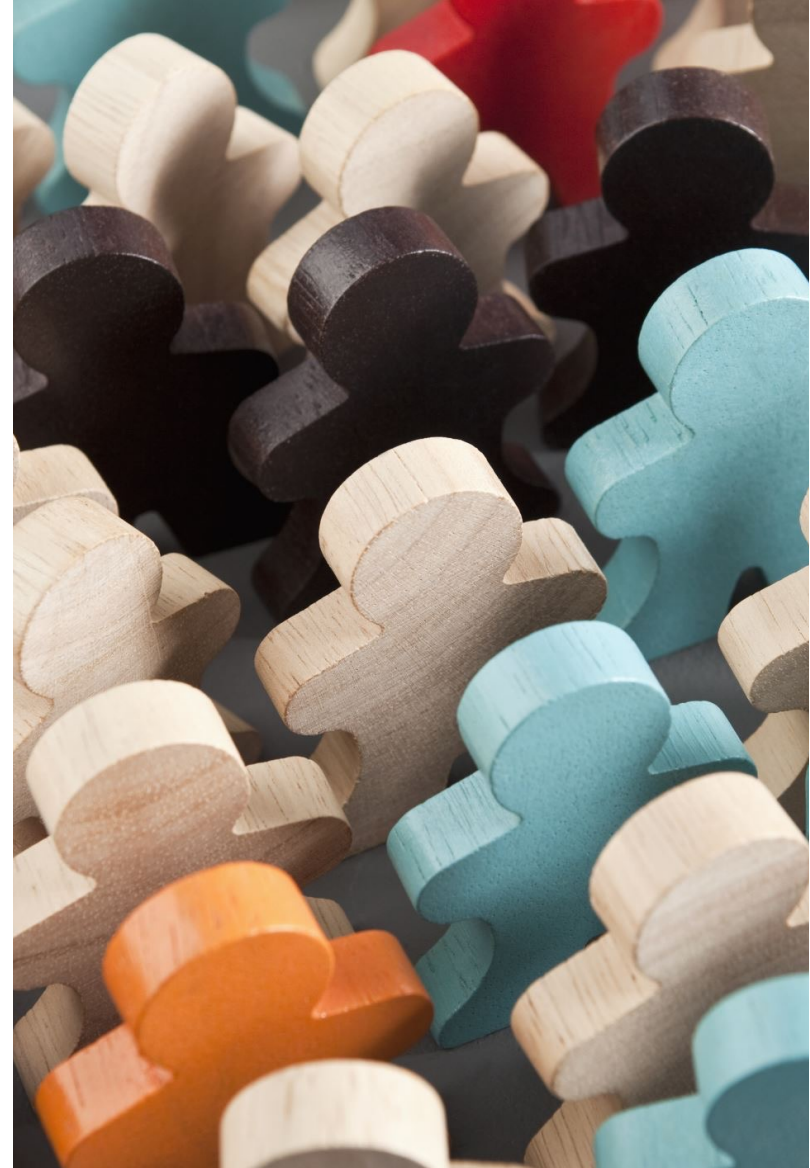
# Group 1: Intuitive Diversity Work

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- No formal DIE policies or procedures
- Their understanding of diversity was more at a symbolic level and focused on promoting social activities such as potluck events that they believed were a good way to connect and bond employees.
- ‘Naturally diverse’ based on location

*‘our managers are just very green in terms of dealing with HR related things’*

- They practice diversity more through material artefacts, such as food/music and intuitive logic.



# Findings Group 1:



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## Quotes

### **Context Makes us Diverse**

“My honest answer is we don't need to ... partially because the ownership is visibly a minority... The second thing is that we're in Scarborough, so we're a very diverse part of the city. So naturally when we hire, the applicant pool is diverse, automatically, already.”  
- P2

### **Diversity Just Happens**

“We've never had to put a focus on it. It's just happened.” – P9

### **Not Part of Our Strategy**

“It's not part of our strategy.” – P2

### **Confront Issues When They Arise**

“Certain employees didn't want to work with other employees who didn't speak the same language as them...we would look at the situation and say, okay, perhaps we should go and do a 30-minute meeting with the employees, just talking about the importance of diversity...” – P7

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# Group II: Hybrid Diversity Work

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- Able to describe more specific ways in which their organizations showed more intentional concern for diversity and migrant employees specifically.
- Yet, they seemed to oscillate between deliberate and conscious monitoring of their DEI initiatives and spontaneous management of diversity.



# Findings Group II

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*We are very much open to and have set out goals to make sure that we're understanding the make-up of our team. We've done a lot of investment in understanding and learning it, including diversity, getting their survey, getting them to give us some great qualitative feedback. And then from that, we're able to focus on specific goals that were identified as problem areas (LB, Hybrid group)*

# Group III: Intentional Diversity Work

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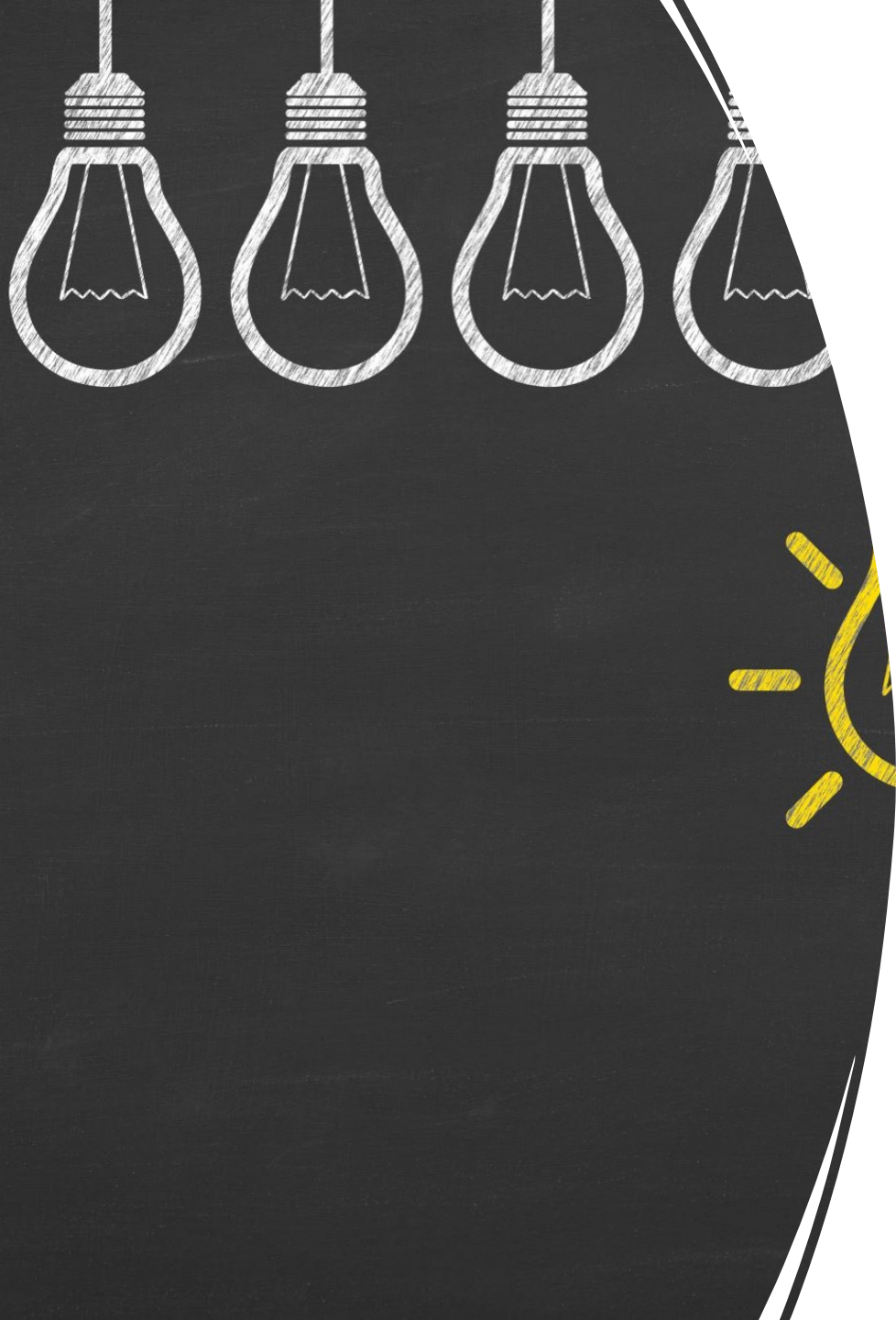
- They seemed to be employing DEI initiatives as part of their overall business strategy (small cluster of organizations)
- They used HR practices and tried to involve employees/migrants into a mutual conversation about HR initiatives that may help them to integrate (socializing practices for example).
- They actively respond to diversity challenges by showing that they are ready to modify DEI initiatives approaches according to changes and or the needs identified in the Canadian labor market.





# Findings Group III:

- *We drafted our first EDI framework and within that framework is also to either update or add relevant procedures and policies, so they aren't so rudimentary right now because a lot of HR ones are very standard when it comes to inclusivity and diversity.*
- *So, for instance, we just hired a new social worker and one of the things they had to do in the first week was meet every single person in the department and have a one on one and say, “Hey, here's what I do, here's how we work together. And then also to help socialize staff and volunteers together, we also offer all kinds of community interest and wellness focused sessions and professional development. And all staff and volunteers are invited to those. When the volunteer department offers them, staff are allowed to join as well. (AM, Intentional group)*



# Overall Observations:

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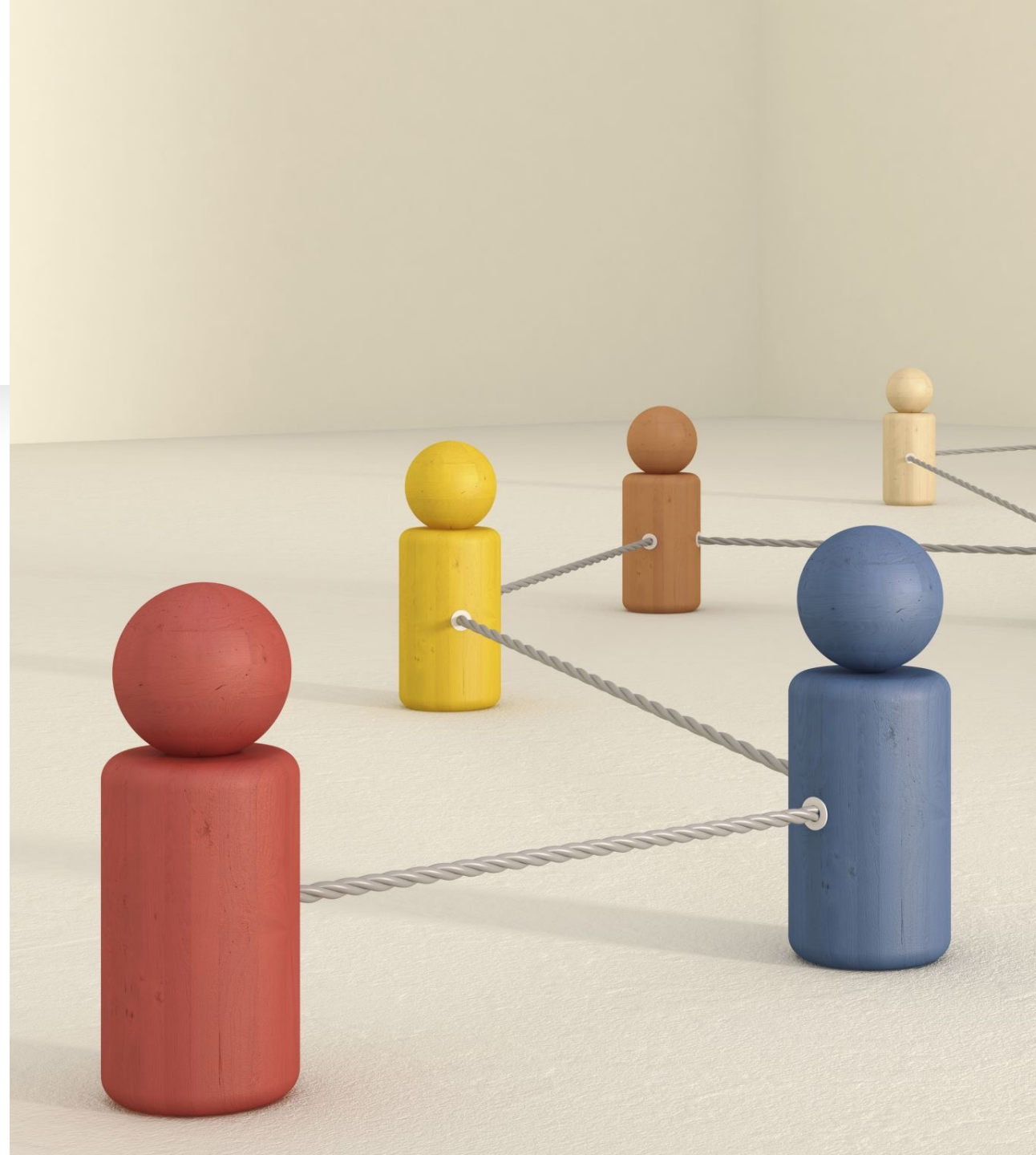
- Strong communication skills are key source of influence in all SMEs, they ensure positions of power/growth (i.e., English communication skills relevant to the Canadian context; other highlight mandated 'corporate language' (i.e., technical skills, etc.)).
- Employee prototypes identified at varying levels within SMEs, impacting hiring and promotion decision. Progressive firms enact deliberate diversity, which aims to deemphasize prototypicality, while conservative firms enact a laissez-faire diversity approach, maintaining the status quo.

# Practical Steps:

- SMEs to establish policies that combat the enduring perspectives and prototypes so that skilled migrants' unique skills and abilities can be fully recognized in the process of hiring & selection.
- Ask for a 'sample of work' (to address some communication challenges)
- Revisit referral procedures
- Actively involve local employees in conversations about Integration (i.e., opportunities to experience 'migrant diversity' 1<sup>st</sup> hand – mentoring/volunteering)
- Focus on building & evaluating communication skills of ALL employees
- Build close partnerships with immigrant settlement sector

# Focus on Relational Integration:

- Relational understanding of Integration (avoid us vs. them)
- Integration needs to focus on the relationships between people, not about individuals
- Integration is closely tied to the established power relations between insiders and outsiders, who are both intrinsically part of the process
- Role, structure and openness of the receiving society-  
> Integration as a two-way process



# Thank you

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Dank U

Merci

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Köszi

спасибо

Grazie

Thank  
you

muruuru

Takk

Gracias

Dziękuję

Děkuju

danke

Kiitos