

BUSINESS

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SECTION D

Keep instructions simple for all your employees

In the 1990s and certainly continuing into the new millennium, we are experiencing an era of expansive immigration in this country. Many talented individuals running across all kinds of vocations are arriving daily, providing a source of talented people for employers.

The source at times is seemingly limitless. Skilled technicians and workers in many fields are now available, sometimes in profusion, willing to work and join the happy American masses with potentially wonderful futures.

This is advantageous for us as employers, and being phased into the American workforce is usually what these new arrivals welcome.

However, many of them may be highly educated in their skills but unfortunately may have a rather limited knowledge of English. As employers, it should be our responsibility to exercise caution when providing instructions to these new arrivals. We must be explicit and understanding, even if sometimes takes longer than we like for the message to get across.

We recently heard of an owner of a small company who hired a mathematician from the Pacific Rim. He was an extremely helpful and conscientious employee. The "boss" utilized his skills in many areas, sometime as an accountant and sometimes doing statistical reports — in many areas assignments



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not directly related to mathematics. One day the boss announced to his staff that he would be out of the office for the next couple of days. Before leaving, he gave his new hire an assignment involving the demographics of the county. As the owner was leaving, he announced, "I'm

going to hit the road." He added, "I want you to pull out all the stops! Leave no stone unturned!" And then he left.

During the next few hours, the new hire put his head down and did an excellent job on the project, but also was troubled. A secretary noticed his stress and asked what was the matter. He said that he was trying his best but was concerned at finding the stops, and worse still didn't know about stones.

The secretary advised him not to worry because the boss was "out in the field." At that point, he became really concerned.

The idiomatic phrases and collo-

quialism we use on a daily basis and take for granted can become insurmountable barriers to a new arrival, who has a hard enough time understanding even basic English. To avoid losing our valuable and talented newcomers, we must exercise extreme caution being oversimplistic sometimes when giving instructions to avoid confusion and to avoid creating a conflict of cultures and values.

Keep it plain and simple.

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