

## My Best Job in Canada

Where is the best place to work in Canada? According to Rachelle Brown it is Alma New Brunswick, population 300. Rachelle should know as she spent the last year travelling and working throughout most of Canada. Rachelle is from Sydney Australia and I met her on a flight to Los Angeles last week. She was on her way home to Australia to gather resources and renew her Canadian work visa so she could return back to Canada.

Why was Alma the best place she worked in Canada? "Because of my boss and my co-workers" expressed Rachelle very enthusiastically. "It was low pay, \$8 an hour, but I loved my boss and the small town environment. My boss Greg was very generous and kind and you felt like he really cared about you. He would treat everyone fairly and reward your work with both recognition and incentives. For example after a day of hard work he would invite everyone out back for refreshments and when he would go for supplies he would always bring something special for the staff".

The job was a cashier position in the general store that catered to campers visiting Fundy National Park. "My boss had realized that he could not make a living selling to the local community so he adjusted his inventory to serve the tourists to the park. This showed me he was a good businessman and gave me confidence in him," said Rachelle. "One of the managers had returned each of the last seven summers because he liked the boss so much".

Rachelle said everyone cared about doing a good job because they liked the boss and wanted to please him and help the business. This was a big contrast to her worst job which was selling lift tickets at a ski resort in Lake Louise.

According to Rachelle, the workers there seemed very transient, many from outside of Canada, and were mostly interested in partying after work. Even so, "the managers did make a difference. One manager was very moody and sarcastic. She wasn't liked by staff because of this and because she was unfair with providing rewards. She chose her favourites and thus staff did not trust her and spoke poorly of her amongst each other. When someone made a mistake she would get angry and scold the person, but would not take the time to retrain them properly, so they would continue the errors and the cycle of reprimanding. Another supervisor under this manager was kinder and acted with fairness. She did not show any favouritism and was liked and trusted by staff."

This job paid the same as the one in Alma but that one was much more memorable and rewarding. "The director of the resort in Lake Louise would pass near our work area everyday but would never acknowledge us or say hello. This felt really strange in comparison to a director from Calgary who would visit once a week and would make sure to stop by and greet us. He would always make an effort to remember and use your name when conversing with you," remembered Rachelle.

She also worked for a time as a server at a restaurant in the Northwest Territories that was owned and operated by two couples. Each couple worked their shifts together and both had opposing work and management styles. One couple were hard working and task driven but would often complain to the staff about how lazy the other couple were. This made the staff feel uncomfortable and torn between whom to form allegiances to. Rachelle felt it created a more tense work environment, which caused staff to feel uncomfortable.

So what can we learn from Rachelle's travel and work experiences in Canada? One thing for sure is that if you want your employees to be motivated and committed you need to show you care about them and are there to support them. In Alma, Rachelle's boss Greg and his managers did this every day. Rachelle told me that Greg and his managers would

regularly check in to see how they were doing and ask if they needed anything. Because Greg showed he cared about his staff, they in turn cared about Greg and his business.

This was not the case in Lake Louise where managers themselves lacked commitment and displayed poor management skills. It seemed like the general management attitude was that people came and went so why treat them well. This type of thinking usually starts at the top and works its way down the organization. Of course there were a couple of exceptions there and Rachelle was quite aware of the impact the good and poor managers had on the attitude of the employees.

Rachelle's experience in the Northwest Territories shows the importance of unified management and shared values, especially at the top. Because the two couple owners had contrasting work ethics this caused a riff between them and posed a problem for staff morale.

Finally, pay is not what makes for a great job. Rachelle's highest paid position was in Calgary where she earned \$14 an hour. But when I asked her where her best job was there was no hesitation in pointing out Alma and her boss Greg.

One last comment from Rachelle: Canada does not pay well at all compared to Australia. Her advice? Pay better and treat employees like you care about them, while providing the training and support they need to do the job as expected.

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