

Case study | Calgary International Airport (YYC), AB

Carrying out a mass recruiting plan to meet CATSA's expansion requirements

Large projects often require the onboarding of many new personnel and training existing employees in new procedures and technologies. On October 31, the Calgary International Airport, designated YYC, opened a second terminal, adding over two million square feet to Canada's fourth largest airport.

For GardaWorld, this expansion project created a massive need to recruit pre-board screening officers, managers and supervisors as growth needs were forecasted at 200 new hires, reflecting a 26% growth rate. A new terminal also brought new technology and operational concepts, demanding large scale training for existing and new employees. To do so, the team addressed three main challenges.

1- Educating the public about GardaWorld Aviation Services

Many people presume that all GardaWorld employees fall into our Protective Services or Cash Services business lines and that employment has prerequisites such as security training and the ability to handle a firearm. However, this is in fact not the case. More than 3,500 GardaWorld Aviation Services employees, under a contract with the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CASTA), protect passengers' safety by ensuring effective and efficient security screening of passengers and their belongings in 28 Canadian airports. As such, our Aviation Services search for candidates who can operate hi-tech screening devices (e.g., x-ray, walk-through metal detector, etc.), conduct physical searches, report and escalate incidents. Ideal candidates also possess customer service skills, an eagerness to learn, and the ability to engage the public.

A collection of potential applicants believe pre-screening positions are entry-level jobs with no room for advancement. On the contrary, many Aviation Services employees develop long-term career paths by taking advantage of continuous training opportunities and demonstrating dedication to the job at hand. Another collective belief was that the pre-board screening officer position required extensive prerequisites while all training is provided to all talented individuals who have demonstrated and exemplified an interest in customer service.

2- Attracting the right talent within a limited time span

The biggest challenge was finding a sufficient pool of qualified staff. GardaWorld required an additional 200 people for the new YYC terminal, increasing the number of pre-boarding employees by 26%. Finding these candidates presented various challenges. For example, there are strict minimum requirements for these types of positions, therefore processing large numbers of candidates is a necessity and the target was set to garner over 16,000 new applicants.

The most significant employment prerequisite is that Transport Canada must issue a transportation security clearance to an applicant before he or she is hired. Gaining this clearance is a three-month process and many applicants simply cannot wait that long to accept a job.

3- Providing customized training suited to the new scope of work

Because pre-board screening officers require specific customized training and certification, the number of qualified instructors was nearly tripled to provide timely sessions. However, instructors are necessary for more than merely onboarding new recruits. The new terminal brought with it cutting-edge technology that all screening officers will be trained on in the weeks and months that followed. Of note is CATSA Plus, a collection of equipment and procedures allowing multiple passengers to display belongings at once, speeding up process times without compromising security levels. Calgary is the first airport to deploy a complete CATSA Plus checkpoint; after it was originally tested at Montréal-Trudeau airport.

Deploying a mass recruiting campaign in Alberta

To address the issues above, marketing programs were considerably expanded to adequately communicate the need for pre-board screening officers based on what the position entailed. Campaigns were run over social media, targeting younger potential applicants. Benefits were summarized to dissuade the notion of this being an entry level position, and various advertisements were linked to [an educational video](#) highlighting a focus on customer care and expert use of the specialized equipment. Visuals were adapted to tackle the instinctual notion of security related pre-requisites and were transformed to truly reflect the airport and customer services dynamics.

These efforts worked almost too well. Over 2,000 people showed up for a one-day recruitment event, well over the 600-700 expected turnout. Recruiters were forced to turn some people away and encourage them to apply via our online sources. Additionally, over 8,000 new applicants applied in a 60-day period and the desired target of 16,000 new applicants was achieved in a 6-month period. The local recruiting team in Calgary was temporarily expanded to ensure that applicants were then processed in a timely and efficient manner.

GardaWorld met CATSA's deadlines thanks to a thorough plan and strong team effort addressing both the contract's needs and challenges. Through mass media advertising, GardaWorld conveyed the most important information concerning the positions.

Renewed trust and a consolidated partnership

Initial feedback from both passengers and employees has been exceedingly positive. New technology and procedures have been brought together with highly-trained screening officers to improve customer service, passenger flow and enhance security. The continuous partnership between GardaWorld and CATSA aims to constantly improve customer experience across 28 Canadian airports.

To learn more about our services, contact your regional airport security expert:

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