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Training People, Inspiring Growth

Be the Change You Want to See!

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It's not business as usual.

Successful, growing organizations understand and respect that their most important asset is intellectual capital. Talent management is an integrative process that focuses on best-in-class recruitment and retention strategies

including selection, orientation, training, performance management, career development, and succession planning. With increasing pressures to maximize productivity, deliver superior products and services, and minimize cost, getting the right people in the right seats of the bus and ensuring they always have a "full tank" is a priority for managers.

Recruitment isn't about getting the best people in the company. It's about getting the right people! The first step is to know what to look for in a candidate. This requires a clear understanding of the vision, mission, and purpose of the organization. What are the core values? Southwest Airline's culture is about fun and creating a positive customer experience. They look for candidates whose personal values align with the Southwest Way. As an example, if a pilot interviewing for a job can't engage in a fun exercise of putting on some funky brown polyester shorts (and actually enjoy it), they will not continue on in the interviewing process.

Another key is to define the job in terms of talents (thinking, striving, relating, and impacting) and attitudes, not just skill, knowledge and experience. Most organizations believe that they can provide a new employee with the skills necessary to succeed in the role however they cannot change the person's personality. When an organization limits the interviewees to only those with significant knowledge and experience, they eliminate a large pool of potential candidates who have the right talents, just not the education or background. Who would you rather hire: someone with the right attitude, lacking experience or someone with all kinds of experience but the wrong attitude? By the way, most of the employees these new hires need to work with would rather have someone with the right attitude than a stellar work resume. I'll let you guess why!

Lastly, be in tune with what candidates are looking for in a workplace and make sure your organization can make the cut. While many job factors vary in importance to employees based on their age, position in life, and core values, the basic intrinsic motivators that affect job attitude remain the same:

achievement, recognition, work that allows people to do what they do best, responsibility, advancement and growth. Every employee wants to know that she is making a difference and that her contribution is valued by someone. When recruiting best-in-class talent, appeal to what is important to potential applicants without making false promises. Eddie Bauer has 82 different versions of its catalog depending on the target audience it is trying to capture. Think about it.

Here are some recruitment strategies that are working well for organizations in today's dynamic workplaces:

1. Conduct on-going interviewing not just when you have a job opening. If you only interview when you have a position open, you limit yourself to the people who apply during that time. You never know when you are going to find the right person. The Container Store constantly keeps in touch with people they would love to have working for them until a position becomes available.
2. Rewrite your job wanted ads to describe the talents needed in the position not just the education, work experience, and technical skills required. Appeal to the people who have those core talents and generate interest so they want to apply.
3. Internet blogging is an increasingly popular way to look for candidates. Best Buy's blog "tells the stories of what it's like to work at Best Buy, far beyond what a job description gives you. It's an opportunity to present the work environment in a real way." Blogs are a great way to connect with your audience, showing that you care and creating a sense of transparency in the dialogue.
4. Offer realistic job previews where candidates can experience what the job will really be like. Research from the Sarasota Institute shows that a key reason why employees leave is that the job, in reality, was not what it was represented to be. If an employee is going to have to wear a white suit in a controlled environment on third shift, put them in uniform, have them interview at 3 am and let them job shadow in the area, working with employees for 1-2 days. Starbucks uses a "virtual job try out" where elements of the job are re-created on-line to provide applicants visiting Starbucks' employment site with the opportunity to "test drive" that job. At the same time, the company can assess candidates' performance potential as they participate in simulations that mirror various elements of the job.
5. Respect and involve the spouse and family. New hires often leave a job because the spouse and family have been unable to happily make the transition to the new location and community. This is especially important with candidates with diverse cultural backgrounds and

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interests. Create support groups and challenge local civic leaders and establishments to become a “city of choice” where people want to live and bring their families.

6. Utilize internships and school-to-work programs to capture new talent coming out of technical and university programs. These opportunities give both the employer and the job candidate time to “check each other out.” Organizations already have a known commodity when they hire interns or volunteers in the work place.
7. Partner with other employers in the area. An applicant that is not right for you may be just what the colleague down the street is looking for. Consider how your organization can partner with other area businesses to share applicant information and make referrals.
8. Recruit and hire from within wherever possible. Doing so increases employee morale, recognizes great performance, and provides growth opportunities within the organization. Create a talent profile within the company and make it available to all managers, not just human resources. Be certain that all job openings are available to everyone, not just those in a particular department or division.
9. Utilize employee referrals which typically result in higher rates of recruitment and retention. Candidates recommended by employees tend to be better qualified and more prepared than others. Broadcast your employee referral program through company wide publications, department meetings, and frequently visited communication sites. Be sure the incentive or reward for recruiting on the company’s behalf is worth the effort. Remember, employee referral programs are the most cost-effective recruitment strategy so they are well worth the funding. Make it matter!

When you hire a great person, it is imperative that you keep him. Talent Keepers, a Florida based consulting firm focused on employee retention strategies, suggests that what attracts an employee to an organization (compensation, perks, benefits, job duties) is not what keeps an employee in the organization (relationship with direct manager, engagement, and job fulfillment.)

On-boarding is a critical employee retention strategy since most employees will delight in or regret their decision to change jobs or positions within a matter of days. Some basic on-boarding techniques include: be sure the direct manager is involved most of the first day on the job, alert current employees about the new hire so they can welcome her and include her in activities immediately, provide a photo of the group along with a letter saying how excited the group is about having the new person on board and mail it to the new hire a week or two before he starts, send a card along with a gift basket to the spouse and family, assign a mentor or “buddy” for the first month, and provide more hand-on orientation tools rather than the traditional

“death by PowerPoint” for eight hours.

Always remember that employee retention is overwhelmingly based on the relationship an employee has with her direct manager. People don’t quit their companies, they quit their bosses. Engaged employees are more likely to stay and be productive contributors than disengaged employees. Be sure that employees clearly understand what is expected of them and have the tools and resources to successfully do their work to the best of their ability. According to the Gallup Organization, “companies boost employee engagement first and foremost by showing that they care about workers as people. Almost as important is providing employees with challenging work. There’s also demonstrating fairness, providing training and opportunity for advancement, recognition, and sharing responsibility for decisions and outcomes.”

Patrick Lencioni’s newest book, *The Three Signs of Miserable Job*, reveals that employees who feel that no one knows them or cares about them as human beings, who don’t feel that their work matters to anyone or makes a difference, and who can’t measure at the end of the day the quality of their performance are poor performers who will negatively impact co-workers and customers. Managers are responsible for ensuring that employees have a meaningful workplace and employees have a responsibility for contributing positively to the business. The best way for managers to keep and retain their best people is to engage in frequent conversations with their employees to clearly understand what that employee needs to be engaged at work.

Lastly, if an employee does leave, conduct an exit interview using a neutral 3rd party. In the Zaradona Study, 38% of employees told their manager the reason they were leaving was money but only 12% told a third party that compensation was the issue. 24% shared with a third party that ineffective management was the reason for their departure while only 4% stated the same to their managers. Wait a few days to do the exit interview and the probe for root causes. Be sure to communicate clearly the reasons why employees have left the organization and then act on those findings. According to Leadership IQ, 95% of companies use exit interviews to monitor and enhance their employee retention strategies however only 42% act on them. When you lose a great employee, don’t say “You are dead to me now.” Keep in touch. You never know when that employee, for whatever reason, may want to return. Keep the doors open!

Differentiate your organization by becoming best in class at attracting and retaining the right people. It is a process where success builds on itself and you will see the results in almost every metric that really matters in your organization. Be the change you want to see.

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