

Where Have All the Good Employees Gone?



by Kathleen Rich-New

You are seeing the result of 3% unemployment in Brevard County. Tattoos, body piercing and glassed-over eyes greet you as you shop or order food. Your walk-in applicants show up with jeans hung too low, sporting flip flops and speaking an unintelligible language. There is not much hope of an increase in the pool of candidates with the median housing prices over \$231,000 for the Melbourne area. New talent is a key to growth, so attracting the right applicants is your mission. To do that, you have to become almost irresistible. You must create a dazzling recruitment plan.

Step 1: Learn how you stack up against your competitors in wages, benefits, paid time-off and the other choices applicants have. Do you know your profitability and growth depends on being appealing? Brevard's Best Places to Work Survey launches in August with the Melbourne Palm Bay Area Chamber of Commerce. You want to participate. Bright House Networks, a two-time winner, leads the area as number one for paid time off with 26 days after the first year and up to 51 days by the fifth year. Carole Erdman, Human Resources Director said, "Our benefits package and working environment is a powerful magnet in attracting and keeping employees."

Step 2: Know what you want for each position. What skills are required vs. desired? Assess each applicant's knowledge with standardized questions and testing. Behavior testing can tell you whether the applicant needs structure or variety, if they prefer people or tasks and require detailed instruction or they find their own methods.

Also, if you are looking at the new generation of workers, know their hot buttons. They are impatient. They expect to be judged on their immediate contributions rather than their years of loyal service. You have to earn their trust. Policies that are perceived as rigid, arbitrary, or out-of-date are significant irritants. These employees are prone to walk away from organizations that insist on perpetuating values that are out-of-sync with the present.

Step 3: Create a plan based on creating a "POW" impression. Use eye-catching and compelling marketing pieces that promote your organization, showing why someone would want to work for you. Share your vision, accomplishments and upcoming events. Carry the theme over into your want ads. Tell them why you are special. When DRS Tactical Systems, Inc. first won the Best Places to Work, President Rich McKnight said, "We are founded on the fundamental principal that employees are the most important asset of the business." They have won the survey three years in a row.

Step 4: Include your employees in your search efforts. Create marketing pieces for them to distribute. Market your company to your employees and establish a reward program for finding new employees. Move quickly when you find a fit. Keith Houston, General Manager, Crest Cleaners said, "Employees only refer people they feel will work out and they get a referral bonus. The store managers can hire someone on the spot if they look like a good fit."

Step 5: Develop a database of the contacts your team has that would be a good match for your organization. Go where your preferred applicants go. If you are recruiting for customer services take a hard look at popular bartenders and wait staff. Always be looking.

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Step 6: Walk in the applicant's shoes. How were they treated? Did you return their telephone calls? How impressive is your process? Are great applicants slipping through the cracks? Their first impression will determine if they want to work for you.

Step 7: Develop your relationships with high quality candidates through periodic face-to-face meetings. When recruiting for top talent, recognize that they have a lot of choices and will decide if you are someone they want to hang with.

Step 8: Be on the Internet. Monster.com has over 800 jobs listed for the Melbourne area, Careerbuilder.com over 1600. The listings are assessable 365/24/7. Create an enticing web page and career area. Enough said. ~SCB~

Kathleen Rich-New, president of Clarity Works! is based in Cape Canaveral, specializing in helping companies attract and retain top-performing employees. She is the Chair of Brevard's Best Place to Work Survey. Kathleen is the co-author of "Looking for the Good Stuff: A guide to enjoying and appreciating life." She is also an adjunct professor at Webster University's Graduate School of Business. You can contact her at 321.452.7308 or KRN@clarityworks.biz.