



# Are You the Employer of Choice?

## Recruiting and Retaining Quality Employees

By Katherine Carol

Who cares? No really. Why would organizations be concerned about having access to a quality pool of talented applicants? Moreover, why would it be important to hold onto the talent they have? It all depends on which of the following three organizations you are.

**1. Spend culture.** This type of organization moves from crisis to crisis. It spends time and money on fixing the past and barely keeps up with today's to-do list. An organization of this type rarely has the time or the capacity for planning and anticipating future recruiting needs. Often, it simply settles for a warm body and can fall victim to "impulse hiring." You would be hard-pressed to find a recruitment and retention strategy here.

**2. Save Culture.** Now, this organization does think about future needs of the organization. It tends to have a rainy-day budget—a healthy reserve for budgetary needs. It is a reasonably pleasant place to work, with adequate employee benefits and a retirement plan. This organization does have connections into various community resources and occasionally hires good employees from those resources and referrals from current employees for potential new recruits. Here you will find an intention to hire good staff and retain them—just not a formal plan or process.



**3. Investment Culture.** With an eye always on the future, this organization lives with anticipation of change. While they can't predict the future they have a heightened awareness of trends, both local and global, that will affect their ability to find talent. And, talent is what this organization seeks. Not just a warm body, not just a good employee, but a great one. They will invest in their talent, coach, mentor—and reward talent. They want them to stay and more importantly they want them to grow. They know that as their employees grow, so does their organizational capacity. This organization focuses its training and coaching efforts on building skills sets that are prized in today's economy (*Futurist* Sept/Oct.2004):

- Self-motivation
- Intuition
- Ethics
- Compassion
- Inspiration
- Imagination/Creativity
- Time management
- Strong oral and written communication
- Problem solving
- Information evaluation
- Leadership
- Team and individual focused

From the perspective of your corporate culture, let's take a look at workforce trends that will most likely affect your recruiting and retention abilities now and in the next few years. Realistically, most organizations have strategic plans that are fairly adequate for the next year or two. Paradoxically, it may take longer than that to fill the pipeline for talent to meet both anticipated and unanticipated needs of the organization in two or three years from now.

Here is what we know at the moment:

The workforce is aging. The average age of most senior executives is 59 to 60 years old. Many of these people will be seeking to retire in the next five years. Some may choose to phase out and act as consultants for hire to the organizations, others will

just leave. Exit strategies and succession planning become an integral part of any recruitment plan.

Despite available employee pool—the talent and skills gap will increase. The amount of highly qualified personnel will shrink and competition for those people will increase. Think about health care. The competition for nurses has been fierce and rural areas are struggling to find enough doctors to meet their needs. Understanding this labor trend and coupled with recent statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicating the rate of growth in employment opportunities in health-care fields are in direct competition for talent with rehabilitation organizations, we begin to understand there is cause for concern. Here is an indication of projected growth from 2003 to 2012, for medical assistants up 59%, social and human services aide assistances up 49%, physical therapy assistant up 45%, occupational therapy aides up 43%, personal and home-care aides up 40%. Contrast this with the fact according to Families and Work Institute study (2001) less than 10% of 2001 high school graduates wanted to go into social services type jobs. The gap between talent and organizational needs will be significant without an adequate recruitment and retention plan. Just remember, many of your potential job coaches and job developers may find higher wages working in these other professions. The typical home health aide can make between \$15 to \$25 per hour.

People leave jobs because of bad bosses. Interestingly enough—good people can make bad bosses. Our stereotypical bad boss looks like an

ogre or the wicked witch of the west. True, no one really likes working for the overbearing, hypercritical, micro-managing perfection type of boss, yet some of the worst bosses are nice people who have trouble setting a clear direction or handling conflict, and are poor communicators. They fail to create a culture of high expectations and high praise—two keys for getting and keeping great people. Did you know that if you simply tell an employee every few weeks that you like their work—job performance goes up dramatically? Did you also know that 35% of new managers and executives fail within 18 months?

Presenteeism is a growing problem. Unlike absenteeism where employees simply fail to show up for work, these people show up and do very little work. Twenty-five percent of employees show up to collect a paycheck, two out of three workers do not identify with their employer's business goals and objectives, and 40% feel disconnected from their employer. (Source:TNS) According to The Novation Group, a consulting firm, 64% of employees think management has set a strategic direction; only 62% of employees know what that direction is. Who is responsible for "presenteeism"? Probably a combination of issues affects employees' productivity, the employees themselves, the manager and the structure that has failed to embrace and inspire devotion to a meaningful cause. People produce when they know their work makes a difference and they are recognized for their contributions.

Employees often have more than one job. Richard Sheridan, long-time executive director of the Arc of

Middlesex in New Brunswick, New Jersey, says one of his challenges in staff entry-level positions is that many of his employees have two or three other jobs to meet the needs of their families. The employee's flexibility is limited and the employer is often required to be very flexible. Issues arise around communication issues and even scheduling meetings. Because of resource limitations, this can be problem.

Your workforce will continue to be diverse. Even in a post-9/11 world where immigration has slowed, you will continue to find your workforce coming from a number of other cultures. Not all cultures get along easily so manager's need to have the ability to bring together people from different cultures and perspectives helping them to focus on common organizational goals.

To build an effective recruitment and retention plan, first start with a comparative analysis of skills needed in the present and skills that will be necessary in the next five years. For instance, if you are looking at management skills you might want to consider this skill set:

- High level of self-awareness. They know where they are strong and where they need help. And, they can ask for what they need.
- Knowledge of human motivation and how people learn.
- A well-developed personal vision and ability to sell it.
- Established knowledge and connected to viable learning networks.
- The ability to effectively analyze and package complex info.

- The willingness to be flexible and get up to capacity fast.
- The ability to make decisions in conditions of extreme ambiguity.
- The ability to develop effective professional relationships quickly.
- Have a well-developed set of personal values.

## **Steps to Developing an Effective Recruitment and Retention Plan.**

### **1. Create a Vision Board.**

In order to address these needs you can start by creating a vision board. This is an eclectic group of people within the organization and the community focused on your organization's future. They meet regularly, addressing future opportunities and key value to customers, and openly mentor staff and managers. Because of their community connections they have access to employee pools you don't know about. Now, the recruitment plan must address the need and find strategies to meet the needs.

### **2. The Need.**

- Define present needs.
- Update and compile current job descriptions.
- Look at future need projections.

### **3. Build a "Get Results" Team focused on employee selection.**

- Select personnel to be on the team.
- Design attractive ads that attract people to a great place to work.
- Build and maintain a positive first impression for the perspective employee—also know as Branding.
- Identify various media to get your word out.
- Build an employee referral program.

### **4. Build a good process.**

- Develop an effective and meaningful interview process.
- Train managers and supervisors on interviewing. This is a critical area in which to invest time and financial resources.
- Have job shadow opportunities for potential employees.
- Make sure job descriptions are true to actual job responsibilities.
- Communicate effectively the organizational values. Have clear expectations and explain their relevance to the organization, team and the job seeker.

### **5. Impressions count!**

- Conduct a review of organization literature. Does it meet the expectations you created about the organization in your ads?
- Select a space for the interview you are proud of. Often times, interviews are held in high traffic areas that are conducive to frequent interruptions. Be gracious. Remember, everything you do creates an impression on the job candidate.
- Determine who will make the job offer.
- Be clear on salary offer. It is very important not to give conflicting information here. Do your homework.
- Know who will check references.
- Determine who will be the job candidate's mentor.
- Remember, look at the employment package from the fresh perspective of the job candidate.
- Plan the first week carefully. For that matter, plan the first six weeks carefully. Invest in training, mentoring and coaching.

