



Work is a necessary evil to be avoided. So said Mark Twain. On the other hand, Theodore Roosevelt believed that far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing. If your job is to hire employees for your company, who are you to believe? Is it Mark, Teddy, or someone in between? One of the challenges that employers have, especially in the current market of too many jobs and not enough skilled resources, is to figure what it will take to attract the right people to their jobs. Is throwing money at the problem going to solve it or will it take more? That's the question of the month but will you like the answer?

HOW DO YOU ATTRACT EMPLOYEES?

“There is a vast world of work out there... where at least 111 million people are employed in (America) alone - many of whom are bored out of their minds. All day long.”

- Richard Nelson Bolles

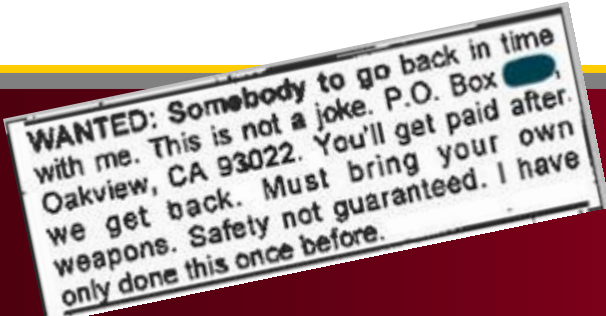


“Nobody can be successful unless he loves his work.”

- David Sarnoff

“FIND A JOB YOU LIKE AND YOU ADD FIVE DAYS TO EVERY WEEK.”

- H. JACKSON BROWN, JR.



One of the most asked questions these days from executives and leaders is, “How can we attract the best people when there is such a shortage of available talent in the marketplace?” Well, I have some ideas on the subject but you may not like what I have to say.

Over the past decade, I have worked at length in areas of North America that have faced this serious problem every day. Places like Florida, Alberta, California’s Silicon Valley and British Columbia are all examples of regions where corporations struggle constantly trying to hire the right employees. When fast food chains are offering signing bonuses or if the biggest poster in any store window is for hiring new employees, you know there is a problem.

When people ask me how they can deal with this issue, I usually respond with a few questions of my own. “Why would your strategy be any different in a marketplace with few available employees as in a market where there is an abundance of talent” I ask? Or I might wonder, “Regardless of the market forces, why would anyone want to work with you and your company? Wouldn’t you always want to be the employer of choice?”

When organizations of any stripe are looking to address this problem, so many are looking for the magic pill or the quick fix. Here’s the newsflash – there isn’t one. But that doesn’t mean there is nothing you can do about this. The solution, I believe, is all around you.

Firstly, in the short term, you have to be competitive from a financial perspective. Your salary and benefits structure has to be at least equal to your competition in your industry as well as competitive with other companies in unrelated businesses. I was in a small town in Alberta recently and a grocery store was offering nearly eighteen dollars an hour for a cashier. If you run an insurance office in that town, the grocery store is now your competition for employees.

But in and of itself, being financially competitive alone is not the long-term solution to your problem. If people only work for you because you pay the most, then that is the extent of their loyalty and you could lose them just as quickly as you got them once a competitor offers more.

The medium and long-term solution requires a lot more effort and will not be resolved overnight. Organizations that are having little problems in hiring the right people have been dealing with this concern all along and are less worried than other companies who are just addressing matters because there is a workforce shortage. The solution goes back to my earlier question, “Why would anyone want to work with you and your company?” That question alone should get you re-evaluating all aspects of your organization. Here are a few things to think about:

- The work itself – is it challenging and stimulating?
- The quality of communication – are you open with your employees and are you really listening?
- The learning culture – do you promote continuous employee improvement?
- Getting it wrong – is it safe to make mistakes?
- The happiness factor – is it a fun place to work?

If you are not the most sought after employer, that’s not good. If you don’t know where you stand, that’s worse. But the good news is that you are surrounded by people who know the answers. That’s right – your existing employees. As a start, ask them how you’re doing. After all, they’ve been telling *everyone else* about you ever since they starting working for you.