

# Hiring & Retaining Staff

By Jim Dion

**PART 1**  
OF A TWO PART SERIES

## Finding The Right People To Work For You

**F**inding the right people to work for us has always been and will always be one of the biggest challenges facing managers and business owners. Some of the changes that have occurred since Gen-X'ers and the early Gen-Y'ers joined the workforce have complicated things even further and the selection game (and the retention one) is now full of new rules. The good news is that if the task is now more complicated, the solution is incredibly simple. It's called Planning. Talented people don't just fall into our hands. We need to have a solid recruitment and selection strategy. What follows are some of the key steps and activities that we can plan for to ensure we hire and keep the best.

### Recruitment

Recruitment is the process by which we seek to create a pool of suitable applicants from which new employees are selected. A proper recruitment strategy and plan requires a very proactive approach, meaning that we need to plan for it.

**Have a constant stream of applicants.** If you have a small staff and somebody leaves without giving notice, you need to be able to replace them quickly to avoid being short-staffed. However, you don't want to hire them quickly and bring people on board that are not qualified for the job. That's why you should always strive to have a stack of current applications available (no more than 6 months' old) and you should even consider meeting with some of the strongest applicants regularly even if you don't have anything available at the time when you are meeting them (be upfront with them and tell them that you are meeting with them in case you will need them in the future).

**Identify the best source.** In order to determine the best recruitment source, you first need to familiarize yourself with the job description and job specifications (each position at your company and store should have a job description). This information will tell you the characteristics of both the job and the people who will fill it. So, for instance, if you are hiring for a roadman responsible for selling sports uniforms to coaches and schools, you will not only need to make sure that you seek individuals with past experience or studies that reflect great communication and interpersonal skills as well as a car (job requirements), you should also identify where (best source) to look to increase your chances of finding the right individuals for the job.

Students, may be one of your best recruitment options in this example, and pretty much in general in retail. This is not just because most of them want and need to work, but because they can in many



cases relate and identify with the product, the brand and the experience very well as they are often users themselves and can be therefore more effective salespeople. In addition, many college students have very flexible schedules and those close to graduation may be perfect to continue with your company. Never underestimate the importance of finding individuals who are truly passionate about the work, your company, your brand and your products. If you manage to find these people, your success is almost guaranteed, as they will see their job as an opportunity to turn their passion into your success. Advertise open positions in student newspapers, or place a notice on dormitory or student union bulletin boards. As well, consider contacting department offices within the school or the placement department to find out if they have work-study or internship programs.

**Personal Friends & Colleagues.** Ask your own personal friends and acquaintances if they know of anyone who would be great to work for your store or business. Referrals are an incredible source as they yield a lower possibility for turnover and more likelihood of better performing employees.

**Current Employees.** Promote a 'recruitment culture'

## (Hiring continued)

within your store and company and encourage your current staff to be recruiters of talent themselves. This is a great way to attract suitable candidates as your current employees tend to refer their friends, who are likely to have similar work habits and work attitudes. Offer a bonus or incentive for recruiting new people. This way you not only ensure that your employees feel motivated to fulfill the recruiter role but you also have a way of thanking them for their efforts (bonus should be paid after a 90-day trial period with the new hire).

**Permanent Recruiting Brochure.** Professionally printed material that publicizes the benefits and opportunities of working for you should always be available at the store. Small wallet size cards highlighting the company's positions, culture and benefits, the requirements of the jobs and providing directions where and how to apply can be very effective. Make them fun and catchy so potential candidates will notice them and will be more inclined to take and use them.

**Sports Events & Functions.** By attending events such as soccer, softball, local track meets, etc. and by networking amongst the people you meet there, you increase your chances of meeting with the right individuals who are your target audience for your hiring activity (remember to bring your wallet size recruitment cards to give to them).

**Sports/Professional Magazines & Professional Sites Ads.** Written/posted ads can reach a wider audience and they are the most familiar form of employment advertising. For highly specialized recruits, ads should be placed in professional (sports) magazines.

**MySpace (Outside-the-Box Recruiting!).** Well, this might be the future!! More than 80% of the site's registered members fall into the core demographic of 16-to-34-year-olds, a large number of whom are college-educated professionals with as much as 13 years of work experience. Retail workers are a diverse group, and MySpace offers access to hundreds of thousands of retail workers from top brands. For example, retail giant Best Buy has a member-supported group on MySpace full of current and past employees. There are also special-interest groups like softball and skiing, which are great sites if you run a sporting goods store.

**"Sell" the company (and the brand).** No recruit-

ment strategy will ever work unless you sell your store, the job, the brand and the company. Emphasize your benefits (health, flexible work hours, part-time, vacation pay, etc.), any kind of educational assistance programs available, the training available, growth opportunities, and the culture of the company. Yes, money is very important but candidates are more and more interested in learning and growth. Without these no money will keep them in place and no money will motivate them to do a good job for you. ●



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