



Small Business Tips: Finding Good Candidates in a Tight Job Market

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As the job market tightens up and companies vie for qualified candidates, many firms, and especially small businesses, will have to consider their current employment practices and strategically plan for their staffing needs. Some of the current trends that are frustrating employers are that employees on the average stay with firms about 3.5 years (Bureau of Labor Statistics). My experience has been that some industries have a much greater turn around than that. To compound the problem, as employees become dissatisfied with their current employer, there are thousands of job boards for them to be enticed. So what can employers do to alleviate the pain and agony that is associated with high attrition rates and a tight job market? I suggest that employers look outside of the box and consider making some changes to their staffing practices. Below are my suggestions:

Write an Appealing Ad: It doesn't do any good to use the Internet or print media to connect with populations of great workers if your message has all the appeal of a dry biscuit. Unfortunately, however, that's the nature of most job postings today. Ads should contain information about the location and culture of the firm as well as the job duties and requirements for the position. This is the typical situation where the firm is looking at what the candidate can do for them and the candidate is looking for what they can get out of the company. In a tight job market, firms should be more open to marketing the position as if it were something they were selling, unfortunately many employers usually do not know how to do this properly and end up writing ads that look like job descriptions instead of enticing opportunities.

Open your Candidate Window: Managers should consider candidates that may not have the exact experience match, but have transferable skills and a good steady job history. Managers may experience a bit of down time teaching a new employee the ropes on the onset, but if the candidate is intelligent and has a skill set that is transferable, the result could be a long term employee who is more loyal and dedicated to the firm.

Allow for Creative Benefits: Managers should consider creative benefits rather than salary to entice candidates and to keep their current employees. Creative

Benefits are not your typical health and life insurance, but rather enticements such as offering a flexible schedule, or telecommuting to trusted employees and offering more down time. Time off has been an increasing negotiation factor especially as salaried employees are asked to fill the gap of staffing shortages by working long hours on a set pay scale. In a recent pole conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers which asked: "Would you change your job if it meant less pay but more time for your family?" The answers were a very resounding "Yes!" 54% of the people surveyed said they would definitely consider it as compared to 19% saying "No" and 24% saying "Maybe". That means that nearly 75% of the people surveyed would consider changing their jobs if it meant spending more time with their family even if it meant a drop in pay! This survey indicates that time off could be a very potent negotiation factor for employment offers.

Be Proactive in your Search: Good candidates do not last long in a tight job market. When good candidates begin their search, they often post their profile to several recruiting sites and simply sit back and wait for the calls to come rolling in. Hiring managers should never hire a candidate at the drop of a hat, but should show interest immediately if there seems to be a good fit on the resume. Waiting even a few days to show interest can mean the difference between getting the best candidate for the job and having to settle for second or third choice. My suggestion is to take the time to schedule a telephone interview immediately with candidates who have resumes that reflect the desired skills you seek. After all, this is an interview not an offer and therefore there is nothing for either side to lose except for a bit of time. Once that interview takes place (and if there is still interest), be sure to keep that candidate informed of their candidacy and the hiring process on a regular basis. This can be time consuming task, but it is essential to keeping qualified candidates interested.

Have an Aggressive Recruitment Strategy: Hiring managers will need to have a very aggressive recruitment strategy and use their recruitment budget wisely. My past experience has shown that employers who enjoy the highest success rates for attracting employees utilize a variety of methods to obtain candidates. Specifically, they write a great ad. They find a good recruiter and outsource those services or hire one internally for their firm. They post to the best advertising resources (which are a moving target). And they network through associations and business organizations to spread the word of open positions.

As the job market tightens up and qualified candidates become more difficult to attain, firms that utilize the above strategies have benefited to achieve the best success of employing and retaining quality staff.

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