



## 10 Tips for Making Hiring & Retention Work in 2009

During times of economic upheaval and uncertain job markets, it is imperative that you hire the right people —and give them a reason to stay.

Although no one can predict where the economy is headed in 2009, we can assume it will be another uncertain year with plenty of bumps along the road. Even though some organizations will be faced with reducing staff, many others will continue to hire new employees while seriously looking at the bottom line.

**1. If you like them – tell them.** First, identify and key employees. Next, show your current and future superstars and they matter. Your high performers are treasured —by your competitors and other companies in need for talent. Don't assume that they are happy in their roles, feel secure or know they are important to you or the company unless you tell them. Top talent is always in play and you are in danger of losing your key employees no matter the market condition. Retention of these employees should always be the key to your annual hiring strategy.

**2. Be open about current conditions.** Economic turmoil and related media's coverage raise everyone's anxiety levels. Some companies may downsize while others put hiring plans on hold. While necessary to control costs, these tactics often leave current employees with more stress and increased responsibilities. Make sure your people know there is something in it for them besides continued employment. Perhaps this is an opportunity to position them for future leadership, to evaluate their management skills or to see their team work in action. Be open about what you have asked them to take on and speak as honestly as you can about your company's current condition.

**3. Find ways to recognize and reward employees.** When budgets tighten, discretionary spending goes away and that can often include salary increases and bonus plans. But the best companies find creative ways to reward and recognize their employees. Have a raffle for sporting event tickets, give an impromptu day off, award a prime parking spot, host a barbecue where the senior management team serves the staff...there are plenty of low or no cost initiatives you can put in place to motivate staff. You may even want to appoint a committee to help brainstorm ideas and activities. Just make sure your plans are equitable and encompass all levels, division and shifts.

**4. Hire right; hire fast.** Slow and steady might win the race, but speed counts in hiring. Although it is imperative to be diligent and deliberate in your hiring process, you still need to have a sense of urgency. Companies that slow down the process or over-analyze each hire are those that run the risk of losing out on their first choices. Never assume you are the only company that a candidate is interviewing with because most likely you are not. And if an individual is anxious to make a move or regain employment, he or she may take the first offer —make sure that it's yours!

**5. Blow your own horn.** It should be a given that anyone interacting with potential new employees knows what makes your company great, can articulate your differentiators clearly and is well-versed on the importance of a consistent message. Now - kick it up a notch. Companies, recruiters and representatives that can talk passionately and sincerely about why that position and that company is the right place to work will always come out ahead in the hiring game.

People want to work at companies where they will feel secure, recognized, appreciated and proud. You can overcome all the fear associated with making a move or resisting an offer by having every interviewee leave your organization wanting to work there.

**6. Money isn't everything.** Although everyone desires to make a decent wage, increasingly, money is becoming less important as a deciding factor in evaluating a job offer. More and more, requests for a flexible schedule, telecommuting days, work/life balance, organizational visibility, defined career paths, better benefits and state-of-the-art resources are working their way up the "must have" list.

While salary and compensation will always be critical, the other components can make or break a deal. Find out what you can about your ideal candidate and then put together an offer that incorporates what is important to him or her.

**7. Developing talent is still important.** In past recessions, budget cuts often included training and coaching. This time it's different: organizations realize that not investing in staff at all times is a strategic mistake. Employees want to know that their company is invested in their success and wants to make them better at what they do—or what they will do. If revenues will no longer support the funding of training initiatives, look at other ways to develop staff such as mentoring, online classes and webinars or using internal experts to teach others.

**8. Be creative.** When it comes to finding new talent companies often rely on referrals from staff, the HR department and job boards. But there are plenty of other places to look if you just think outside the box. Internships, co-ops and college relations programs and NGO/Not For Profit's are excellent ways of finding entry-level talent—and teaching them how to do things your way!

Job sharing is a great way put the part-time workforce to work for you. Retirees and at-home parents are often looking for ways to stay involved in corporate life while enjoying external pursuits. Telecommuting arrangements break down geographic barriers to hiring and can be economically beneficial to infrastructure costs. Don't be afraid to experiment and try different workforce arrangements like consolidated work weeks or virtual offices.

**9. Follow the trail.** The best place to hire the best and the brightest is from your network—people that know you, your values, principles and your successes. A good way to identify external talent is by asking your senior leaders, managers and salespeople to identify individuals they have met at professional association meetings, networking events and business development appointments. Do some good, old fashioned networking with these people to see if they are interested in new employment opportunities or know someone that is and follow the trail until you get what you want.

**10. Don't SWAG it.** Your workforce is most likely your single largest investment. An energized workforce is the key to your organization's ongoing success. Give it the attention it deserves and have an annual recruitment and retention plan in place. Review it every quarter and adjust as necessary. Include components such as valid competencies, succession plans, budgets, recruiting sources, potential business issues impacting hiring and goals based on cost and time-to-hire. Plan it and work it: You can't get where you want to go without having a plan and a map, so have one in place at all times.

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