



Attracting Qualified Candidates

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January 2022

QUESTION: Like many employers in this job market, we are struggling to recruit new staff. We have many positions unfilled at all levels of the company. What are some new strategies we might try to stand out from our competitors and attract qualified candidates?

ANSWER: You are right. It is a tight labor market right now. The “great resignation” that started in 2021 is leaving many jobs unfilled and employers struggling. In addition, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that job openings are projected to grow over this next decade. These trends mean that the labor shortage in many industries is unlikely to change anytime soon.

So, how can your company stand out from others and attract qualified candidates? There are several strategies you might consider beyond what you may already do as part of your traditional recruiting process. This job market is forcing employers to adapt their way of doing business.

- 1.) Offer more part-time positions. Providing more part-time options may be attractive for several reasons including offering flexibility with child care or other home commitments and supporting more work-life balance. Offering part-time positions may appeal to trained staff that left the workforce previously, enticing them to rejoin. Also, don’t forget about your current employees. Offering a part-time option may help retain existing staff who are experiencing burnout.

Of course, there are additional considerations when offering part-time options, including decisions on what benefits to offer and scheduling considerations, but these costs and logistical details may pay off in recruiting and retaining talent. Start by talking with your existing employees about their interest in part-time options. You can also test out the option with a couple of staff to assess how it works and then decide to expand from there.

- 2.) Consider offering more work flexibility. Along with part-time options, there are a segment of workers who may appreciate working non-traditional hours. Depending on your company and industry, you may have opportunities to allow more flexible work schedules, including additional options for remote work. One thing that the COVID pandemic has shown us is that more work can be done remotely and many in the current workforce are looking for remote work positions.
- 3.) Provide additional benefits. Support with child care costs and continuing education may give you the edge as compared with other companies. If you don’t already offer retirement match and/or student loan payment assistance, these benefits can set you apart too.

- 4.) Pay attention to your image. With a tight labor market, employees can be choosier on where they want to work. Employees want to work at companies that treat their staff and customers well. If your customer reviews are not positive overall (more than just a periodic bad review), it could mean that there are other issues happening at the business that need attention. Discontent in a company not only impacts customer satisfaction, but employee recruitment and retention as well. And if there are other employment options that look more attractive as a place to work, high quality employees will choose to apply somewhere else.

In addition to paying attention to online reviews, spend some time marketing your company online via social media and your website. Potential employees are researching your company and you want them to see a place that looks like (and is) a great place to work.

- 5.) Build your future workforce. Do you have generalized staff who are interested in moving into more specialized roles? Do you partner with your local high school career institute, community college, or university by providing internships or other shadowing opportunities for students? Building up your talent pipeline is a long-term strategy to cultivate your future workforce.

While these strategies may not be an immediate fix, together they can help build and retain a high-quality workforce for the long term.