

Add Existing Employees to Worker Recruitment Team

By Holly Culhane, Contributing Columnist



In business, who you know won't guarantee success, but it does help. The same can be said about recruiting the best employees to help make a business successful.

Often who a company's employees know will make the best hires.

Although the U.S. economy's recovery from the "great recession" continues to be sluggish, we have been helping an increasing number of Kern County business owners fill critical positions in their organizations. Some of these positions were cut in waves of layoffs that began in 2008 and continued into 2009. But as a sign of increasing confidence in the local economy, a number of companies are recruiting applicants for brand new positions. It's encouraging to see businesses expand their workforces, and adding new products and services.

Recruitment requires a multi-faceted approach. With most companies, the search begins from within – through promoting existing employees or laterally transferring employees into new jobs that use underutilized skills or allow for skill development.

External job applicants – workers who are not presently employed by the company – are recruited using a variety of strategies. They include walk-ins, "career" postings on a company's website, print advertisements, job search engines, job boards, job fairs, and even Facebook or LinkedIn postings. Job "aggregators," such as Indeed.com, CareerBuilder and Monster, are playing an increasing role in recruitment.

One of the most effective and underutilized tools for recruiting good applicants, but one that often yields a higher hiring rate, is employee referrals. In a nutshell, a company asks its existing employees to urge qualified friends, relatives and professional acquaintances to apply for openings.

According to the 9th Annual Source of Hire Study by CareerXRoads, employee referrals accounted for 26.7 percent of external hires in 2009 -- higher than any other external recruitment technique.

Besides being effective, employee referrals entice applicants with built-in recommendations, an insider's knowledge of a company and its culture, and an initial buy-in to a company's vision and mission. Candidates hired through employee referrals typically have the highest retention rates.

But effective employee referral programs just don't "happen." They need organization, communication, incentives and goals.

Organization – Keep the referral process relatively simple. Use internal communications, such as emails and company websites, to advertise positions. Include job descriptions and application process information. Announce job openings first to existing employees before advertising externally.

Communication – Announce the existence of an employee referral program to the entire workforce. Make every employee part of the recruitment team. Have a procedure in place to acknowledge the referrals and keep the referring employee apprised of the hiring process. Regularly remind employees that they are encouraged to recommend qualified applicants for job openings.

Incentives – Many employee referral programs offer incentives, including cash bonuses if a referred applicant is hired. I recommend that a bonus be paid only after the new hire reaches a certain milestone. That milestone may be successful completion of a 3- or 6-month introductory period, and will encourage employees to recommend only applicants who are likely to succeed in the workplace and benefit the company.

Goal – The goal should always be to recruit the best applicants so the best workers will be hired. A company's existing employees can be vital resources for helping make that happen.

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