

Human resource best practice

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Make recruiting and retaining the right people your organization's strength

The shortage of skilled labour in the Canadian workforce is an issue that has received considerable attention in the last several years and is one that has a distinct impact on the manufacturing sector. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters estimates by 2016, approximately 1.3 million skilled jobs will remain vacant because of a lack of skilled tradespeople in Canada.

How to solve the shortage of skilled trades has been the subject of vigorous debate for several years. There are many theories and much finger-pointing. Suffice it to say, resolution of this problem is neither simple nor imminent. So what can an employer do to enhance its chances of recruiting and retaining skilled tradespeople?

Strategic Recruitment

Diversify Your Recruitment Methods

The manner in which a company recruits determines the pool of candidates from which it hires. A company that relies on one or two means of recruitment risks excluding talented candidates. For example, reliance on word-of-mouth referral to fill open positions is likely to exclude candidates who do not share the same demographic characteristics of the company's existing employee population. Similarly, a company that relies exclusively on one or two recruitment agencies may unknowingly limit its pool of candidates to those within the agencies' networks.

Embrace New Technology

Technology and social media in particular, has had a significant impact on the manner in which people communicate and connect with one other. Not surprisingly, this impact has extended to the pursuit of employment opportunities. For example, there is no question in this day-and-age Facebook inquiries and profiles on LinkedIn are a more efficient means of connecting qualified candidates with employment opportunities than the traditional circulation of hard copy resumes or job fairs.

Accordingly, incorporating online mediums into a company's recruitment process is likely to increase its effectiveness whereas the failure to do so may result in missed opportunities, particularly among younger generations who tend to be more reliant on social media as a primary means of communication.

Retain Talent

Investment in recruiting and/or training a skilled worker is wasted if the worker does not remain with the company. Retaining talent is therefore a significant priority.

A competitive compensation package is only one element of a successful retention strategy. Studies have shown the majority of employees who voluntarily leave a company do so not because of compensation but because they are dissatisfied with the work environment. Among the most commonly



cited reasons for leaving employment are lack of trust and confidence in senior leadership and a belief that individual contributions are not valued or recognized.

In our experience, incorporating the following tips into a company's management style will help promote employee engagement and retention:

- **Build relationships:** Demonstrate interest in employees as individuals, not merely commodities, by inquiring about their families and remembering personal details. Instead of asking "how was your weekend" which generally leads to a one word reply "fine" — start a conversation by asking open ended questions like, "what did you do over the weekend"? You'll be surprised about how much you can learn.
- **Be transparent:** Communicate with employees about decisions that affect them and explain the reasons for those decisions. They may still be upset about a particular decision but their response will almost certainly be more negative if they feel the decision was made arbitrarily or without any regard for its impact on them.
- **Empower employees:** Ask employees for suggestions about how to resolve operational problems, increase efficiencies and respond to new market demands. Soliciting ideas from employees will not only improve engagement by making them feel part of the team but invariably will yield creative ideas based on their experience.
- **Be receptive:** Listen to concerns raised by employees and, where possible, address them. Even if you perceive the concern as trivial, it likely isn't viewed that way by the employee who raised it.
- **Be consistent and fair:** Treat employees fairly. Nothing builds resentment like disciplining one employee for arriving five minutes late for a shift while giving another employee a ten minute grace period.
- **Address issues promptly:** The annual (or semi-annual) performance review should not be the first time an employee learns about an ongoing performance issue. While conversations about performance can be awkward and unpleasant, nothing undermines trust like failing to raise serious and ongoing concerns until the employee's formal performance review.
- **Recognize achievements:** Celebrate success. We have a tendency to point out how employees can improve and sometimes forget to acknowledge what they are doing well. 20/20

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