

Need To Attract Employees To Your Business? Start by Looking In The Mirror!

Author: Jeff Ketchum, CRA

Publisher: Upper Peninsula Business Today, October, 2019



If you are like many business owners in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan today, you may be saying to yourself, "It's so hard to find good employees". From home service companies (plumbing, electrical, HVAC) to forestry products companies, banks/credit unions and manufacturers, the challenge of finding and hiring talented employees can seem daunting.

One of the reasons why it's difficult to find talented employees is because many of you are using 20th century thinking and recruitment techniques. You know what I am talking about.....your business is growing and need to hire someone quickly. As a result, you react by:

- Asking around "who might be available" for work
- Running ads
- Calling a staffing agency or search firm

Although these techniques may have produced marginal results in prior years or economic cycles, they won't guarantee success for you today. Why? Because they don't appeal to the Top 20% of talent that you most likely want to hire and who will make good long-term employees.

The most successful employers today are proactive about “attracting” talent to their organizations continuously. As a result, they don’t have to go out during a time of needy desperation, to find really good employees. They are able to attract good employees because they have invested the time to strategically develop their culture, leadership abilities and brand. Regardless of the size of your business, you can do the same!

STEP 1 – PLAN FOR THE FUTURE..... BECUASE YOU WILL ARRIVE THERE.

The worst time to be looking to hire is when you actually need to hire someone. If you are behind the hiring eight-ball right now, it’s a good indication that you have not adequately planned for growth within your business. You are likely “reacting” to the demand for your products and services. Stop reading and let that sink in for a minute.

Effective planning is like the windshield in our vehicles. The windshield allows us to see what is ahead and plan for it. You can get ahead of demand for your products or services and the “need for hiring” through monitoring the trends of your business. For example, let’s say you are a manufacturer with revenues of \$5M annually and desire to grow to \$8M over the next 3 years. A key question you should ask yourself is “at \$8M in revenue, what will the need for talent be?” “What would our organizational chart look like at \$8M versus now?” Unfortunately, most business owners will wait until they have already reached \$8M in revenue to begin planning for talent and even then, it’s not a plan, it’s a reaction. Planning for talent ahead of time enables you to prepare and be patient about attracting the right employees to your business versus having to hire someone quickly to meet demand.

STEP 2 – ADDRESS YOUR LEADERSHIP ABILITIES AND COMPANY CULTURE

Ever wonder what might attract someone to your business? Recently, the highly successful restaurant chain Chick-fil-A commissioned a research study aimed at answering that exact question. What Mark Miller, the former VP of High Performance Teams at Chick-fil-A found was the following: “The three things top talent looks for are *a better boss, a brighter future and a bigger vision.*”

To effectively attract top talent to your business means you need to be continuously developing as a leader. You need to be the better boss that good talent is seeking. One of the ways you can develop as a leader is understanding the critical importance of establishing *values* for your business and living them daily. Establishing *values* for your business represents critical infrastructure that will aid your planning and decision-making while enabling you to attract like-minded employees and customers with shared values.

To attract top talent to your company, you need to ensure a brighter future is available for your team members. Talented employees are looking to join an attractive employer on a mission, a mission that matters and can lead to a brighter future for all involved. That’s why it is so important to develop a *mission statement* for your business and to continually pursue it. Those

businesses that are committed to a mission attract like-minded employees. However, if you're looking to attract an employee based upon title, duties and money alone, you're missing the boat. Get on board and become a small business driven by mission and purpose.

The third point the study revealed is that top talent is always looking for a bigger *vision*. The talented employees you are looking to hire are themselves looking to join a business that has a *vision* for the future. If you don't know what the vision is for your business then you will not be able to communicate it to prospective employees. To address this, carve out time you can spend away from the business, thinking about your business. Dream, think big and dare to envision what business success means to you.

STEP 3 – CULTIVATE YOUR BRAND

Your brand as an employer is just as important as your brand of products or services. In fact, both should reflect the values you have established for your business. Your brand is what employees, customers and vendors think about your business.

Specifically, your employment brand is how current and former employees would describe the working environment, leadership, training, opportunity for growth and the compensation and benefits offered by your business.

Ask yourself this question to define your employment brand. "If my current and former employees were polled, what would they say about my business?" Write down your answer, then go ask them with a humble heart and listening ears. If you like what you hear, promote it in your outreach to potential employees. If you don't like what you hear, make the changes necessary for you to become an employer of choice in your area.

In summary, by proactively planning for the future and establishing values, vision and mission for your business, you can attract high performing, like minded employees who will help grow your business even more. Don't settle for anything less as a business owner for you help to create the majority of jobs and economic growth for our country and region. Be the best you can be and go for it!

Jeff Ketchum is a 20-year resident of the Upper Peninsula and the Founder and President of several U.P. based businesses. One of them, [Lordstone Business Advisors, Inc.](#), helps guide business owners (\$2M - \$500M) who are looking to grow their business through effective planning, hiring, leadership and execution.