

Hiring Outside the Baby Boom Box

It's the victim of reduced, short-term and unstable government funding and it's more accountable to its masters than ever before. It has suffered hits that have taken a toll on employees and led to constant turnover and the need for employers to recruit highly skilled talent. And, like other sectors, it is also dealing with replacing experienced baby boomers who are retiring in record numbers attributable to the unprecedented size of this population. Still, Canada's nonprofit sector reigns as the second largest in the world and continues to be a significant employer of Canadians. Indeed, even in today's tight and competitive labour market – where the candidate holds many of the cards – nonprofits still present an appealing option to those seeking meaningful participation in the workforce. We should be buoyed by this masked good news and start now to think outside the baby boom box to meet the hiring challenge before us.

Employers' Most Wanted List

The HR Council's three-part series, *Toward a Labour Force Strategy for Canada's Voluntary & Non-Profit Sector*, indicates that while employers face both retention and recruitment challenges, recruitment is the greater concern, especially in health and social services and in large organizations of 100+ employees. These employers are seeking management skills and specialized skills in such areas as law, research, marketing, fundraising and campaigning, among others.

Employees' Greatest Needs

The HR Council's report also provides information about what employees like and don't like about their jobs and looks at their plans and expectation for their future. It echoes other research that demonstrates employees are very committed to organizations whose cause they really believe in, and they are motivated by meaningful work at the authority to make decisions. Still the #1 concern is

employees' need for adequate compensation – whether pay, perks or benefits. Work/life balance is another key contributor to job satisfaction, particularly for younger workers.

Widening the Recruiting Pool

So, how do we begin to tackle these converging trends of employers' wants and employees' needs? We offer some strategic approaches that may well take you into unexplored but promising territory.

1. Use the insider advantage

If you haven't already done so, it's time to get to work on a succession plan. Our long-held belief is that an effective succession plan eases the stress of replacing senior leaders, makes room for a seamless transition and shortening the process of replacing the senior leadership. A succession plan can include giving all staff an opportunity to witness and practise leadership. Along with mentoring and training, this helps groom potential successors from your ranks. The opportunity to manage a staff team, even temporarily, propels employees into the realm of management and coveted decision-making roles. These training and advancement opportunities will help your staff – especially younger ones – feel valued, challenged and engaged.

2. Graduate to an MBA

The complexity of today's nonprofit calls for new and different skill sets at all levels of your organization. Those who have had success hiring MBAs attest to the skills and expertise they bring, including sophisticated analytical skills. MBAs, along with CFREs and other accredited professionals, may have the more specialized skills you are seeking. We also advise not to overlook candidates who have taken advanced degree courses in such areas as human resource management, project management and finance. In fact, you should be offering incentives to your staff to take

these courses. Bear in mind that job candidates or employees on the fast track may demand greater rewards. Beyond salaries, do some creative thinking about other forms of compensation you can provide to entice and retain valuable talent.

3. Set the stage for encore workers

Not all retirees are ready to stop working. Some simply want to change the pace or nature of their work. Baby boomers retiring from the corporate sector have launched encore careers, combining personal meaning, social impact and continuing income, on a full- or part-time basis. These retirees, plus those wishing to remain in the nonprofit sector in different roles, present a “new-to-you” talent pool of seasoned professionals. As you look to create a more flexible work environment and increase training opportunities for employees, you may find that encore workers are more than willing to job share and mentor less experienced staff.

4. SYT or Source Young Talent

Younger workers, who relish the ability to work and communicate quickly via new technology, will know “see you tomorrow” is the true meaning of “SYT.” But as one segment of the population retires from the workforce and another younger one enters, your organization would be wise to source young talent. Along with being extremely tech-savvy, the new generation of workers may be unlike anything you’ve ever seen: they have high expectations of what their employer can deliver to them, not just what they can bring to the job. They tend to be confident and skilled, with strong values that include work/life balance and a need for challenging and rewarding work. To successfully attract this group, you must discard all notions that staff can never do or give enough. SLAP? Well, if this does “sound like a plan,” you should be prepared to offer flexible work conditions and stimulating assignments to a generation more than willing to hold out for what they want, and work passionately to support your cause.

5. Identify ways to diversify

The rapid growth of Canada’s immigrant population indicates that by 2017, visible minorities will surpass any other group and remain younger than the rest of the population. For every 100 visible minority workers old enough to leave the labour force, 142 will enter (compared with a 75/100 split in the rest of the population). So, while few organizations are as diverse as the communities they serve, change is inevitable. Ask yourself, “How am I currently recruiting and who is responding?” Ensuring a diverse workplace will help ensure your organization is

responsive and relevant to its constituents.

Get your feet wet

Canada’s nonprofit sector is a significant economic force that attracts workers looking to make meaningful societal contributions. But the recruiting challenges are real. To break through, we strongly believe you must plan effectively for change and draw from a diverse pool of potential employees as you source and retain talent for today and the future.

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