



Treat your staffing problem like a ‘marketing problem’... because that’s what it really is!

(Time to read this Blog article is about 6 minutes)

(Note: This Blog is a bit longer than usual, but it’s one of the most important Blogs I’ve ever written).

Attracting and retaining top-performers is the #1 challenge facing most businesses today. I have Biz Coaching clients who could immediately double their sales if they could find the right people.

But many job applicants don’t show up for interview appointments and some don’t even show up on their start day, even though they’ve agreed to the job and, perhaps, signed a contract. Whining and complaining that “*You just can’t get good people anymore!*” won’t solve the problem, so I’m guiding my Coaching Clients through a mind-shift and a process to address this huge universal problem. The best people have to work for somebody...it’s just that you have to deserve them.

The mind-shift is to define this as a marketing problem. Businesses have been marketing to their target customers to increase sales for hundreds of years. Now it’s time to start being as clever and proactive in marketing to your prospective target employees.

For this purpose, let’s define ‘marketing’ as creating and effectively communicating compelling value and experiences that will ‘grab’ your target customers, clearly differentiate you from your competitors, make you ‘famous’...and grow your bottom line.

Whatever product or service you sell, your market is over-served and under-differentiated. There are too many other businesses selling what you sell. So, you need to clearly differentiate yourself to become the ‘preferred supplier’ of what you sell to your target customers.

It’s exactly the same when it comes to attracting and retaining top performers. There are too many other businesses looking for the same talented people and you need to clearly differentiate yourself with a compelling employee ‘value and experience package’. Think of your employees as your ‘internal customers’.

Know who you’re looking for:

When marketing to customers, a smart business starts with defining those target customers and then understanding what life’s *really* like for them. What’s important to them? What do they value? What are they trying to achieve, functionally, emotionally and financially? What do they want more of, and what do they want less of?

So, start by defining your ‘target employees’. In every part of your business what talent, skill, knowledge, experience, value, attitude, energy level and personality do you need? Finding great people *is* like looking for a needle in a haystack. But it’s a lot easier to find that needle if you know what a needle looks like. So, create a Job Description for each position that states the outcomes to be delivered and the key activities required to deliver those outcomes. Most Job Descriptions focus on activities only, rather than outcomes...and that’s a big mistake!

Don’t just hire people who can do the specific job that you’re recruiting for today. Hire people who are a great fit for your culture and values and who can actually help you get to where you commit

to be in 3 to 5 years. Of course, for that you need a clear and specific Vision of where you commit to be in 3 to 5 years to be a profitable and sustainable market leader...and that's a whole other discussion. To access my insightful article on 'The Truth About Vision & Mission', [Click here](#).

Next, think about what life's *really* like for the kind of people you need. What's important to them? What do they value? What are they trying to achieve, functionally, emotionally and financially in their careers and their lives? What do they want more of, and what do they want less of?

Do they want flexible work hours, work-from-home, more vacation time, clear, ethical and effective management, more training and career development, more empowerment, to be listened to and respected, to feel safe, to make a difference within a company with a clear purpose that itself makes a difference in the world? Do they want to work in a culture of integrity, trust, fairness, kindness, diversity, inclusion, empathy, acknowledgement, passion and joy? You don't need to spend much on research to figure this out. Just think and feel like a human being...and ask them what's important.

Let's look at a specific example of what today's employees *really* want. Many of us grew up in a job market where we got 2 week's annual vacation until we were there for 5 years. Then we got 3 weeks vacation for the next 10 years. That simply doesn't cut it anymore. First off, most employees today won't stay with you that long. On average, employees now stay in a job for 4 years and have 12 different jobs over their career. This is a smart strategy on their part because employees who change jobs every 4 years or so typically earn a minimum of 50% more over their entire career than employees who stay in one or two jobs over their lifetime.

Cooper's insight of 'the 4 Currencies':

Our target customers have '4 Currencies' in their lives and effective marketers use all four of these when creating compelling customer value and experiences. **Note:** A 'Currency' is anything of value to your target customers that they don't have enough of.

The '4 Currencies' in our customers' lives (the 4 things they don't have enough of) are :

1. Money,
2. Time,
3. Feeling Safe (physically & emotionally safe)...and,
4. Feeling Special.

But our employees have the same '4 Currencies' in their lives. So, to be a competitive and compelling employer, we need to pay them with:

1. Money,
2. Time to have their definition of a balanced and fulfilling life,
3. Feeling physically and emotionally safe at work...and,
4. Feeling special (noticed, appreciated, thanked and rewarded).

Getting your 'Product' right:

In marketing our products or services to our target customers, once we understand who they are and what life's really like for them, the next step in marketing is to get our product, service and customer experience 'right' so that we become their clear 'wise choice'.

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So, it is with marketing to our target top-performing employees. Now that we've defined who we're looking for and understand what life's really like for them, we need to get our culture, employee experience and career opportunities (our employment 'product') 'right'.

To do this, first we need to take ownership of the problem. We'll never solve a problem that we don't first take ownership of. So, we'll stop whining and get to work to create the kind of business that the best people want to work for, stay with and contribute to. We'll become a 'talent magnet', attracting the best and the brightest!

To do this, set aside two hours to sit down with a few of your smartest and most insightful Team members and use my 2-step Process to take ownership of your staffing problem...and to take action. This could be the most important 2 hours you spend this year!

Cooper's 2-step Process to take ownership of your staffing problem...and to take action.

A) In the first hour, describe on paper the kind of business in your market, in your industry, that the very best people would want to work for, stay with and contribute to.

1. How would that business...
 - recruit, screen, hire and 'onboard',
 - pay,
 - train, coach, mentor,
 - communicate with and listen to,
 - manage,
 - empower,
 - challenge,
 - inspire & encourage,
 - promote,
 - thank, celebrate, reward and 'hug' individuals and teams?
2. What would its employment policies be re flexible hours, work-from-home, vacation time, self-expression, benefits and perks, treatment of others, etc?
3. How would it measure performance, reward performance and deal with non-performance?
4. How would it create career paths and opportunity for those with the ability and drive?
5. Within the company, how would it balance competition with cooperation between individuals and teams?
6. What would its commitments be to family, personal growth, the community and the environment?
7. What would it 'feel' like to work there?

B) Then, in the second hour, write down what you, as a business, must do to become the kind of business that you just described in Section A) above. For each action you commit to explore or implement, specifically what will be done, by whom, by when, at what cost, with what outcomes, measured how to make it happen? And then follow up. The world is run by those who follow up.

Using the insights and 2-step process detailed above, do the work to create an employment 'Value & Experience Package' and a business culture, that attracts and retains the top performers you need now and in the future.

Communicating your compelling 'Employment Value':

Just like in marketing to your target customers, there's no point in being the best if you're also the best kept secret. *"We are what we communicate."* So, you must communicate your clear and compelling employee experiences and career opportunities.

Some smart marketing things you can do to communicate your compelling employee experiences and career opportunities:

1. Create an amazing, inspiring, fun 5 to 7-minute Video that tells the story of what you do as a business; why it matters; your commitment to your customers, your Team, the community and the planet; your history, values and future vision; awards and recognition you've won; meaningful things you've done in the community or around the world; front-line team members who have become Managers; a facilities tour; 3 or 4 inspiring endorsements from current employees stating why they love being part of your Team and endorsements from a few of your customers stating why they love doing business with you.

Post this video prominently on your website, LinkedIn, Facebook and other social media. Include a link to the video to each job candidate in an email confirming their interview time and location and any other logistical info they'll need to find you easily. Ask them to confirm receipt of the email and the video and invite them to be in touch with a specific person if they have any questions prior to their interview.

2. Create a professionally designed Info Piece about your company covering the info communicated in the company Video. This will be given to each candidate when they arrive for their interview. First impressions matter!

3. Create some great branded company swag like hats, polo shirts, sweatshirts, mugs or pens to give to candidates and new employees at strategic points in the interview / hiring / onboarding process.

4. Create engaging job ads and commercials that communicate the uniqueness of your business, how you make a difference, your culture and career opportunities. The ads will include a link to your video.

5. The interview. Here are 5 key questions that good candidates have on their mind as they go through your interview / hiring process. Every aspect of your process should help great candidates answer these 5 questions in the affirmative.

1. Will I have an opportunity to make a difference?
2. How will this job help me grow my career...and grow as a person.
3. Will I be treated fairly, paid competitively and thanked frequently?
4. How will this job fit in with the other important aspects of my life?
5. Will this be an uplifting place to come to every day?

Text them the day before their Job Interview appointment to remind them that you're looking forward to seeing them and asking them to confirm that they'll be there...or advise you if they're unable to attend. Then, if they don't show up for the interview, it's frustrating, but you dodged a bullet, because they likely would have been a lousy, unreliable employee anyway.

If they do show up for the interview, they should be met at the front door and warmly welcomed and presented with your professionally designed Info Piece that we've already talked about.

The interview should be divided into two parts. The first part is screening for fit with the job, your culture and the future of the business and the 2nd part of the interview, if they appear to be a strong candidate, is to start marketing your business as an 'employer of choice'. That should include a physical tour of the facility, so they can picture where they'd be working.

What screening tools are you using to determine if candidates have the qualities you need and are a great fit with your culture and values? To download an insightful article on the 7 types of screening tests that you might consider go to:

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/types-of-pre-employment-testing>

One of my Biz Coaching clients uses the '**Predictive Success**' tool (www.predictivesuccess.com) very successfully.

Note: It's generally unwise to hire someone after only one interview. It's like asking someone to marry you on the 1st date. You don't know them well enough yet.

During this initial interview visit, or a few days later, have strong candidates interviewed by other members of the management or supervisory Team...and by at least two strong members of the Team with which this candidate would be working. All interviews must be carefully planned with specific questions documented. Effective interviewing is an art and a science. Getting it right will save you tens of thousands of dollars.

When a candidate is hired, there should be an immediate and energized 'welcoming communication' sent to them by courier or Special Delivery, preferably with some great swag to start the relationship off right. This communication will include details regarding start date, time and exact location. Remember this is 'marketing' and marketing is all about building relationships and creating passionate connections.

6. The 1st day and effective Onboarding. During the week before the new person arrives, a Memo with photo should go to all Team members who will be working or interacting with the new employee to announce their arrival, describe their function, share a little about them as people and to ask that everyone enthusiastically welcome them.

The new Team member is met at the front door, welcomed and taken to their work area where everything is ready and organized...and a little more swag awaits them. You may think I'm going into way too much detail here, but it's distressing how often I'm told by 'new hires' that when they arrived on 'day #1', nobody seemed to know who they were or why they were there. What a crappy start.

Every business needs an effective and engaging '**Onboarding Program**' that gets every new employee off to a great start. Sadly, most don't. There's a ton of info online about how to do this. Who will take on this project in your business?

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Assign a 'Buddy' to each new employee for the 1st month. A 'Buddy' is a long-time, positive employee in the same Department who will befriend, guide, answer questions for and help a new Team member.

In Conclusion. Will you now start thinking of your staffing problem as a 'marketing challenge'? If so, how will you use the many insights delivered here to help you out-market your competitors to attract, challenge and retain more top-performers in every part of your business? And when will you start?

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