

## **Dangerous Curves Ahead—Finding and Keeping Employees**

**Friday, 11 July 2008 Author Louise Broekman, Founder and Director HR Coach**

Keeping the doors open in your business just got a whole lot more difficult in this tight labour market. The signs are, quite literally, everywhere. Just last week my local bakery was closed with a note on the door that said "Shop Closed- Can't Find Staff". Don't laugh, it could happen to you. Just think of the impact on your business if you were to lose a staff member and struggled to find a quality replacement.

Most business owners are overwhelmed with buzzwords and jargon like "Skills Shortage", "Labour Crisis", "Attraction and Retention Strategies", "Employer Branding", "Employer of Choice" and the list goes on. The old adage used to be that a business can't survive without sales. I'd argue that the 2008 sentiment is that most businesses cannot survive without employees.

### **Labour Shortage is here to stay...**

Media outlets have been running hot with topics like labour shortages, low unemployment rates and increasing wages. Although the market dropped approximately 20,000 jobs in May 08, the consensus is that this is merely a blip on the radar and not a sign of an easing of the market pressures.

Quite simply, we have passed the tipping point. More people are now leaving the labour market than entering it. The demand for talent and skills outstrips supply. Employees are more choosy and more demanding than ever before.

The real question is—what do businesses do about it? More importantly, how can your business compete against big, attractive corporate companies with deep pockets and heaps of perks?

### **Are you Attractive?**

This is not a personal question! But are you attractive to a prospective employee? Would they want to come and work with you? Remember, it's a buyer's market and employees are in high demand. So how can you make your business attractive? Well, as the saying goes, beauty comes from within.

Implement systems to make your business a great place to work and achieve your strategy. Make sure that you look after your staff, measure their satisfaction, look for ways to continually improve, increase motivation and productivity, invest in your people and focus on retention. It sounds like a lot but the most important thing is to start somewhere. One strategy is to benchmark where you are now to determine where you need to focus your energy. A staff satisfaction survey and employer satisfaction survey are a great starting point.

### **Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill**

The smaller the business, the greater the teamwork and flexibility required within roles. This was identified in organisational behaviour research conducted on growing businesses by the HR Coach

Research Institute. Businesses valued staff with the right attitude and would prefer to teach them the skills for the job.

### **Promote your Employer Brand**

The more attractive you are in the market, the more likely you are to draw high quality applicants to you. It's not as difficult as you think. Focus on the way you promote your business to your clients and use the same message for your recruitment process. One way to draw quality candidates to you is to highlight your employee focussed business culture. You can participate in programs like the STAR Workplace program from HR Coach. Prospective employees will look for the logo and instantly know that your business is a great place to work.

### **How Professionals Can Help**

You don't have to wing it and your time is too important to waste. Look for a qualified HR Coach who understands the changing labour market, your future business needs and can assist you with implementing solutions that create a positive impact on your business.

One quote that speaks to me in my business is, "a bend in the road does not mean the end of the road... unless you fail to make the turn." Don't wait until it is too late for your business. There are dangerous curves ahead.

### **About the Author**

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