

The Search for Seasonal Staff



By Joanne L. Smikle

Where, oh where, are the seasonal staff? Shouldn't they be lining up to work at your club? You, dear club manager, are no different from millions of other employers in the United States. You are feeling the effects of the labor shortage predicted by economists and doomsayers for the past several years. Baby boomers are getting ready to retire. The economy continues to grow. There are fewer qualified workers.

The shortage is expected to reach crisis proportions by 2010 with a 10 million worker shortage. These predictions, coupled with the startling reality that applicants are not flocking in droves to get jobs at your club, make it critical for hiring managers to employ new strategies for getting and keeping good people. This article presents four strategies for recruiting a steady stream of seasonal staff.

Rope 'Em In

First, the search must be constant. It is not wise to wait until a month before you need staff to post an ad. You are better served by establishing a constant presence in the places where your applicants are most likely found. That means providing sponsorships, participation in community fundraisers and any number of other activities that show you to be a good corporate citizen. Place ads in campus newspapers, attend career fairs and stay well connected with college placement offices. The more visible you are, the more likely you are to be considered a good potential employer.

Second, consider non-traditional applicants. Retirees and the disabled are both markets that many employers forget. Connect with your local senior citizen agency to get a steady supply of seniors who want flexible, part-time work. While this is a stereotypical belief, most of these older workers have a work ethic and dedication that is both enviable and admirable. Make the Gray Hair Brigade one of your potential sources for staff.

There are many myths about the severe limitations that disabled employees present. The disabled are no different from you and me. We all come with different competencies, skills and abilities. Work with one of your community organizations that specializes in job training and placement for the disabled. They are skilled at matching disabled employees with employers. They also will help you develop a more clear understanding of the benefits of hiring from this special population.

The third secret society of potential seasonal employees is the Mommy and Me play group. Any group that caters to stay-at-home moms is a wonderful source of untapped talent. These hidden treasures are often looking for temporary work that offers flexibility. Many are fortunate enough not to need benefits. They will be happy with fun, temporary work in a pleasant environment.

Clubs put much emphasis on satisfying the needs of members without considering the fact that dissatisfied staff cannot produce satisfied members.

Seasonal Hiring Tips:

- Place ads in campus newspapers and stay well-connected with college placement offices.
- Remember seniors, the disabled and stay-at-home moms.
- Offering referral bonuses and other incentives.
- Create a rewarding work environment so employees will want to return for the next season's opportunities.

The fourth strategy for keeping a steady stream of applicants is the referral bonus. Do not just offer a referral bonus to your current employees, offer a bonus to club members and former employees. Get everyone involved in the talent search. Design bonuses appropriate for each of the possible recipients. The bonus you offer a member may be a gift certificate to your pro shop. The bonus you offer a former employee may be dinner in the club's best restaurant. Brainstorm with your current employees to come up with interesting bonuses.

The Work Experience

Once you find the right people, you have to make sure they have a good experience in your employment. A friend recently

recounted the tale of her summer work as a waitress at a posh New England resort. She regaled me with the story of a young girl away from home for the first time slaving under the most grueling conditions. Not only did the resort ignore every wage and hour law under the sun, many of the guests ignored the laws of decency by making lewd requests of the young staff. These solicitations, reported to management, went unaddressed.

She recounted unreasonable bosses who made waitresses double as maids without providing additional compensation. She laughed uproariously as she recounted her ineptitude as both waitress and chambermaid. She could not remember how to properly fold a dinner napkin, bath towel or bed sheet. She told a story of the cook who would only allow the wait staff from his hometown to eat the hot meals promised as part of the employment contract. The rest of them dined on cold sandwiches for breakfast, lunch and dinner, though they did get fresh fruit for snacks.

Your workplace has to be employee-friendly. Clubs put much emphasis on satisfying the needs of members without considering the fact that dissatisfied staff cannot produce satisfied members. Work to create a friendly, fun environment that makes staff want to return. Be certain you have a clear understanding of the particulars required to make your workplace appealing to potential team members, both long-term and seasonal. Maintain constant dialogue to be sure that your employees are pleased with their work and workplace. Just as satisfied customers serve as excellent public relations, so do satisfied employees. Both groups speak well of your club in circles that you may not be able to reach. ■

About the author

Joanne Smikle is an author, consultant and speaker specializing in leadership development. Reach her at www.smiklespeaks.com or (301) 596-3140.