



Fill Your Organization with Talented People



By Raquel Rolo González

Here are keys to a high-performing group who will work tirelessly to fulfill your organization's goals.

Your organization can't meet its goals without the right workforce. To recruit and retain the kind of staff—both paid and volunteer—your organization needs, here are the steps to take:

Create a Strategic Talent Plan

The first step is talent planning. During this process, it's important to do the following:

- **Identify current and future** human-resource needs.
- **Match those needs to your organization's strategic goals** (identified in your strategic plan; for more on strategic planning, see the first item in "Keep Up the Good Work" on page 25).
- **Forecast your future demand** for employees, based on organizational priorities.
- **Decide on the required number** of qualified, competent people.
- **Plan for the people-management practices** that will help your organization meet its goals.
- **Create a clear target profile** of the people you need. This is the key to sending a strong message and attracting the right people to the organization without the need for mass marketing.

Decide Who to Recruit

If you think recruiting means looking for the best people in general, you're missing the boat. What you want are those who will put in their best for *your* organization. This means discovering people who will

- **fit well** with your organization's culture
- **participate wholeheartedly** in the organization's activities
- **be enthusiastic** team players

“The first step is talent planning.”

- **have values** that match those of your organization
- **have a deep sense of commitment** towards the organization's mission and goals.

It's not about finding people with the right experience. It's about finding those with the right mind-set. Recruit for attitude. Train for skill.

Market Yourself

Once you know your staff needs, the next step is positioning and marketing your organization. To do so, you must know your organization inside out. Ask yourself:

- **What's your brand**—the combination of logo, Web site, and other materials that set you off from other organizations and communicate who you are?
- **What are your organization's key values**, mission, and vision?
- **How would you describe your culture**—the assumptions underlying people's behavior and the collective norms that suggest how they should act?
- **Who are your main competitors?** What do they do to be successful? How do you differ from them?

Once you've answered those questions, you'll know what people will find attractive about working at your organization. That will help you target new employees and “sell” your organization as the place to be.

Select the Best Candidates

Building a culture of excellence depends on attracting, selecting, developing, and retaining high-potential staff.

- **First, know what personality traits, values, and competencies** you want the new employee to have.
- **Use the same interview and assessment techniques** for every applicant.
- **In interviews, ask questions to see if the person's goals** match those of your organization.
- **Perform scrupulous** background checks.

Provide Job Descriptions

After being selected, people need to know exactly what they're supposed to do. Job descriptions make expectations clear. They outline responsibilities not only of the employee but of the organization. Detailed job descriptions help you evaluate people's performance and assure that they receive the best possible orientation and training for their jobs.

Be sure to put the same effort into creating job descriptions for volunteers as for paid positions. No matter how small a volunteer task may seem, a written job description will help immeasurably in making the experience rewarding for you and the volunteer.

Volunteer job descriptions are also an important part of risk management. To mitigate legal risk, ask volunteers to read and sign their job descriptions, noting that they're fully aware of the expectations and limitations of their jobs.

Offer Training and Development

New workers, after receiving clear job descriptions, need functional training to build the skills to perform in their roles. Use training to increase people's knowledge through a mix of theoretical and experience-based learning.

Create a learning organization in which education, training, and development are ongoing, continual, never-ending, and part of the fabric of every-day organizational life. In addition to job-related training, give people access to the type of education and knowledge they want to receive.

Deepen people's potential by using coaching and mentoring. Doing so builds trust and loyalty as well as increased motivation and productivity.

Track Performance

Rather than holding formal performance reviews, assess people on an ongoing basis. Track activities related to each person's job description.

Work with employees to create goals that they'll be motivated to meet. Then ask them if they feel they're making good progress toward those goals. When employees take an active part in reviewing their own performance, they'll be much more motivated toward continual improvement.

Remember the Feedback Loop

Feedback is one of your most powerful tools. You can use it to energize people, help with an employee's development, uncover risks, and solve problems. Frequent, honest, and relevant feedback fosters an environment of open communication and continual improvement.

To be most effective, give feedback on a one-to-one basis soon after the event that triggers its need. Also keep in mind that your input is far more powerful when someone has asked for it; take advantage of those opportunities whenever they occur.

Feedback is as much about objectively stating the positives as it is about stating the negatives. Having a feedback culture in the organization will contribute to the creation of an organizational environment that helps people increase their performance and continually develop their talents.

Reward and recognize people's efforts and achievements on an ongoing basis. Look for rewards that are tied to people's desires and values. For instance, you might pay for attendance at a conference someone wants to attend. You could choose a relevant book for a person who loves to read. Some people would most appreciate being praised in a newsletter article. Others might be happiest simply to have you stop and chat with them for a while.

How do you know the best reward for each person? Get to know your staff. Feedback is a two-way tool: Don't just give it. Ask others for their feedback frequently, too. 

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