



Secrets to Finding & Keeping Top-Notch Talent Without Breaking the Bank

Try these easy, inexpensive ways to create a team of happy, productive workers.

By Mike Champion

Do you feel like you can't afford to pay what it takes to get – and keep – top-talent employees? You're about to discover five actionable strategies to help you do so. Fear not, none of the five strategies is about base salary, benefits, or bribing.

Think more effective and less expensive. Imagine your organization as the sole provider – the sole source of something special that workers are desperately looking for and can't find anywhere else.

1. Build a Community, Not a Workforce

Chances are you're not hiring people for their first job. Some are coming from a job they hate – a job that paid the bills and nothing else. Invite prospective employees to join a community – not to sign up for another less-than-fantastic job.

When you create a community of people with shared values who care about each other, you decrease

people's tendencies to steal, quit, come in late, complain, slack off, and behave in other nonproductive ways. It's a simple matter of building an appealing culture, inviting talented people to join you, and reinforcing what it means to be a good community member. Give people the autonomy to make decisions and the resources to carry them out. Open up the lines of communication to make it easy for them to give and receive feedback.

2. Provide a Sense of Purpose

Once you build a community, your team will have a sense of belonging. Supercharge that with a sense of purpose and your organization becomes extremely sticky to top talent.

People desperately want to be a part of something bigger than themselves, something they believe in. Provide that for them and unleash the floodgates for an avalanche of talent at your doorstep.

“Small things make big differences in employees' lives.”

3. Offer Experiences over Expenses

A study by Harris Group found that 72% of Millennials prefer to spend more money on experiences than on material things. Shared experiences build bonds, families, communities, and organizations. Don't just hope these experiences happen – create them. Schedule monthly events. Rent a bounce house, a dunk tank, or some comically oversized sumo suits employees can battle to the death in – anything to help create experiences for your employees to build that community.

Don't keep the fun to yourself. Invite prospects, clients, employees' families, even vendors. All this creates an environment people are proud to be a part of and makes it hard for them to leave.

4. Lavish Them with Appreciation

This is your secret weapon, and you can have it for the low, low price of zero dollars. Even better, it can be a ton of fun.

When you have employee get-togethers, give awards – not just the typical performance-based awards but awards for everything. Enjoy a few examples to get your creative juices flowing:

- most adventurous
- most thrifty
- best able to learn from mistakes
- most likely to win at arm wrestling.

Small things like this make big differences in employees' lives. Let your imagination loose, and you may well be the one that gets the most benefit.



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5. Put a Bow on It with Core Values

Core values aren't a string of words on a plaque at your front office. They're three to four key beliefs, summed up in a word or two each. They're the guiding principles your organization uses to create your community. They're a golden thread that runs throughout your organization, including your website, your interview process, your employee review process, the on-hold music for your phone system, and who you accept as vendors and employees. Core values bring the first four secrets together and give them power.

It's impossible to get people to act outside of their true beliefs for an extended amount of time. It's far easier (and more enjoyable) to help people live out your shared beliefs for the benefit of a larger purpose. 

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Design a Community to Believe in

For details on shaping a powerful culture, see these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

Creating a Values-Based Road Map (Vol. 23, No. 2.)

Grounded Visioning: A Quick Way to Create Shared Visions (Vol. 26, No. 4)

Why Your Employees Are Losing Motivation – and What to Do about It (Vol. 29, No. 4)

Want to Hire Top Talent? Create an Irresistible Culture (Vol. 33, No. 4)

Let's Take the Mystery Out of Training Millennials (Vol. 36, No. 1)

How to Tap into Purpose to Motivate People (Vol. 38, No. 2)

What Makes a Great Team? (Vol. 32, No. 6)