

WORKPLACE MATTERS

Panelists suggest ways to find good help — and ways to keep it

LANE WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP

Finding and keeping great employees is always a challenge. Uncertain economic times, changing demographics and new technologies can make it even more difficult to find people with the right skills who also fit your organization's culture.

Businesses must constantly update and refine recruitment and retention practices to keep pace. Curious about what local businesses are doing to improve their odds? Lane Workforce Partnership recently hosted a round-table meeting for local businesses to share some of their best practices in recruiting and retaining employees.

A diverse group of businesses came to the table to share common concerns and creative solutions. Here is a summary of the group's recommendations.

Question: *How can businesses reach out to young people still in school? Many students aren't aware of all of the career opportunities in the area.*

Solutions: Attend high school and community college career fairs. Offer interactive displays that draw students to your booth and allow them to "try on" some aspect of the careers your industry offers, whether it's assembling an electronic component or identifying a sample under a microscope.

Consider hosting student interns and offer job-shadowing opportunities or tours. Most high school students are now required to have work or community service experience to graduate. Schools are ready to partner with businesses.

In Lane County, contact the Career and Technical Education Coordinator at Lane ESD for more information: (541) 461-8253.

Universities and community colleges have cooperative work experience programs that will place college students into internships that relate to the student's field of study.

Question: *How can businesses attract and keep younger workers? Many business people feel that this age group seems to have different values*

Some companies said that they have increased supervisory training and have seen a decrease in turnover as a result.

and work styles.

Solutions: Educate yourself and your staff about how various generations in the workplace may differ in their approaches. Try to see the strengths of each work style and how it contributes to the overall strength of the team. There are many books and workshops available on this topic. Some companies are using more Internet-based recruitment strategies to attract this age group, including Craigslist (www.craigslist.com) and posting recruiting videos on YouTube (www.youtube.com).

Also, many local companies are creating flexible benefit packages to appeal to priorities of different age groups.

Question: *How can businesses reach out to people who may not read the help wanted ads?*

Solutions: The group shared many creative approaches to advertising openings. Running an ad in the Sports or Food section of the newspaper was suggested. Others have had success with ads in movie theaters on buses and in industry specific publications and Web sites.

Most of the companies work with local organizations in promoting job openings such as WorkSource Oregon, Goodwill Industries, Job Corps, various youth programs and even work-release programs.

Some businesses host weekend and evening job fairs or participate in community job fairs. Additional online job boards that are used by local businesses include: Monster.com, Careerbuilder.com, Jobdango.com and EugeneJobs.net.

WorkSource Oregon also offers a free online job listing service called

WORKPLACE MATTERS

Panelists suggest ways to find good help — and ways to keep it

LANE WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP

iMatchSkills. For more information, go to www.employment.oregon.gov or contact the closest WorkSource Oregon center for assistance.

Question: *How can businesses address high turnover rates? Many companies report retention difficulties, especially with younger employees.*

Solutions: One local wood products company makes sure to involve supervisors — from the interview to the new hire orientation and throughout the beginning of employment. The company's philosophy is that employees seldom quit the job. They leave because they haven't developed a positive relationship with their supervisor.

Some companies said that they have increased supervisory training and have seen a decrease in turnover as a result. A local food products company tracks where its successful applicants come from, and it has refined its recruitment strategies accordingly.

Some companies report that they give bonuses as an incentive. A local metals company pays employees a bonus if the person they referred to the job stays on for at least 90 days.

Others pay holiday and year-end bonuses. Some companies have found that offering creative perks affects retention, such as pizza parties or on-

site massage.

A local manufacturer attributed her company's high retention rate to the positive culture and atmosphere they worked hard to create. She said that an environment of respect and professional dignity creates loyalty in employees.

In summary, there are many successful recruitment and retention models and strategies developed by local businesses that fit our community's unique culture and work force.

Lane Workforce Partnership regularly hosts roundtable discussions on various workforce topics. If you are interested in participating in future activities, please contact Robin Onaclea, Business Services Coordinator at robino@laneworkforce.org or (541) 682-7224.

The Lane Workforce Partnership is a workforce development organization dedicated to assisting employers recruit and retain employees, and to help individuals find employment and progress in their careers. To comment on this column, or suggest future topics, contact Robin Onaclea, Business Services Coordinator at (541) 682-7224 or robino@laneworkforce.org.