

INSIGHTS: HUMAN RESOURCES

TOP 10

Mistakes companies make in attracting and retaining talent

BY MELISSA KOSSLER DUTTON

With the economy improving, companies are finding it harder to hire top-level job applicants.

"It's a candidate-driven market," said Phil Georgenson, president of PMG Employment Consultants, an executive search and recruiting firm in Dublin. "The employers who have the best recruitment process will likely be more effective in bringing in good talent."

To attract quality candidates, companies need to make sure the hiring process is fine-tuned, said Catherine Reynolds, past president of the Ohio Recruiters Association. And to keep talent, providing health benefits is just the start.

A group of experts offers some tips to overcome common mistakes that derail a company's hiring efforts.

1 Poorly written job descriptions. Clearly defining the position is a critical first step, said Reynolds, owner of OnBoard Recruitment Advisers in Columbus. Hiring managers must decide which skills are essential and which are nice-to-haves, she said. It's also important that everyone involved in the search agrees on what skills are priorities, said Phil Georgenson. "If you don't stipulate what you want up front, you're trying to hit a moving target. That can delay the process."

2 Only interviewing people who are job hunting. Don't limit yourself to people who are job hunting, advises Michael Georgenson, vice president of PMG. "Often the better candidates are the candidates who are not actively looking," he said. Brian Moore, vice president of global talent acquisition at Cardinal Health Inc., agreed. Cardinal routinely reaches out to professionals who are thriving in their current roles, he said. "We have a proactive recruiting team that targets certain companies and talents," he said.

3 Not tapping current employees and professional networks for quality candidates. Cardinal loves referrals, Moore said. "Top-notch people know top-notch people." Encourage people at all levels of the company to be involved in professional organizations, Phil Georgenson added. Use those contacts to create an ongoing pool of qualified candidates so you are not starting from scratch when a position becomes open, he said.

4 Not offering a sense of the company culture during the interview. Candidates want to get a sense of how the company operates, what its values are and who they will be working with, the Georgensons said. "It's a two-way street," Phil Georgenson said. "You need to sell your company and your opportunity." Make sure candidates get a tour of the facility that includes the area where they would be working, Reynolds said. "It can be hard for (candidates) to make a decision if they are only meeting people from HR and have only been in a conference room."



Phil Georgenson



Michael Georgenson



Brian Moore



Catherine Reynolds



J.R. McCullough

5 Not respecting the candidate's time. Remember that the candidate is likely taking time off of work to speak or interview with you, Michael Georgenson said. Try to schedule interviews with multiple people at one time rather than have the candidate come back again and again. Stay in communication with candidates throughout the process and make them aware of any unexpected delays, Phil Georgenson said. "Delays can lead to a candidate to perceive that the company isn't interested."

6 Offering a poor employee benefits package. "Salary is not the only consideration when deciding whether or not to accept a position," said J.R. McCullough, district manager in the Columbus office of Insperty, a national provider of human resources and business performance services for small to midsize businesses. Top job candidates expect competitive benefits packages that include most, if not all, of the following: Health care, dental, vision and prescription drug plans; a 401(k) savings plan; and disability and life insurance.

7 Forgetting the fun. "Yes, work is serious business, but employees can still have fun," McCullough said. Merriment can enhance morale and stimulate productivity.

8 Stifling creativity. Some companies eschew creativity because they fear change. Encourage creative brainstorming to overcome challenges or roadblocks and to possibly lead the company in new and exciting directions, McCullough said.

9 Forgoing training. McCullough said the best firms help employees develop and grow professionally by offering opportunities for them to share information through internal and external training sessions, teamwork and mentoring programs.

10 Failing to communicate expectations. McCullough advises companies to establish and communicate standards of performance, conduct regular reviews and link compensation to performance.