

*An RCI Whitepaper*

# Attracting and Hiring the Best

By

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You know the challenge in front of you: it's getting harder and harder to both attract and hang onto qualified and committed workers. You've tried the want ads, you've attended job fairs, and you've even tried the bulletin board at the local Laundromat. You still have a problem getting people to even think about working for you. The bad news is that this labor market isn't likely to change in the near future, the good news is that the solution to the problem of finding qualified people who *want* to work for you is a lot closer than you think. And it begins even before you have a job to fill.

**Hang onto your good workers.** Most people start putting their ideas for filling a vacancy together as soon as one of their valued employees leaves. But the best place to start in keeping your company fully staffed is to ensure that you don't have a vacancy to begin with. All of the things you need to do to fill a vacancy in your company are a lot more expensive than simply making sure that those who work for you stay working for you. People leave their jobs for a variety of reasons. Some leave involuntarily—you've fired them or put pressure on them to leave. Others leave voluntarily—they may have a better offer someplace else, they don't like their job, or the pay isn't adequate. The most effective strategy for keeping the best people working for you is to give them reasons to keep picking your place as the place they want to work. This means paying attention to the work environment, their future with the company, the pay they receive, and the other rewards you make available for good work. It means investing in building each employee's commitment to your company. If you don't invest here, you'll end up paying handsomely in high turnover, expensive recruitment efforts, and retraining.

But when and if you do need to hire—whether due to turnover or growth in your company—there are some important steps you must take to ensure that your investment in recruiting and hiring returns healthy dividends.

**Step One — Decide what kind of company you want to build.** Before bringing people into your company, you must first decide what kind of company you want. You need to be clear about your company's purpose and vision. This essential first step in the recruitment and selection process isn't a fad or buzzword; it is a critical step that helps you decide who you want to invite into your company to help you create the value for which customers will pay. This step achieves two important objectives for you: the first is that it will help you choose people who will positively shape the customers' experience and contribute value to the company. The second is that the vision communicates to prospective job candidates what you stand for, what your company is trying to achieve for its employees, its customers, and even for the community. When you define your company vision, you clarify for yourself and others the goals, values, and beliefs that distinguish your company from all the others. This might make the difference in attracting people who aspire to the same goals and beliefs as you.

**Step Two — Identify how a person working in the vacant position creates value for the company.** Drawing upon the company vision and its supporting beliefs, this step defines a strong link between the purpose of the company and how this specific position benefits the company. When you announce to the world that you have a job vacancy, you want to be able to communicate the critical role this position plays in the company. Whether this job involves taking customer calls, grooming pets, running an injection-molding machine, or bussing

dirty dishes, you must let people know the value that this position brings to the company and its customers. As with step one, this step can also be helpful in attracting prospective candidates because it makes every job important.

**Step Three — List the benefits and rewards that will come to those who do this job well.** People will choose to work for you for a variety of reasons. It may be the pay you offer, the kind of work you provide, the opportunities available for skill development or job advancement, or something as simple as your location. What you have to offer won't appeal to everyone, but then you're not looking for just anyone; you're looking for someone who will help create value in a certain way for the company and its customers.

Help prospective job candidates choose your company by letting them know up front what job success will mean to them. Be clear and be specific, but don't stretch the truth. Give people a reason to choose your company over others.

**Step Four — Define the critical knowledge, skills, and abilities that a job candidate will need in order to be successful in the job.** When you look at your job candidates, you will need to examine each to determine if he or she has what it takes to get the job done and to create the value for the company that you defined in step two. Make a list of the behaviors, skills, abilities, and knowledge that most contribute to success in the job. Talk to those who have done the job well in the past or who are doing it well now. Find out what the customers value the most. Create a profile that defines the competencies that your ideal candidate should have. While you may not find any person that completely meets the profile, it at least gives you a clear target to shoot for.

**Step Five — Get the word out.** With a clear company purpose, a clear definition of how a vacancy contributes to this purpose, a well-defined list of benefits and rewards that follow job success, and an understandable list of the knowledge and skills that you're looking for, you can now let others know that you're in the market for someone who will help your company. Recruitment isn't easy in this labor market. People have lots of employment choices and they will freely and gladly exercise them. But at least you've made it clear to yourself and others what you're looking for.

In this step, be creative. Want ads work for some jobs, but, in reality, the best place to fill many vacancies is through the informal "friends and family" network and through professional and fraternal associations. This means asking your best employees to be your recruiters (another reason to build a positive work environment). It means approaching people who you see doing good work for others and asking them to give you a call. It means finding out where prospective candidates socialize, what magazines or newspapers they read, what radio stations they listen to, or what groups they belong to. Being a good recruiter requires that you do your homework.

**Step Six — Use a variety of methods for screening and selecting job candidates.** While sorting through and then selecting the best of your job candidates is more art than science, there are some things you can do to improve your success in selecting the right person for the job. Use a combination of techniques to discover the candidates who fulfill most of the knowledge and skill requirements that you've set for the position. Some of the most promising include behavior-based interviews—which focus on a candidate's behavior and performance in *past* jobs—and job tryouts or "in-basket" exercises that give the candidate real work to do and that demonstrate their *applied* knowledge and ability. An extended job tryout can most easily be done through a temporary employment agency, but expect to pay a finder's fee. Such a fee, however, pays for itself when you see the tryout candidate doing the right things on the job.

**Step Seven — Hang on to your good people and don't stop recruiting.** This step brings us around to where this article began. You'll spend less time and money recruiting and selecting employees if you hang on to those good people who work for you now. Do whatever it takes to give your current employees a reason to stay working with you.

And finally, recruiting isn't something you do only when you have a vacancy. Everything you do as a company owner or manager should reflect your passion for discovering and attracting the best people to work for you. If you see someone who just might fit the profile of a great employee, talk to the person. Find out if she or he would love to join a winning team.

## Need Help with Your Hiring Practices?

Russell Consulting, Inc. (RCI) helps organizations develop effective strategies for attracting and hiring the best. Contact us today to learn more about our human resource and human resource development services.

## About Jeffrey and Linda Russell

Russell Consulting, Inc. (RCI) provides consulting and training services to organizations in the areas of leadership, strategy, and change. With a special focus on helping companies and their leaders achieve their great performance outcomes, RCI engages its clients in discovering their own path to success — by helping them identify their aspirations and assets and by assisting them in developing strategic and operational plans to achieve their goals.

Co-Directors Linda and Jeff Russell have authored nine books, most recently *Leading Change Training*, *Strategic Planning Training*, *Change Basics*, *Ultimate Performance Management*, *Engage Your Workforce*, *Strategic Planning 101*, and *Fearless Performance Reviews*.

For more information on RCI and its services — and to download or request the current and past issues of its publication *Workplace Enhancement Notes* — visit Russell Consulting, Inc. Online at [www.RussellConsultingInc.com](http://www.RussellConsultingInc.com) or contact us via telephone at 608.274.4482 to explore the ways we can help you achieve your goals.

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