



Finding key people and engaging them – **Part 1**

There is an old saying, "It is impossible to answer a very complex question with a simple answer."

Anyone who considers the current "Employment Problem" realises it is not a very complex question, it is not pondering all the building points or scope of the problem. Consequently, the process most are using to engage employees needs to be reviewed. The reality is, solving any modern-day problem with decade old solutions is just not going to cut it.

My clients are all quite concerned they cannot find or generate enquires and engage staff with any of the proven methods. No surprises there.

The issue is far from simple and is indeed an extremely complex situation to resolve. I am hoping to detail potential stages to develop awareness, and processes to select and engage people. These methods can be tailored to suit your business needs. While importantly, standing out to the prospective employee as a positive and creative place to seek a career.

The scale of the solution will require a two-part article. Please enjoy part-one. At the end of this article, you will see highlights of part two, scheduled for release in the next issue.

In my view, the employment problem has taken decades to develop, create,

build to the current size, depth and overall situation. Therefore, it needs to be addressed with an all-inclusive methodology.

In my view, there is ABSOLUTELY no short cut to solve the problem if your aim is to genuinely build a robust, appropriate, and successful system to attract and retain employees. The key to this is not thinking that how you used to find skilled people in the past will allow you to engage the talent you want or need in today's world. The ideas put forward should be adjusted, and tailored, to your business, your people, the position requirements and the legal prerequisites in your region.

The steps start retrospectively, to learn from the past which is hoped to inspire the future and acceptance of new ideas to create positive change for all involved.

1. Step 1 – Reflection – Why did you lose the people or need new people?

To set the scene we will assume you have been given notice of a staff member leaving – what next?

This event offers you the opportunity to audit your processes, even question the processes you are using. Ask yourself, "Why have staff losses happened

before?" ... "What is the new position, responsibilities and skills?" Or other questions. I suggest the best course of action is look inwardly to ensure the company is using best practice across the areas the employees are engaged. The upside of investing time into people is significant, whereas, if you just hypothetically ignore it long-term, it is very likely the problem will manifest, and therefore repeat or become rampant.

Conduct a review of steps to remedy your previous methods:

- Assess WHY you are losing people, or need new staff.
- Look at the operations, processes, and people – aim to cut mistakes and internal personal conflict zones.
- Check if existing job descriptions are designed to support the company's Organisational Chart and analyse where the work and job gaps are.
- Is your list of job positions relative to the people, their skills, responsibilities, and roles within the business?
- Process and production: assess your people and process efficiency by empowering people and, increase the ability of skilled people to prosper without the overburden of excess management. Develop more linear management tools and processes.

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- Do you have skilled, effective, and knowledgeable people in the right roles?
- Have you been starting to turn away work more often, what is a remedy for you?
- Create a better and scalable method of contractors and suppliers – formalised, repeatable, and scalable.
- Develop additional “past learning tools” to enhance your move forward to your new Employee Engagement Process.
- Potentially, a new role in the business may attract unforeseen conflicts, power struggles or even conflicts in egos. The safe place is to strategically talk with your current people and list the input.

Potential remediation steps:

- **Develop a formal written exit interview** – An accepted wisdom is to have a friendly exit interview offering both parties listen to what each has learnt from the employment period. Frequently, true insights into improving the business, policies, and a host of conceptions both parties missed, can be clarified. The positives that are shared can offer much satisfaction and opportunities for improvements. It's a unique opportunity where the parties have nothing to lose and much to gain.
- **Conduct a Happiness Survey** – In today's workplace we have been through almost three years of COVID. This is an exceptional event. This unique period has provided people with time to reflect. Many questions abound. Do they really want a nine to five job? What do they really want? Next, the world has become an unstable place. The war in Ukraine, the threat of China invading Taiwan, interest rate rises increasing literally monthly, the unsettled stock market in the USA and the ripple effects that causes. How often do you really work towards understanding how your people feel about their jobs, work colleagues, your customers, the business attitude? If you never ask you will never know.
- **Mistakes, professional jealousy, poor work attitudes and deadlines** - These are just a few of the assurances of the steps that create the flashpoints and triggers to push people to leave your business, and other repercussions that come. Creative people gain no pleasure from poor business practices. They become dissatisfied and look for

a better environment. My observations show that your best people are impacted quickest. Poor mindsets and, unhappy work environments, grow like cancer if not managed with due care and expertise. Become aware, act on any internal misgivings. I can offer you the assurance that when left to itself, the situation does not generally become better. Typically, the opposite is true. I have written several articles which may help. “Are mistakes killing your company”, “If you think good people are expensive – look at your bad ones”. Email me for a free copy. My point is very clear, do not leave festering issues to grow.

■ Organisational Structure, Job descriptions and Work instructions

- Business scalability and effective process is fundamental both in growth and prosperity. The systems in place in your business all need planned efficiencies. I suggest that the lack of an Organisation Chart may lead to a case of “Where do I fit in this business?” While the lack of a proper job description creates unknowns, as people can easily lack direction. They may miss the understanding of just what they are employed to do and, with whom. Poor quality work instructions will literally blindside current employees, whilst any future employees are robbed of the business's “intellectual property” of how to do even simple functions simply, and safely. Work instructions are not only daily working tools, they help to build and grow people and skills, by supporting people with defined knowledge.

- **Process and production:** Fundamental process flow and production is often overlooked. After 30 years running my own large sign and print business, and now witnessing operations around the world, may I suggest that the answer is as simple, as the answer to this question ... *“Are your people and processes efficient to such level, that a 3rd party person can visit a production area and see a visual interpretation of the WIP (work in progress), and clearly see the work pipeline?”* If you can't visualise the picture, or hold the WIP in hand, then you are not empowering people or increasing the ability of skilled people to prosper. You have overburdened employees with excess management. It is the single most critical element ... what you can't measure you can't manage!

2. Step 2 – Create the collateral and processes to ensure the pitch is correct.

At this point, we have looked back and scanned our past activities to employ people. Today, the workplace has radically changed. The methods from the past are generally not working, as expectations are vastly different for new employees, especially across various demographics.

The key words in this article are – integrity, respect, honesty, balance and, understanding.

This is ALL about the creation of an amiable persona for you, and your company, and it must ring TRUE.

The power of Google is undeniable, it means that you will be researching candidates and, they will be researching you, and your business. Thus, among the aspects of your profile must be current, content rich and position the business as a ‘great place to work and build a career’. You're expecting the same when you search the prospect's social media accounts, checking references and research their professional history ... it's hard to hide on the web.

It is not the case of “Any sort of news is good news”. In fact, the opposite is true. Ask and answer this question. When you search your business, yourself, or anything related to you, how comfortable are you with the public perception you have created?

Typically, we aim to teach future employees to be advocates for the business. However, if we look back at the past, we can often see what led you to this cycle and, how to fix it. Yet, with so many employees required, a new approach is needed.

Summary

In Part Two of the next issue, we cover the pre-interview steps, the preparation of the development of the collateral needed in a step-by-step process. Then, where to position advertising, classified ads, and social media protocols.

At www.controlzone.com.au we encourage you to email or call, to discuss “Finding Key People”. We are not a recruitment agency. We work with Sign and Print businesses to create common sense Employment Engagement Protocols.