

Ask the Experts

Q&A on Staffing and People Strategy

by Ken Gonyer

Good news: as of February, the labor market seems to be opening up. It's time to find just the right people to fill your open positions. Who is the ideal candidate, and how do you find them? We asked the experts at **HR Reliance**, a human resource consulting company based in Virginia.

Q: Is there an ideal candidate?

While the needed skills and experience may vary among different jobs, the ideal candidate is one who has the mindset of a leader—no matter their position. A leader is someone who brings their best to work and inspires others to do the same.

Q: How can a retailer find those ideal candidates?

Traditional recruiting doesn't work as easily anymore, so being innovative is key. Here are a few ideas to spark your creativity:

- Recruiting former employees who were star performers
- Offering incentives to your employees, customers, and vendors to refer those who would support your brand
- Casting a wider net and getting the word out to book lovers in libraries, schools, and churches. Consider retirees, veterans, disabled, and even small business owners who were disrupted by the pandemic.

Q: Thinking big picture, how can a company set itself up to succeed with staffing long-term?

Winning organizations are workplaces where employees are inspired to bring their best to work. When you build an inspirational workplace, employees, customers, and vendors will all naturally become some of your best recruiters.

Q: Where does the retailer's brand/mission fit into recruiting?

It's critical. If you don't know who you are, you are unlikely to attract talent that you want. Before more narrowly focusing on recruiting, it is wise to take a step back and develop a comprehensive people strategy. At HR Reliance, we encourage organizations to have these three mindsets as they develop people strategies:

- Individualized – Employees have a lot of choices. Think about the unique value you can offer and how to get your message out in a way that is unique to you.
- Innovative – Identify your challenges and create out-of-the-box solutions. If your normal practices aren't working anymore, be creative. We like to tell our clients to ask "why" 3 times to find the best solutions.
- Intrepid – Acknowledge and embrace the fact that you cannot go back to the way things used to be. Try new ideas that can move you forward without fear.

Q: Any final words of wisdom?

Have a people strategy and live it out with your current team. Let your people strategy guide your recruitment. Remember, inspirational workplaces win!

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