

# WCA Alert

**July and August 2012**

## **7 Ways to Build a Strong Team – Without Hiring New Employees**

(Open Forum June 6, 2012)

Corporations don't want to spend time or money on training employees; they want workers who can hit the ground running. So they look for job candidates who already have the exact skills and experience needed for a particular job. Seeking employees to fit the job—not tailoring jobs to fit employees—is the wrong approach for building a strong, flexible team. It's far more effective to tailor a job to an employee's skills, interests and aptitudes.

*Hire for attitude, not just aptitude.* Say you're considering two candidates for a sales associate job. One has lots of sales experience and knows your POS system, but she's remote and a little stand-offish. The other candidate has less sales experience, but she's warm and enthusiastic, as well as eager to learn. Which would you rather hire? It's easier to teach a friendly person the job than to teach an unfriendly person how to get along with others. Consider what attitude your employee will need to work effectively with teammates and customers, and factor that into your hiring decision. Tailoring jobs to fit your employees gives your small business an edge, because when workers are truly challenged and get to do something they love, they will reward

you with loyalty, energy and innovative ideas. Imagine having a team of workers who look forward to coming to work every morning. That can be reality if you craft jobs to fit your team.

*Be patient.* It takes a while for new workers to learn the ropes. Give new employees the training they need; then give them time to grow into their roles. Regular, detailed feedback—both positive and negative—helps to speed up the learning curve.

*Get feedback.* In addition to giving feedback, get input from your employees on how the other staffers they work with are doing at their jobs. Learning the good, the bad and the ugly about each person will help you determine whether their current roles are the best use of their abilities.

*Talk to employees.* Not just during their annual review process, but, ideally, throughout the year, talk to your staff honestly to get insights about how you could better tailor jobs for them. What do they like most and least about their jobs? What would they like to do that's not part of their current job description? We often ask these kinds of questions when hiring someone, but don't bother to do so after they're on staff.

*Think outside the box.* Every move doesn't have to be a promotion. Sometimes employees are happiest moving laterally within your business or even going back to a job they previously held.

## Mistakes You're Making on LinkedIn

(Forbes March 23, 2012)



With over 150 million people leveraging LinkedIn for job hunting, it's the one place online where honesty is the best policy, from your photo to your college to your sorority.

*No Photo.* LinkedIn profiles with photos are viewed seven times more often than profiles without. Many people still chose to keep their faces off the social graph. This is a really bad call. When there isn't a picture, there's an immediate element of mistrust.

*An old photo or a glamour shot.* Having the wrong photo is a *much* more common mistake. You might look great, and it might get you an interview, but when you walk in the door it can appear to employers like a deceptive bait-and-switch.

*Education.* If you bluff on your education information on LinkedIn, be prepared to be ousted. Rule of thumb in professional social networking: it may seem like a vast network of strangers, but the world is truly much smaller than you think.

*Calling yourself an "account manager".* The headline on a LinkedIn account is key. People usually go one of two ways in making a mistake with the headline, either they leave it as their job title, 'sales associate' or they veer off in the other direction and the language is too flowery. The best bet is to find a middle ground.

*Fudging your skill-set.* Recruiters are starting to get hip to the different searching capabilities on LinkedIn. The settings allow users to search by keywords and skills, years in an industry and all manner of criteria. If your profile lists C++ but you're less than comfortable with the programming language, you might want to re-edit. An employer looking for a specific skill-set might be sadly disappointed when they put you to the test.

*Asking for recommendations.* Recommendations are a powerful tool on LinkedIn, but it's poor form to make a request for recommendation immediately upon making a connection online. Instead, draft up what you're hoping they'll say about you. It may seem nefarious, but it might be your best shot at a

positive (and useful) recommendation. Tell them the position you're hoping to get and what qualities you'd like for them to highlight. The more of the upfront work you can do, the better.

## Low-Cost Local Marketing Ideas

(Open Forum June 6, 2012)

Local entrepreneurs should first focus on networking with other area businesses, major employers, schools, churches, etc. They should network and then create marketing strategies and events that are beneficial to all parties. Here are some marketing ideas to consider before breaking out the big bucks:

*Hand shake and business card.* There is this amazing new social networking tool: a radical concept called meeting people in person. Make a point to introduce yourself to at least five people every week. Say something like: "I'm John Doe, the GM of John's Bistro down the street. Just wanted to introduce myself. Have you tried us out yet?" Pull out a business card, write a special freebie offer on the back, and sign and date it. Out of the 250 people you might meet over the year, odds are 185 will use your business-card coupon, and about 50 will become new customers.

*Cross promote with other local merchants.* Provide a special certificate for other local businesses to pass out to customers with a special offer from you -- compliments of them. You get your advertising handed out for free, and the promotional partner offers their customers a perk.

*Get some bounce-back action.* Ever have special circumstances in which you provide products or services to a group of people who normally aren't your customers? Maybe you own a restaurant that also caters events. So besides catering a retirement party, provide each of the 420 guests with certificates offering them each a \$15 discount on their next meal.

*Support fundraisers -- creatively.* A restaurant was approached by a local charity for a gift card for their silent auction. The company found out the nonprofit expected 400 attendees, they created special certificates for the restaurant that were handed out. Each certificate gave a \$5 donation to the charity when the certificate holder spent at least \$10. The restaurant saw 135 redemptions, and 45 were first-time buyers. The restaurant not only achieved exposure and goodwill, but got new people in the front door spending money.

WCA Alert is designed to provide accurate information regarding the subject matter covered. However, before completing any significant transactions based on the information contained herein, please contact us for advice on how the information applies in your specific situation. WCA Alert is created from the NFIB **SmartBrief**, The Voice of Small Business among other sources.