

Ten Ways to Attract Female Talent

PURPOSEFUL PROCESSES IN YOUR HIRING TO GET THE BEST

by Erin Johnson

IN TODAY'S RECOVERING marketplace, it is imperative that employers hire and retain a diverse team of individuals to lead their companies beyond surviving and into thriving. And just as important as how you get there is who gets you there.

Your team creates your culture, your reputation and, ultimately, every facet of your brand. From the talent that writes and develops the product, to the ambassadors who sell and service the customers, to the decision-makers who win and woo Wall Street, your company's successes start with the talent you hire.

So how do you identify and attract these A-players? Who are they? As more and more companies are hiring women into leadership roles, it is becoming increasingly important to win the coveted best. In order to capitalize on the current pool of female talent, hiring authorities must purposefully pursue these individuals. Here are 10 keys for attracting women to your company:

1) Be a good listener.

Resumes provide much valuable information about a person's background, skill sets and career history. But unless you are hiring an outplacement service, the individual most likely will not be an expert resume writer. You must ask revealing questions in the interview and listen for clues to uncover her true ability to perform and to blend well in your corporate culture.

2) Understand her needs.

Many of today's female professionals have two important titles: manager and mother. Thus, many companies find it valuable to offer women such options as flex scheduling, assistance with daycare or remote workdays. In addition to decreasing personal stress levels, these options communicate value and lead to better performance for the company.

3) Allow her to shine.

Creating a competitive environment for women is essential to attracting, hiring and retaining their talent. For example, setting realistic and achievable goals on a monthly or quarterly basis can stir her competitive drive while also teaching

her never to be satisfied with yesterday's achievements.

Help her outline a potential career path and opportunities for advancement within the company. By doing this, you will make the opportunity to join your team more attractive. Provide outside opportunities such as education funding, seminars and training classes where she can learn and be challenged. Finally, create a program where she can mentor and be mentored. By helping her achieve her highest potential, you will see continual strides in both performance and attitude.

4) Lead with confidence.

As you're courting for hire, you must clearly articulate any information that would factor into her decision-making. Explain such things as the company's vision, the position, the market and company goals. This will earn her respect and trust.

5) Show interest.

As any great salesperson knows, non-verbal communication like facial expressions, body language, eye contact and attentiveness communicates a high degree of interest. This is imperative when interviewing candidates. If the candidate is ill-matched for the role, keep the interview short. If she is highly qualified, tell her at the conclusion of the interview and verbally communicate the interest you've already shown.

6) Give praise and appreciation.

Speak highly of your associates. And when your new hire begins, do the same of her. Compliment her on her strengths and abilities. Remember, there is little more rewarding to the recipient of praise than receiving that praise in the company of others.

7) Be sincere.

An attractive company is one respected in the marketplace. This respect is earned corporately through delivering your product and personally

by honoring your word. Make sure, also, that the picture you present of the position itself is full and accurate.

8) Make a commitment.

The best time to make a proposal to your leading candidate is when her interest is peaked. You want her enthusiasm to be at its all-time high, which means neither extending the offer too soon nor too late. It also means making sure the diamond ring you present is compelling, giving her reason to accept. Many companies today are sitting on hiring decisions, waiting to make sure all internal pieces are first aligned. It is important to keep internal components in consideration: however, a long hiring process runs the risk of either causing the candidate's interest to wane or losing her to another pursuer.

9) Nurture nurture.

It is not often the word "nurture" is used in relation to business, but without purposeful caring as a part of your corporate culture, you will leave your employees stressed, over-worked, under-appreciated and viewing their work as a job rather than a career. The result? A dysfunctional team whose only sense of camaraderie is complaining about the company

10) Say "I do."

Attracting talent does not end when you both sign the contract. Always assume your new hire is being pursued by your competitors, and that she will be receiving a counter-offer from her current employer. If the position involves relocation, remain in close contact with her before and after her start date. Take her to lunch. Bring her in to meet the team. Get her started on a project so that her energies will begin getting tied to her new role.

Even in an employer's market, the imperative remains to attract phenomenal talent. Perks and unusually high salaries drove the marketplace of the 90s. And while times have changed, purposeful processes in your hiring will establish your company as the leading brand.

Erin Forrest Johnson is an executive search consultant with Bell Oaks Company, a 37-year-old executive search firm headquartered in Atlanta (ejohnson@belloaks.com)