



Investing in your employees! Small Business BC Newsletter May '07

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In the Spotlight

Changing Corporate Value Systems to Keep Valued Employees

Finding good employees and keeping them is getting tougher. B.C. is experiencing a shortage of talent to fill jobs, a situation which is creating enormous challenges in every sector of the economy. The hospitality and retail sectors have been hit the hardest, with small businesses also affected by the upward shift in salary levels.

B.C.'s static, or zero population growth curve combined with shrinking inter-provincial immigration and a low unemployment rate -3.9 per cent in March, means B.C. employers are fighting it out with the rest of the country to attract employees.

Karin Kirkpatrick, a partner with The Karmichael Group, a company specializing in recruitment and human resource consulting, notes, "By 2030, the average worker will be 49 years-old. Visualize the work force as a funnel with the most experienced and senior workers moving towards the top and the wide end of the funnel emptying out. Whether employers are seeking welders, CEOs, engineers or carpenters, the process is taking more time, and costing more money." This trend says Kirkpatrick, is going to cause a quantum shift in how companies recruit and retain their employees.

"For many years the workplace has been 'employer driven'," says Kirkpatrick. "If an employer wasn't happy with you, ten people were lined up waiting to take your job; there was simply no incentive to negotiate or work through workplace issues. The job market is now 'employee driven', as businesses struggle to find talent to fill jobs, and the recruitment industry is paying more attention to employee retention. Increasingly, employers are starting to understand that flexibility and job satisfaction are critical to their bottom line."

Kirkpatrick says this means businesses will need to re-define employee commitment. "Now-a-days, commitment is not defined by particular hours, or a particular location," explains Kirkpatrick. "To shift the perceived value of an employee's commitment, companies will need to build trust and create a system which supports a new kind of employer/employee relationship. This may require investing in training and technology to ensure employees working from virtual (home) offices feel they are part of a team, and connected into the organization."

Additionally, companies will have to be more creative in their methods for sourcing talent. Some forward thinking corporations are even setting up Alumni groups to keep ex-employees on their radar screens in case they want to re-hire them.

New and small businesses have an advantage when it comes to adapting to market place challenges. Kirkpatrick explains that new organizations can build in flexibility right from the start, while small businesses are able to embrace change more quickly than large corporations. And change, it seems, is the name of the game.

For more information on how to make your business more attractive to perspective employees visit the [Human Resources Management Association](#) and take the Setting Up HR Systems for Small Business seminar series at the [Small Biz Education Centre](#) at Small Business BC.



Recruiting Options for Small Business

So, you're a small business looking to hire someone to help with the workload – maybe to help make your product, to work with your customers, to do your office administration. You wonder: How long does recruitment take? How much does it cost? And, as a small business on a limited budget, how do you start?

According to Cissy Pau, small business recruitment specialist and principal of [Clear HR Consulting](#), finding the right employee typical takes 6 weeks and can eat up to 30 hours per position. Here's what else she says:

Write a Job Description BEFORE You Start Looking

In addition to setting the appropriate amount of time aside to do the recruitment job properly, small business owners need to write a proper job description - or "hiring roadmap" as Pau refers to them.

"Recruitment is one of the most common challenges faced by a small business," says Pau, "And starting recruitment without a job description is one of the most common mistakes. Tell me: How will you find the right person to work for your company if you don't know exactly what you're looking for?"

The job description – which can be from one to several pages long - should clearly state a position's duties and responsibilities, as well as the "must have" qualifications, skills, and experience required. List daily, weekly, monthly and annual tasks for the position. Summarize tasks into the most critical functions. Be descriptive and specific. If you need someone to do heavy lifting, specify the weight they need to be able to comfortably lift. For "soft" skills (e.g. organizational skills, communication skills), specify how strong their skills need to be or what they'll use them for. "Good communication skills" can be improved by writing "Proven communication skills resolving customer complaints".

Once you have these items defined, you can more quickly evaluate candidates as being in the "Yes – Interview" or "No, don't" pile. Similarly, you can also know quickly during interviews if a candidate has what you want. No more spending hours reading resumes of unqualified applicants. No more using your "gut-feel" when interviewing. No more hiring the wrong employees.

Look Smart

Most small businesses don't have large recruitment budgets, so use both your money and energy wisely when looking for candidates. Ask for referrals from friends, family, your clients, or anyone you trust who may know of candidates for you. When and if advertising, consider your ideal candidate's age and what they read. That is, if you want a young(ish) or computer savvy person, post an ad in craigslist (see <http://geo.craigslist.org/iso/ca> for your city), an association/university/college job board, or - if you have the budget - a job-posting website like Monster.ca. Similarly, if you suspect your ideal candidate may be reading a certain printed association newsletter or reading the local or provincial want ads, put your ad there.

Hiring a university, college or trade-school student can be a great option, says Pau. First, they are keen, enthusiastic, and may be more open to a short-term or contract arrangement (they likely go to school full time for part of the year). Second, many are looking for or need co-op or practicum opportunities to practice skills they're learning at school. Third, funding may be available to offset the cost of hiring. For some co-op programs, see [Langara College](#), [UVic](#), [UNBC](#), [BCIT](#).

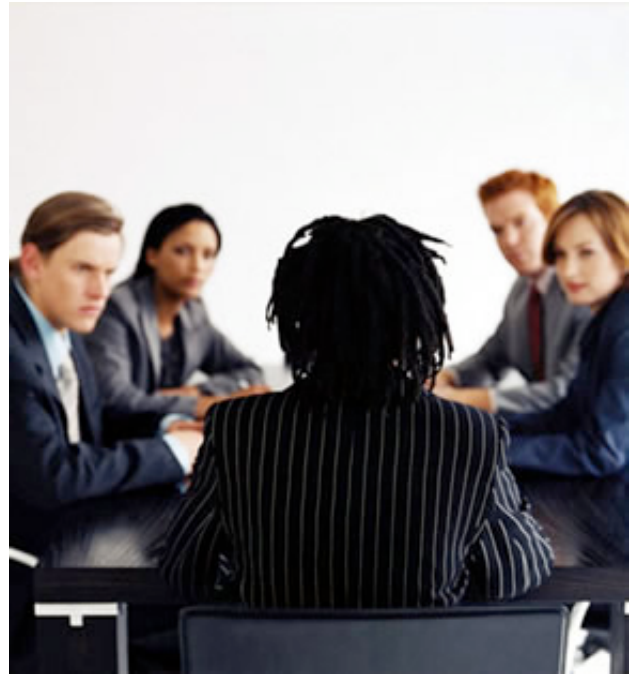
Interviews 101

Now, after a few weeks of having the word out, you should have a pile of qualified resumes to look through. Again, ensure the resumes meet your must have requirements, skills, and qualifications. Pau suggests using a pre-determined rating system, where a certain requirement or skill warrants certain points. Sort high to low.

Then, interview 3-5 individuals.

"Even applicants that who were referrals from your mother should be interviewed," says Pau. "You need to make sure they're a good fit for you and your company."

Conduct a thorough, relevant, objective job interview with each candidate. Pau suggests asking questions that prompt candidates to discuss concrete examples of where they demonstrated the skills you're looking for. Instead of "Can you use FrontPage?" try "Tell me about a time when you used FrontPage to update a customer website".



Got the ideal candidate? Check references – at least 2. And make sure they're former supervisors, so you can hear about the candidate's performance at work.

Make a Clear Offer

Now, you've got your best candidate selected – create a written offer letter that includes the basic terms and conditions of employment. Common items to include in an offer letter are:

- Position title
- Basic duties & responsibilities
- Start date
- Compensation, including rate of pay & overtime considerations
- Bonus system, if any
- Work hours
- Probationary period
- Benefits & insurance
- Vacation entitlement
- Statutory holidays

Call the candidate to make the offer and provide them with a reasonable time frame to consider their decision. Should the candidate make a counter-offer, know your budget restrictions and consider what is currently in place for other employees in your company and in the industry. After an agreement has been reached, set a start date and prepare for your new employee's orientation to your company. Congratulations!

Cissy Pau, Certified Human Resources Professional and B. Comm, is a recruitment and small business human resources HR specialist who specializes in developing and implementing practical human resource policies, procedures, and systems for companies experiencing growth and change. Her company's website, www.clearhrconsulting.com, contains more details on the recruitment process and other HR issues faced by small businesses – see <http://www.clearhrconsulting.com/resources/archives.html>.

Community Spotlight: Fort St John



(Peace River, Ft St John)

Fort St. John, known as the "Energy Capital of BC", is located 785 kilometres north east of Vancouver in an area known as Peace River country. Fort St. John has a population of more than 18,000 and the city is a service centre for the 64,000 people who live and work in the outlying areas. What's interesting about the demographics of Fort St. John are that the town's median age is 29.6 years - the 2nd youngest in the province after Whistler, and about 10 years younger than most cities in BC. Fort St. John is a place where young people are working hard, raising families, creating wealth and making business happen.

For the past several years, exploration and production in oil and natural gas resources has moved at a record-setting pace, with

much of the region's natural gas deposits – estimated at among the largest in North America – still untapped. About 450 billion cubic meters of marketable gas reserves have been identified so far and an estimated 650 billion cubic meters have yet to be discovered. Natural-gas production in Fort St. John so greatly exceeds provincial demand that most of its oil and gas is exported to markets in Canada and the U.S.

With more than 16 million hectares of nearby active farmland, Fort St. John produces more wheat, barley and grass seed than any other region of the province. The city and its unique prairie land base supports 1700 farms, which in turn generate about \$77 million per year.

The forestry industry in the area directly employs more than 600 people and contributes \$90 million per year to the local economy. Surrounded by a 4.5 million-hectare timber supply and with room to grow sustainably within their Allowable Annual Cut, the local sawmill and pulp mill are busy, creating timber products and converting sawmill wood waste into salable wood fibers for the German and Japanese markets. The focus on traditional forestry has expanded since 2005 with the opening of the Canfor/LP Peace Valley OSB (oriented strand board) plant, where layers of strands (flakes) of wood are compressed and bonded with wax into a highly inexpensive yet uniform, water-resistant, rigid engineered wood product.

Tourism and recreation also figure prominently in Fort St. John's economy. The nearby Alaska Highway provides a steady stream of RV traffic in the summer, and many staying to enjoy fishing and recreation in the many lakes, rivers, and provincial. In winter, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, dog sledding, snowshoeing, and a local invention called skjoring are enjoyed by many.

As part of booms in oil and gas and forestry in the area, countless local companies have formed to provide the necessary support, including trucking, logging, laying pipeline, constructing wells, and proving seismic analysis. As these industries continue to grow, local businesses in retail and service struggle to keep pace. In 2006, papers like The Vancouver Sun featured special employment sections to try to attract new workers and service providers to the area.

For more on Fort St. John, see: www.fortstjohn.ca
www.fortstjohn.com
www.fsjchamber.com - Fort St. John & District Chamber of Commerce

Website of the Month

[Yahoo SiteBuilder Homepage](#)

Yahoo Site Builder is a powerful and downloadable Web site building tool, and the latest step in Yahoo's efforts to establish itself as the leading provider of Internet solutions for small business.

Developed in-house at Yahoo, the Site Builder tool is a departure from the free Web design tools commonly offered by Web hosting providers. Perhaps the most important difference is that it is a downloadable program that allows users to manage their Web presences from their desktops and publish to Yahoo's Web hosting service, unlike browser-based tools, which usually require users to edit pages online.

Anyone can download site builder for free and use it to design a site, without so much as a Yahoo ID. But to publish the site, the user requires a Yahoo Web hosting account.

Site Builder also allows users to incorporate functions from throughout the Yahoo network into their Web sites. Customers can incorporate features like maps or driving instructions into their site, or use the popular Yahoo Store to build in e-commerce features.



Upcoming seminars and events

Whether you're at the thinking, launching or growing stage of your business, you'll benefit from our complete range of information-packed business seminars, facilitated by our Small Biz Education Centre. We've formed strategic partnerships with several organizations to connect you with some of the leading industry and government experts.

Upcoming seminars and events:

[Small Biz Education Centre](#)

@ Small Business BC, Waterfront Station 82 - 601 West Cordova, Vancouver BC

May seminars at the Small Biz Education Centre:

[Success with Search Marketing "How To Grow Your Customers and Sales" - Presented by Yahoo!](#)

May 24, 2007. 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Record Keeping and Accounting for Small Business

May 25, 2007. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

10 Deadly Sins of Business Development

May 25, 2007. 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

First Steps - Finance and Market Research for Business

May 30, 2007. 9:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

Are You Interested in Exporting?

May 31, 2007. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tax Tips from an Accountant

June 4, 2007. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

10 Deadly Sins of Marketing

June 8, 2007. 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The Basics of Selling on eBay

June 8, 2007. 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

eBusiness Connection

@ Small Business BC, Waterfront Station 82 - 601 West Cordova, Vancouver BC

Women's Enterprise Centre

Seminars held at various locations throughout BC

BC & Yukon Trade Events

Import and Export related seminars held at various locations throughout BC and Yukon

Retail BC PEAK Retail Training Program

Courses held at various locations throughout the Lower Mainland.

Events around town:

RBC Olympic Business Opportunities

May 18, 2007. 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Rotary Centre for the Arts - Atrium, Kelowna, BC
Please RSVP to Carolyn Schatz @ 250-470-4709

Cloverdale Rodeo and Exhibition

May 18 to 21, 2007. Cloverdale Rodeo and Exhibition 176th Street Surrey, BC

Eat! Vancouver - The Everything Food + Kitchen Show

May 25 - 27, 2007. BC Place Stadium Vancouver, BC

BC Export Awards - Call for Nominations!

Deadline June 1, 2007. Recognizing BC's Top 25 Exporters for 2007, the BC Export Awards are looking for those companies who export goods and services to destinations around the world. The Awards celebrate the innovative approaches and unique contributions of BC's "export champions" to the province's economy, its communities and citizens.