

Recruiting “Outside the Box”

It's not unusual for a restaurant without an internal accounting structure to hire a professional accounting firm to assist with important financial decisions. Nor is it out of the ordinary for a small hotel to bring in outside catering for a special client who is hosting an elaborate dinner. In doing so, the organization is simply making a smart business decision by having trained professionals provide the service. This choice does not mean that something is missing within the organization. Rather, it reflects a desire to look “outside the box”, providing services that better serve the customer, thus generating revenue that's needed to stay competitive in a highly volatile market.

The logical question then is why this industry seems to resist the notion of hiring outside services to provide our most important resource – people. Effective recruiting, like cooking or accounting, is not something everyone is either confident about or qualified for. Those who do it well are trained professionals. They have both the aptitude and interest in finding the right people for the job, and also in matching the job and organization to the person. Good human resources and recruiting practices do not lend themselves to simply finding a “warm body”. Successful hiring means taking the time and effort to get to know both potential applicant and employer.

Many industries would not give a second thought to contracting an outside agency to fill vacancies. In the hospitality industry, however, we seem to have the naïve idea that effective leaders and managers are automatically effective recruiters and interviewers. This is not to say that leaders and managers should not be directly involved in the hiring process and have the final say in who is hired. The simple reality may be that to make them responsible for all recruiting is effective neither in terms of time or results.

How can an outside agency appreciate the unique environment within our organization? Without the long-term commitment to the company's success how can we feel comfortable with a recruitment agencies' commitment to our people and the company? Organizations commonly voice these valid concerns when deciding whether or not to seek outside recruitment assistance. However, a reputable human resources consultant practice will make the effort to get to know the organization from the ground up. They will talk to a variety of employees, from line staff to upper management, in addition to spending time simply “being in” the establishment. In doing so, they will acquire a sense of what kind of person best suits the environment and place people who compliment it. This is why an organization must carefully screen potential consultants - to ensure that the work they do is industry specific (a sound knowledge of the industry is imperative in hiring good people) and reflects the values that are important to the people within the organization.

Organizations that do not have a designated human resources function should look carefully at the negative financial impact of hiring practices. High turnover,

absenteeism, workplace accidents, and overall poor performance can be the direct result of hiring the “wrong” people. Problems such as these are much more difficult to deal with in a reactive as opposed to a proactive manner. If an organization takes the time and acquires the expertise necessary to recruit competent, enthusiastic individuals, positive bottom line results are measurable. Effective recruiting affects the bottom line, as ultimately it is the people within the organization who generate revenue and predict overall monetary success. A product or service cannot sell itself.

In an industry that thrives on continuous innovation and change, there is definite merit to having an external recruiter – someone who sees the “big picture”. It's worth repeating that using an outside recruitment source is not a reflection on poor internal human resource practices. Rather, it is an affirmation that ones' most important resource - people- are being brought on board by trained industry professionals. Recruiters know the impact that quality staff can have on any business. Outsourcing this service can make very good economic and business sense, which, at the end of the day, is what makes good human resources.