

Employers getting outsmarted



Travel is not the only industry facing a recruitment dilemma. Most industries are in a similar predicament. Veteran consultant and *TTG Asia* Training columnist, Ray Bigger, kicks off the new year by asking bosses to look squarely at why they have not changed.

THERE cannot be many of you out there reading this for whom staff retention is not an issue, and by that, I mean in real dollar terms. Having said that, the only surprise to me is the issue now appears to be at the top of companies' agendas – why hasn't it been constantly at the top of companies' agendas?

Maybe when the economy was struggling, jobs were scarce, people were plentiful and employers

drove a hard bargain. Now the economy is doing well and there is a scramble for talent. Yet we hear mountains of comments about the cost of poor recruitment and losing good people, which have severe repercussions on profitability. So what has changed?

In this first article I am going to walk through some of the issues, all of which will be expanded upon in later articles. Companies spend considerable sums of money

IN South-east Asia, more than 40 new hotels are springing up in Thailand alone this year, and it will be needing between 7,000 and 10,000 staff to man them.

In Singapore, the two integrated resorts, scheduled to open in 2009 and 2010, will require 20,000 staff. The

picture is the same across the region, where trained, bilingual and multilingual staff are being lured away.

The manpower crunch will dominate headlines in 2008 and *TTG Asia* is tackling the hot topic head on with the launch of a 10-part series in its training column.

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and time developing and growing their brands to establish an image, market position, brand values, emotional appeal, etc in the minds of buyers. Is the same input accorded to hiring and retaining people? While a number of companies clearly do and do it exceptionally well, the vast majority, it would appear, do not.

Why can I say that? Let's look at some data.

In the last two years, various surveys carried out in Singapore (and Asia) highlight that the majority of personnel are disengaged from their companies and/or management. By far the worst was a Gallup poll two years ago where 82 per cent said they were disengaged and 12 per cent totally disengaged! The average seems to hover in the 65 to 70 per cent bracket.

With research models becoming even more sophisticated the figures are truly frightening. Even if the cynics doubt the figures and you "discount" the figures by say 15 per cent, they are still appalling.

Why are people disengaged? They are unclear about their role, the boss does not communicate, they are not sure what is expected of them, a lack of rewarding and challenging work and so on. Interestingly, money

is on the list, but it is not near the top. Further research identifies that when people leave a company, again the majority do so for reasons other than money.

Where do the problems lie? Firmly and squarely in the hands of the management. Do managers have the skills to recognise their own deficiencies and take action or does self-interest prevent that action?

In my work with companies, I ask this telling question: "Why should people buy you and your brand?" The answers are varied and inconsistent indicating a lack of clarity. If the top people do not know, what chance does the sales team stand in differentiating itself from the competition?

The flip side to the above is to ask members of your team or colleagues this question: "Why should anyone/someone come and work for us/our company/brand?" I will bet you will get similar answers to the questions as to why buyers should buy your brand ie varied, diffused and confused. So what are the statements given by your interviewers to interviewees on this point? Most likely they will define your company as at best a "me too" company meaning

nothing distinctive, no dynamism and little to differentiate you from the competition, just an okay place to work in.

Let us take this further with two questions.

- What has fundamentally changed in the way you/your company recruit personnel at every level (and I do not mean tinkering)?
 - What radical change has taken place in management thinking about the way they handle recruitment (and I do mean radical)?
- The data indicates very

little has changed, so why are companies surprised or agitated by the current recruitment dilemma? Companies have been slow to react to the fact that interviewees have changed their approach. This was starkly outlined at a human resource conference I facilitated last year where you could see the attendees' jaws dropping at what they were hearing and seeing, "but just how" was written all across their faces. They would have to change.

I read recently that some companies were considering lowering their criteria for

recruitment which is plain dumb. They have other problems that need addressing.

If you have carried out an employee survey recently, did you take it seriously, did you give the feedback to your employees, did you take action or was it quietly filed away?

So ponder this. Remove human resources from the recruitment process and pass the responsibility not to the department head but to the personnel in that department and then tie their bonus to the department's performance. That would create a sharper focus. Achievable, yes. Why? Because it is already happening in more enlightened companies which are making themselves employers of choice and they are not all big boys either.

COACHING



Articles to look out for

- Recruitment tools
- Innovative assessments & interview techniques
- Realistic, practical and relevant job/role descriptions
- Training & development of your people
- Coaching & accountability
- Performance reviews
- Effective teamwork & communication
- Setting objectives, goals & targets
- Remuneration

THESE articles will grow into an aide memoire for you to keep and use. It is all about recognising and marshalling people's strengths not going overboard on correcting weaknesses – think about it.

THINK

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