

## Multi-Unit Franchising Articles

## Are You Tough Enough: Does Your Company Know How To Hire Right?



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Everywhere you look jobs are being replaced by new technologies and automated systems.

We book our own airline tickets online. We fill our own gas tanks and pay at the pump. Touch screens at the neighborhood deli allow us to punch in our sandwich and beverage order. We can pick up a rental car and check into and out of a hotel without ever interacting with any of the providing business concern's employees. And don't even get me started on automated voice call-directing systems.

Much of what is driving the rapid adoption of these new technologies is that business owners and managers worldwide are under increasing pressure to do more with less—along with an inability to find the kinds of workers necessary to deliver quality service.

While the combination of these two factors may make it appear that the roles of employees are being diminished, this couldn't be farther from the truth. With fewer in-person interactions between companies and their customers, each interaction needs to be of the highest quality, or you risk not only losing that customer to the competition, but also of that customer telling 13 friends about their negative experience.

That's exactly what happened when my computer locked up last week. After two screening conversations that took about 10 minutes each, I spent another three hours on the phone with one of the manufacturer's tech support personnel. After all else failed, he asked me to find a Phillips screwdriver and walked me through removing the bottom covers, popping out the hard drive and the motherboard and reseating them. As you might imagine, I was sweating bullets. The capper is that when these extreme measures didn't work, he wanted to send me a box so I could ship my only laptop to them for a couple of weeks to repair in-house.

On the advice of a friend, the next day I took the laptop to the Geek Squad at the nearest Best Buy. The young man behind the desk waited on me immediately, fixed it in 10 minutes, and didn't charge me a red cent. Now where do you think I'm going to shop first the next time I need any electronics or a new home appliance or And when I need a new laptop, which brand do you think will *not* be on the short list?

And I'm not just saying that your technical people, salespeople, counter person, receptionist, and cashier need to be the best. Everyone does.

When I rent a car, the only employee I meet is the one who lets me out of the gate and the one who checks in my car when I return. They are the only ones who have a chance to make sure I'm happy and let me know my business is valued.

When I check into a hotel at an unstaffed kiosk the only employee I ever cross paths with during my stay is a housekeeper. This means her responsibility has expanded from just keeping my room clean to being the property's goodwill ambassador. At the best managed places, she smiles and asks if there's anything else I need in order to be comfortable.

At the core of Southwest Airlines' tremendously successful corporate philosophy is founding CEO Herb Kelleher's (it's Gary Kelly now, Herb is chairman of the board) unwavering belief: "The day we screw up the people thing, it's all over."

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The airline is renowned for being picky about who they hire for every single position—and just look at where it's gotten them. In 1971, they had four planes and 195 Employees (yes, they capitalize the word "Employee"). In 2005 they set an industry record with 32 straight years of profitability and now boast more than 33,000 Employees. And they never have a shortage of qualified job applicants—even in our increasingly tight labor market—because everyone knows Southwest is a great employer. They have built their entire culture on the fact that the Employees come first and the customer second.

They often say they treat their Employees the way they want their Employees to treat their customers.

What one company has done, any company can do. So the obvious question is, "Why don't they?" Better yet, "Why don't you?"

You'd think everyone would be all over this bandwagon. Instead of recognizing that the most important decisions they make are who gets hired, some are driven largely by profits, some by products, some by growth, etc. And while many pay lip service to the hackneyed phrase, "Our employees are our greatest assets," very few really walk the talk.

This is aptly illustrated by the fact that more than 90 percent of those responsible for hiring front-line employees in North America have had little or no training in the proven best practices that result in superior recruiting results and the best hiring decisions.

Starbucks, the darling of Wall Street, is taking a lot of hits right now, but don't count them out. When its chairman and founder was asked how they were able to pay the wages and benefits they do to even part-time workers, he said, "The reason we pay well and give benefits is not because we are successful. We are successful because we pay good wages and give benefits."

So how does your organization stack up? Do your hiring managers know:

- The number-one, best source of proven, great employees? (No, it is not employees who come from referrals.)
- The one key question to ask every time someone gives them a referral?
- The biggest mistake most hiring managers make when it comes to looking for their next new, great employee? (Clue: They are looking in the wrong places.)
- How to better identify what they really want and need in their next employee? (And this doesn't mean creating yet another job description.)
- How to get people to tell them the truth in the interviewing process?
- The number-one biggest mistake in interviewing? (No, it is not talking too much, even though that is a major mistake.)
- The single most important interviewing question to ask every single applicant?
- How and why everything they do in the hiring process is a test, and how to evaluate the results?
- How to use a tool that will make them all better interviewers with no additional training?
- How to legally ask the questions they need to ask?
- The number-one reason great people quit? (It's not for more money.)
- The number-one motivator for almost every employee? (This one isn't money either.)
- The other four major motivators everyone is looking for, no matter which generation they belong to?
- How to reduce employee turnover by five percent?
- The most important question that every new employee is asked after their first day at work, and what the answer needs to be?

Red Auerbach was the winningest coach in NBA history and he liked to say: "If you hire the wrong people, all the fancy management techniques in the world won't bail you out."

Now how does your organization measure up? Do you get how and why the most important decisions you'll ever make are hiring decisions? It couldn't be otherwise. You have a corporate name, logo, and brand. Just like Southwest Airlines and Starbucks, you also have an employment brand. Is it one that says, "We hire only the best?" You'll never be greater than the sum of your parts—your people, your Employees. Are you tough enough to hire tough so you can manage easy?

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