

Employers Adjust to Workforce Changes

More and more turf industry employers report that they can't find and keep good employees. They're not alone. A slew of societal factors have combined in recent years to create labor challenges for employers everywhere. And experts predict that this situation could continue, even during an economic slowdown.

First, U.S. demographics are changing. Fewer young people are entering the workforce as the number of older Americans in the population increases. Women have taken a higher percentage of full-time jobs in the last decade. And the number of Hispanic workers entering the U.S. workforce is increasing, creating language and cultural issues for employers.

Employee expectations and loyalty have also changed. Employees are more likely to change jobs if they become dissatisfied in their current job or if wages and benefits are more attractive elsewhere. Some of this loss of loyalty stems from the tight job market of the '90s that increased competition, plus wage and benefit packages, for workers.

Yes, it's a challenging labor market for small business employers. But progressive and innovative human resource strategies can overcome the challenges.

Two human resource strategies that will serve you well in a competitive labor market are building employee commitment and creating a positive image.

Build Employee Commitment

Employees are more likely to be attracted to a business and stay with it if they enjoy their work and can be productive. As an employer, it's your job to help create this environment by doing at least four important things:

1. Create a vision and a direction for your business. Then communicate that to all employees. This creates a purpose for their work and helps them to feel part of the organization and its success. The sense of contributing to something bigger and more impor-

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The Human Dimension

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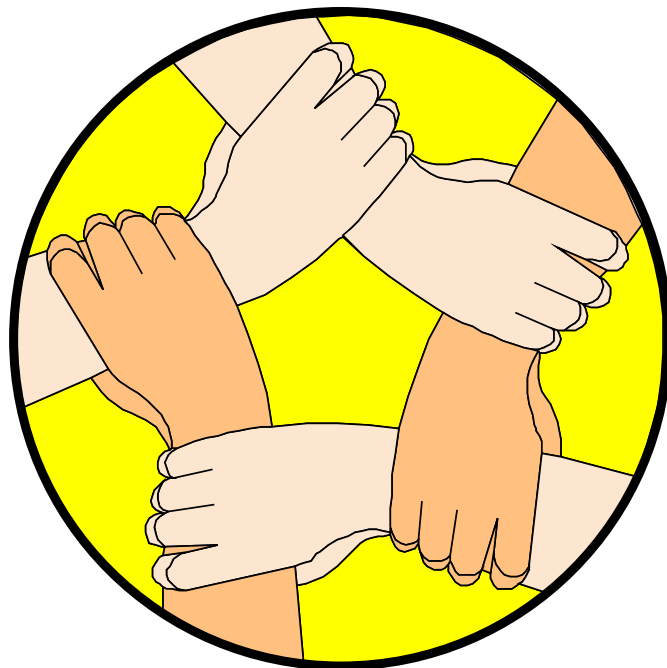


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2. Develop and support the people you employ. Determine their training and development needs. Then work with employees to develop their personal development plan. This creates a win-win situation: employees gain valuable skills and your business benefits from a higher performance level.
3. Outline the standards for good performance and help employees meet those standards by becoming their coach and supporter.
4. Communicate the results you expect for jobs. Then provide employees with the freedom and resources to achieve those results.



Create a Positive Image

Why is it that one turf related business has a ready supply of qualified applicants, yet the one across town struggles to find and keep good employees?

The difference may be the image that a business projects to the community and to prospective employees. The following factors can help create a positive image and attract a pool of applicants:

1. Promote what’s good about employment in your industry. Successful turf businesses highlight the benefits such as working outdoors, job variety and the opportunity to see results of hard work.
2. Maintain the appearance of your business. It helps create an image of excellence and acts as one of your most valuable advertisements. Most people want to work in a business that is highly regarded and has a reputation for professionalism.
3. Provide competitive wage and benefit packages. This allows you to compete for the best job candidates.
4. Employ professional human resource practices. Begin with creative, attractive recruitment ads that promote the job you’re offer-

ing and your business. Professional practices include your reputation for training, developing and helping people succeed.

5. Keep employees happy. A business’ current employees are its best advocates for attracting new employees.
6. Create opportunities to promote your business in your community. Building your public image enhances your ability to attract good people. Many businesses successfully use tours, open houses and public service to promote themselves and to create goodwill in the community.

The best employees always have a choice of where they work, and they’ll opt to work for the best employers. If you have a reputation as a poor, or even average, employer, it’ll be more difficult to find good employees. Instructors at universities, colleges and tech schools will steer their students to the better employers. Business associates will also recommend the best employees to employers whom they perceive to be good ones.

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