3 Areas of Focus to Effectively Attract, Retain, and Grow Team Members

The Great Resignation (TGR) has thrown staffing into a tailspin. As employees seek opportunities which allow them greater flexibility, autonomy, work-life balance, among other attributes and values, employers are scrambling to backfill open roles, attract new talent, and restructure teams, departments, and even entire organizations to compensate for this dramatic, rapid shift in workforce culture, expectations, and practices. With many companies using the same playbook, is it possible to stand out amongst the sea of opportunities currently being presented to candidates, particularly for smaller, perhaps lesser-known businesses such as boutique and independent hotels? This raises another valid question: For those organizations with positions not conducive to work from anywhere (WFA) or even work from home (WFH)—two major factors of TGR—such as housekeeping, is attraction possible? With a fair degree of creative thinking and by focusing on the three areas outlined below, not only is it possible, but likely.

1| VALUE RECOGNITION

There once was a time where employees were expected to conform to their company's values, cultures, and practices. These days, however, those expectations are being re-examined. While no less significant, TGR is not the first instance where labor markets have been adversely impacted by mass exoduses. For example, both World Wars had crippling effects on employment. The Great Recession of 2007-2009 is yet another example. TGR, however, is arguably the first time significant shifts in the employment market can be directly attributed to heightened recognition of and demand for employee values, ethics, mental health, cultural sensitivities, environmental consciousness, work flexibility, and other standards.

With roughly 40% of the global workforce considering new employment, according to Deloitte, employers are now expected to adapt to an evolved talent pool. This is especially true for hotels, which, among others in the leisure and hospitality sector, as well as those in industries such as government and education, have been disproportionately impacted by recent employment events. In 2020, for example, Deloitte reported that "80% of job losses were among the lowest quarter of wage earners".

The market has always ebbed and flowed. However, unlike the rebounds of the past, a recovery in today's day and age requires—in some cases significant—change on the part of the employer. Because while an external factor (COVID-19) might have been the impetus, it is no longer the primary driver behind current market conditions. To curb current conditions, modifications to corporate culture, values, ethics, and infrastructure are required.

Talent, for the first time in recent—if not recorded—history is in the driver's seat. Their demand for corporate cultures and values that align with their moral and ethical standards is essential to realizing a balance in the employee-employer dynamic. Mental health, including work-life balance, is also of great importance. This has, in part, led way to a newly heightened emphasis on work flexibility, such as WFH and WFA. People Managing People reported that a 2020 study conducted by the Work Institute found that "some 75% of employee turnover was preventable." The study further revealed that "10.5% [of the 75% of preventable turnovers were] work-life balance-related: Scheduling, travel, and remote work preferences".

Empathy, recognition, and diversity and inclusion are also amongst the key values held by today's workforce. Seeking to understand and value employees as individuals, versus as a

role or—even worse—a number, and acknowledging their contributions, performance, and attributes are paramount. Further, ensuring that an organization is adequately and equitably comprised of different races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, etc. continues to remain top of mind and of key importance.

Not only are job seekers searching for opportunities with organizations that meet their standards, but they are holding the organizations accountable. For example, Forbes reports that "87% of employees expect their employer to support them in balancing work and personal commitments". Built In found that "Employees who don't like their organization's culture are 24% more likely to quit." And, People Managing People revealed that "for 67% of job seekers, inclusion and diversity are important considerations when deciding where to work."

So, how does an employer increase its likelihood of being desirable to job seekers in this new, hyper-competitive market? The first step is to acknowledge and adjust to the changes in employee expectations to better align with societal standards regarding corporate culture, work-life balance, work flexibility, mental health, environmental consciousness, empathy, recognition, diversity and inclusion, etc. The standards, dynamics, and focus have shifted—arguably, in many ways for the better. They have humanized the most human element of success. It is a valiant first step in bridging the historical divide and recapturing the interest and respect of candidates and employees alike, but there is more that remains to be done.

35% of American workers say they would pass on the perfect job if they felt the company culture wasn't a good fit.

60% of U.S. employees would accept a job they love that pays half their current salary over a job they hate that pays double their current salary.

52% of hiring managers at organizations where remote work is available reported fewer difficulties hiring within the past year.

Employees who believe their organization has broader goals outside of profit margins are 27% more likely to stay at the company.

85% of HR leaders say employee recognition programs enhance their organizational culture.

-Built In

Achievers Workforce Institute's 2021 Engagement and Retention Report found that the top reasons employees would stay in their current job include: Work-life balance (23%); Recognition (21%); Compensation (19%); Satisfactory working relationship with their manager (19%)

If they had to choose between the two, 54% would prefer setting their own hours and 40% would choose flexibility in location

Slack's October 2021 FutureForum survey found 93% of employees want control over when they work and 76% of workers want flexibility in terms of where they work.

71% of the Future Forum respondents who reported being unhappy with their current role's level of flexibility are open to seeking a new job in the next year.

-People Managing People

2| Professional Development

Contrary to common belief, and despite the groans and grunts that often accompany job training, workshops/seminars, and team building activities, professional development is vital to candidate attraction and employee retention. Education and training leads to empowerment, engagement, and the potential for advancement. Team building leads to greater empathy, shared values, a collective mission, and a general sense of belonging.

When considered in those respects, the emphasis placed on professional development becomes far less debatable. Fortunately, most employers believe in the power of education and training, team building, and other forms of professional development. There should be comfort in knowing that those efforts are largely valued and appreciated.

For many organizations, however, there are challenges to effectively presenting, executing, and recognizing professional development. Challenges such as consistency, effectiveness, clarity, management, and others.

The data suggests that a large percentage of today's workforce believe their employers do not offer adequate or frequent opportunities to advance their skillsets and careers. Even worse, a nearly equal percent feels as though there are constraints,

whether intentional or not, adversely affecting their professional development and career paths.

Those constraints could be systematic or in the form of either their direct report manager or leadership. Communication is key. Ineffective communication—whether it be a lack of, poor, or hostile—can, not surprisingly, be detrimental to employee morale and performance.

If management fails to communicate the importance and availability of professional development, and, for each employee, their roles, responsibilities, and possible career path, team member engagement and satisfaction risks being severely compromised. According to Built In, "employees are 23% more likely to stay at a company if their manager clearly explains their role and responsibilities."

Professional development and its correlation to effective communication extends to a clearly defined business strategy and communication by management as to how each role plays an integral part in the overall success. If team members feel as though they are on an island and/or that their efforts either do not contribute to the overall performance of the organization or is not valued for doing so, again, morale, engagement, and performance will decline.

It must be said, communication is not exclusive to performance reviews. As a matter of fact, there is a growing resentment for the hallmark tool. There is a strong belief that these reviews detract from the company's culture and are mere formalities. Somewhat to that effect, Built In found that "89% of HR leaders believe peer feedback and regular check-ins enhance their organizational culture."

For clarity, "peer feedback and regular check-ins" are separate from performance reviews.

So, aside from acknowledging and adjusting to the new standards of today's candidates and employees, consistently and effectively offering and communicating professional development tools is yet another way to stand out from the masses.

Highly engaged teams show 21% greater profitability.

Those teams who score in the top 20% in engagement realize a 41% reduction in absenteeism, and 59% less turnover.

-*Forbes*

76% of employees believe that a well-defined business strategy helps cultivate a positive work culture.

42% of millennial employees say learning and development opportunities are the most important factor when considering a job opportunity.

43% of workers say they left their company because of career path constraints.

Without professional development opportunities, 67% of millennials say they would leave their current position.

94% of employees would stay in their current role longer if they felt the organization invested in their professional development.

Monotonous annual performance reviews do

not add to your company culture. In fact, it can be a deterrent for more than 30% of staff.

-Built In

A 2020 study by Work Institute found that some 75% of employee turnover was preventable. 18% career-related: opportunities for growth, achievement, and security; 10% job-related: enjoyment and ownership in manageable work.

According to Deloitte's Talent 2020 report, 42% of employees seeking a new job didn't feel that their company was maximizing their abilities and skills.

-People Managing People

The World Economic Forum estimates that by 2022, more than half (54%) of employees are going to need significant training, with more than a third of that number (35%) needing at least six months' worth of effort.

-PwC

3| Technology Solutions

Technology is becoming a common theme when looking to succeed in today's competitive and ever-evolving marketplace. Nowhere, perhaps, is this truer than in the hospitality industry—hotels in particular. The hotel industry has long had a stigma of being behind the times technologically. Recent advancements in guest service, workplace efficiency, and revenue management solutions—specifically those geared towards the hotel industry—are likely to change the narrative.

The embracing of technology in its many forms and focuses is essential to all areas of success—employment, performance, guest satisfaction, sales, etc. For instance, a recent article in Hotel Business claims that "80% of candidates are searching for jobs on their phones". Ensuring that both the application and interview process are mobile-friendly is, in fact, a technological advantage.

There are a bevy of tech services, products, and other solutions designed to maximize efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction for nearly every aspect of the organization. For example:

- Hiring technology to help identify and attract the ideal candidate
- Revenue management and strategy software to increase optimization, efficiency, and data reporting/insights
- Online training courses accessible via mobile phone for anytime professional development
- Workforce management tools to improve organizational health, drive alignment and engagement
- Team communication platforms and apps to increase employee camaraderie and engagement

Tech solutions that are specifically designed to benefit team members can be leveraged to amplify and advance organizations despite the hyper-competitive environment. Largely all that is required is the embracing of technology and wiliness to invest.

Just as there are a host of solutions catered directly towards the workforce, there are numerous tech products and services which indirectly impact their performance and satisfaction. To name a few:

- TV entertainment platforms for guest entertainment
- Mobile check-in and mobile key to improve speed, efficiency, and guest satisfaction, while reducing friction
- Multifunctional, ergonomic, sustainable furniture to reduce costs and environmental impact, while increasing guest satisfaction
- RFID lock technology to enhance the guest experience, increase

speed and efficiency, and reduce friction
- EV charging stations with integrated smartphone software to increase guest engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty
- Air purifiers to improve indoor air quality and reduce safety concerns

Wondering how the above technologies impact the employee? They are designed to enhance the guest experience, thereby reducing friction and increasing efficiency. These efficiencies act as safeguards for team members against becoming overwhelmed, and ultimately lead to a less stressful work environment and increased team member satisfaction.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that technology is not a substitute for human interaction nor a strong corporate culture. The intention should be to utilize technology to improve/complement human interaction—whether peer-to-peer, employer-to-employee, or employee-to-guest—and strengthen the corporate culture. It is not intended to be a Band-Aid or a catchall.

Ensuring that the technology is necessary and productive are also key factors. Implemented incorrectly or unnecessarily, technology can hamper the very area(s) it was intended to progress. Employees may feel threatened by the new product or service. Bottlenecks can be created and/or the guest experience can be interrupted with ineffective or poorly planned technologies. Poorly designed and overly-complex systems can add to employee frustration, burnout, and disengagement.

The benefits of technology, however, far outweigh the potential for negative outcomes, particularly when adequate thought is given as to its need, selection, and application. Its universality makes it an incredibly important tool in attracting, retaining, and growing team members.

61% of employees are burned out on the job.

31% of respondents report extremely high levels of stress at work.

-Forbes

Another third (37%) [of employees] are more likely to adopt new tech if it helps them advance their careers or gain status, such as the opportunity for promotion or other external recognitions.

90% of C-suite executives believe their company pays attention to people's needs when introducing new technology, but only about half (53%) of staff say the same.

While 92% of C-suite execs say they're satisfied with the technology experience their company provides for making progress on their most important work, only 68% of staff agree.

73% of people surveyed say they know of systems that would help them produce higher quality work.

46% [of employees] say their company doesn't value employees who are technologically savvy.

56% [of employees] say they feel technology is taking them away from human interaction at work.

Nearly half of employers in a supervisory role (46%) say they feel overwhelmed by technology at work, while 61% say they spend more time getting technology to work than they'd like.

For a third of the workforce (34%), the motivation to use technology comes from curiosity and the promise of better efficiency and teamwork.

-PwC

An overwhelming 91% of employees report being frustrated due to inadequate workplace technology.

Top complaints included slow speeds (51%), extended response times from IT teams (34%), lack of collaboration between departments (30%), missing important features/capabilities (28%) and lack of automation (25%).

71% of whom [survey respondents] acknowledge that employees will consider looking for a new employer if their current job does not provide access to the tools, technology or information they need to do their jobs well.

More than half (57%) of unsatisfied employees say their current software makes them less productive.

Nearly half (49%) of employees surveyed report that inadequate workplace technology causes

them to feel stressed and 48% claim it has negatively impacted their mental health.

-Global Newswire

Conclusion: The Power of Three

There is a reason "trifecta" and similar terms have a certain draw. There is even a rule dedicated to the number. The Rule of Three suggests that when things come in threes, they are inherently more satisfying and effective.

What has been discussed here can be summarized into three goals with three ways to accomplish them all. To effectively attract (1), retain (2), and grow (3) team members, focusing on the following areas is a surefire way to accomplish all three:

1. Recognizing and adjusting to employee values

2. Effectively communicating and investing in professional development
3. Embracing and investing in technology

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