

It's a Tough Job to Build Careers

All the technology in the world is wasted by inattentive staff. You've paid for the fiber. Now it is time to pay attention to hiring and keeping the best.

By Bryan Rader ■ *Bandwidth Consulting LLC*

Look around the table at your next staff meeting. Do you know who on your team considers working at your company to be a career, and who just considers it a job? Look out at your technicians in the field, and walk through your call center. Are some of these folks simply working here for the paycheck on Friday? Do others want to interview for every job opening in the company?

As I meet my clients, I am always amazed at what I find out about their staff. It is the single most telling piece of data about why they are (or are not) performing at an optimum level. Some companies talk about competitors' threats, technology deficiencies, and customer dissatisfaction, and the need to build a plan to address these items. But how do you fix what's wrong if you have the wrong type of players in place to execute?

The first question I consider is: Who is working here just to have a job – a place to spend time away from home, or earn enough money to go to the movies on the weekend? Who uses every sick day allotted to them, and leaves early before a holiday to extend a weekend, and has car trouble three times a month?

On the other hand, who stays late the day before a holiday to make sure things are in order? Who pitches in to help with a special project? Who volunteers to work overtime at a new property launch?

Snow Days

I remember watching what happened every time we had a slight snow dusting in Atlanta during the winter. The people who considered working at my company a "career" never had problems starting

their car, or driving through the snow (okay, it was really a cold rain) to get to work. The "jobbers" always called the office to say, "My driveway is covered with ice. My car won't start. I can't get out." Or, "I have a tickle in my throat – better go back to bed."

One of my clients recently asked, "Tell me what's wrong with my MDU business. I have given my team good resources, marketing materials, and a commitment to upgrade my service. Why are my sub counts going backwards?"

Because your team is simply going through the motions, I said: "Sure, they clock in at 8:30 am each day. The techs pick up their work orders. CSRs answer calls relatively quickly. The marketing staff sends out another postcard direct mailer. But they are sleep-walking through their days!"

"Why is that?" he asked.

"They consider working here to be a job, and a not a career-building opportunity," I said. "And that will fundamentally destroy any resources you put in front of them."

Cable companies (including private cable operators) have been notorious for treating most of their staff as head count. "I'm just here to do my job," one manager recently told me. "I stay out of their way, and they leave me alone." What about striving to take your boss's position? Or to be transferred to a bigger division, or system, or property route? Is this company hiring head count, or career-oriented associates?

Benefit Levels

According to the Cable Telecommunications Human Resource's Association's recently released 2007 Benefits Survey, cable companies are starting to figure this out.

Over half (56 percent) are offering tuition reimbursement, and 68 percent offer employee referral rewards. They are now offering benefits, too, such as 401K matching (100 percent), dental plans (62 percent), and wellness/preventive care plans (62 percent). Over half even provide on-site gyms, day care facilities and cafeterias, and 44 percent offer adoption assistance. Wouldn't you want to build a career at one of these companies?

The REIT industry is going through this transition, too. One executive recently told me that "we try to hire talented on-site staff who want to stay with us. They don't want to become an assistant manager. They want to become regionals, or even VPs in the corporate office. That's what we look for."

And so should PCOs. It starts in the interview process. Any business plan you put in place with "clock-watchers" will fail. Stop hiring to fill jobs, and start hiring to fulfill careers. Look at your benefits package, your training programs, your internal promotions plans. Attracting a career-oriented team is the best way to meet your economic goals for your company.

What happens to *your* staff on snow days? **BBP**

About the Author

Bryan J. Rader, former CEO of MediaWorks before selling the company in 2006, has recently founded a new firm, Bandwidth Consulting LLC, to advise operators and providers in the MDU market segment. He also remains President of IMCC. Contact Bryan at bryanjrader@yahoo.com or by phone at 636-536-0011. You can learn more about Bryan's new firm at www.bandwidthconsultingllc.com.