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It's 2007 All Over Again

Preparing your company for the impending labour shortage in Canada



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In this issue of *People Insights*, we will examine the anticipated challenge of finding good quality people in what is expected to be an ongoing labour shortage in Canada starting after this recent recession. We will look at the challenges companies will face as well as discuss ways to both avoid and overcome these challenges in your organization.

We all recall the time before the recession, in 2007, when companies had tremendous struggles in finding people, let alone qualified people, to fulfill the work needs of their organizations. The recession has probably helped us forget these painful issues, but, as the economy recovers, this problem will begin to resurface very quickly. Already, many organizations are showing strong signs of recovery and growth and they are actively recruiting for qualified employees who can continue to help their businesses flourish. In fact, Prime Minister and economist, Stephen Harper, in a recent CBC interview referring to the Canadian economy stated his concern of the impending "longer term problem, which is the labour shortage in our economy".

So, how can your organization minimize the impact of this challenge

and avoid the headaches of finding great people? There are two strategies that should be considered. First, an organization should develop and implement plans and programs to ensure that it is able to effectively keep the good talent that it has by providing engaging and challenging work opportunities for all existing employees. By doing this effectively, organizations will create strong work cultures that will be recognized by potential employees as great places to work. This, of course, will ease the challenge of attracting new employees, even in a tough labour market. Secondly, organizations must examine their recruitment, selection, and hiring processes to ensure the ability to attract high quality people to the company during what is expected to be a long Canadian labour shortage challenge. These two opportunities will now be examined further.

Keeping Great Talent

Perhaps over the past few years, some organizations have failed to project the right actions to make current employees feel engaged and wanted. To avoid labour shortage challenges, this must begin to be rectified immediately. Here are a number of suggestions that could be considered:

- Conduct an employee survey to find out how employees view the organization and be prepared to deal with the results effectively.
- Conduct an HR Audit to ensure systems and processes are in alignment with the needs of the company as well as the needs of the

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Has the issue of the impending long term labour shortage in Canada raised a concern for your organization?

Now, more than ever, organizations need the expertise of a Strategic Human Resources partner. Contact the President of **People Insights, Inc.**, Neil Zambik at 604-585-6608 to assist you with developing a strategy for your organization to deal with this impending challenge.

People Insights, Inc. continues to provide strategic Human Resources and innovative People Development programs and processes for organizations.

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The time to deal with the impending Canadian labour shortage is NOW!

- employees.
- Provide management and leadership training. It is important to note that most employees leave organizations because of how they are treated by their immediate manager.
- Ensure your organization has a strong proactive leader holding the HR portfolio. This person must be well respected and viewed as trustworthy by staff and executives by being able to stand up for what is right.
- Managers and executives must make a concerted effort to proactively seek out employees' feedback by deeply listening to their issues and concerns and then dealing with them in an effective manner.
- Become an employer of choice by finding ways to make your company truly a great place to work. A task force of employees and managers could lead such an initiative.
- Examine all elements of your compensation program to ensure that total compensation is fair and competitive.
- Find ways to reward employees frequently. Remember, it's the little things that count.

Improve your Recruiting Bandwidth

Of course, making your organization a great place to work is a key factor in being able to attract great employees. As well, there are a number of things organizations can do from a recruitment, selection, and hiring point of view to improve the odds of finding great people. Let's now look at some things your organization could consider:

- Recruit early. It takes time to find great people and then get them on board and up to speed. Recruit

well in advance of the need.

- Treat recruiting as a marketing process. Involve your marketing team in developing programs for marketing your company as a great place to work to potential employees.
- Implement a referral program for existing employees to allow them the opportunity to refer great employees to the company.
- Consider foreign trained workers. There are many extremely educated individuals in Canada who may not speak perfect English but can bring wonderful experience and educational backgrounds to your organization.
- Attend job/career fairs often. Even if you are not actively recruiting at the moment, regular attendance at job fairs increases your company's exposure to potential future employees. Staff the booth with some of your motivated, positive employees.
- Increase company exposure by seeking out speaking engagements for senior employees to talk about your company. Also seek out media exposure opportunities.
- Encourage employees to represent the company in community events and volunteer endeavours.

In summary, the labour shortage challenge is arriving in Canada. Rather than wait until the crisis hits, preparing your organization now for the challenges ahead will ensure a competitive advantage for your company in the future. Every organization in Canada will be faced with these issues and, if they do not anticipate the challenge today, they will be faced with a crisis situation in the near future that will not be easy to fix. Success depends on dealing with this major HR issue today.