



Success in Hiring

Successful recruiting strategies in today's job market

by: Paul Schwartz, Copier Careers

If you are a dealership principal or a hiring manager in the copier/MFP channel, you are probably aware that one of the biggest factors restricting your growth today is the low availability of qualified candidates. In the 25-plus years that my company, Copier Careers, has been recruiting for the independent dealer channel, I have never

seen a candidate shortage as severe as the one we are facing now.

What is behind the shortage? The truth is, we are victims of our own success. Managed print services (MPS) and managed network services (MNS) have enabled strong and rapid growth within the channel and the demand for OEM-trained technicians and proven sales reps has outstripped supply. What's more, copier/MFP channel employees are reporting unusually high levels of satisfaction with their current employers, which means they are changing jobs less often and are, therefore, not available to participate in the job market. That is great if these individuals are already working for you, but it is not ideal if you are hoping to hire them away from your competitors. MPS annuities have made experienced sales reps particularly difficult to recruit — a topic we explore at length on copiercareers.com in our annual salary survey of more than 10,000 industry sales professionals.

To put it succinctly, the best people working in the industry today are happy and well-compensated, which makes them immensely difficult to recruit. Though it is tough for employers to accept, the reality is that it does not matter how reputable your company is or how generous your job offer might be. If candidates are happy where they are, there is little you can say or do that will convince them to come work for you.

This may sound like a hopeless situation. It is not. Even in this historically tight hiring environment, it is still possible to recruit qualified, experienced staff. But it does require diligence on the part of the employer. It is also essential that employers recognize one essential truth: In today's job market, new hires happen on the candidate's timeline, not the employer's. Once you are able to accept that candidates will come to you at unpredictable times, you can begin to deploy the following strategies that will greatly improve your ability to hire and grow in this environment.

(1) Make opportunistic hires. Despite the tight job market, great candidates do become available for a variety of reasons



(e.g., relocations, abrupt changes in compensation plans or territories, internal trouble at their current dealerships, etc.), and when they do, you have to be open to hiring them immediately, regardless of whether you have an immediate need. If you do not quickly take advantage of the opportunity, one of your competitors will.

(2) Stop hiring reactively, start hiring proactively. At Copier Careers, we are retained by most of our first-time clients to fill an immediate need for a mission-critical position, often because an employee has quit unexpectedly. Because we maintain relationships with (and have detailed performance metrics on) more than 76,000 copier/MFP channel technicians, sales reps, sales managers, service and operations managers, and back-office professionals, we are well equipped to solve time-critical problems like these. However, once the crisis is averted, we advise all of our clients to stop hiring only reactively — in response to an immediate need — and begin hiring proactively, in anticipation of future needs. In a candidate-driven hiring environment, it is essential to build “bench strength” into your ranks so the loss of one employee does not send your entire operation into turmoil.

(3) Use your business plan to identify future staffing needs. Have short-, mid- and long-term business plans in place and make sure that you are identifying your future staffing needs as part of those plans. Good plans will not only inform your hiring decisions and empower you to build bench strength where you need it most, but they will also allow you to make informed decisions quickly when an unexpected hiring opportunity comes along.

A fourth and final piece of advice is to apply these tactics continuously, while regularly devoting time to making new connections within the industry. Like so many other things in life, there is no secret to success in recruiting. It all comes down to hard work and persistence. ■

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