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People Power:

Calculating the Real ROI of Staffing Smart

By Scott Cullen

Dealers that approach hiring like any other capital investment are better positioned to scale, retain customers, and build resilient teams.

In the office technology space, return on investment (ROI) is a core part of every business conversation. Dealers leverage it when discussing their hardware, software, and service offerings with customers and prospects. They use it to assess sales performance and department efficiency. But when it comes to hiring and retention, ROI often falls off the radar, a critical oversight in the current competitive labor market.

“Dealership owners and managers are constantly looking at ROI when it comes to what they sell,” said Paul Schwartz, president of Copier Careers. “But the most important ROI they get is from the people they employ. If you don’t have the right people to sell, implement, manage, or maintain your products and services, you don’t have a business.”

According to Schwartz and Jessica Crowley, senior vice president at Copier Careers, many dealers underestimate the long-term financial effects of their staffing choices, especially the cost of leaving a role vacant. In a hiring market still recovering from years of generational shifts and industry changes, not investing in the right person at the right time can cause a chain reaction of missed opportunities and shrinking margins.

Calculating the ROI of Talent

The value that a single employee adds to a dealership can be remarkable. For example, a productive sales representative might generate between \$800,000 and \$1 million in annual revenue. A skilled service technician can enhance customer loyalty and cut down on costly downtime. The right back-office team member can improve efficiency in billing, collections, and operations.

Dealers often hesitate over recruitment fees and onboarding costs. But Schwartz encourages them to look at the bigger picture. “Yes, there’s a cost whether you’re recruiting externally or developing someone internally,” he said. “But the ROI that person brings to the organization far outweighs the upfront investment. And if you recruit someone who already has the experience, you reach that return even faster.”

Even in technical roles, where certifications and brand-specific experience are often required, the ROI still makes sense. Whether the hire is closing deals or keeping the customer base happy by maintaining their equipment, a delay in filling that position has real costs in lost revenue, strained teams, and slower growth.

5 Questions Dealers Should Ask Themselves About ROI and Hiring

1. What revenue or productivity am I losing each month this role stays open?
2. What will it cost me to fill this position quickly and correctly?
3. Am I open to candidates with adjacent skills who can be trained quickly?
4. Do I have a long-term strategy for retaining high performers once hired?
5. Am I calculating ROI for people as rigorously as I do for hardware or software?

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The Talent Challenge: Why This Is a Critical Moment

The office technology workforce is undergoing a generational transformation. Fewer new professionals are entering the field, and seasoned industry veterans are aging out. That's created a talent bottleneck, one that smart dealers are racing to address.

"People are the hardest thing to replicate," Schwartz said. "You can manage supply chain issues, expand your product catalog, and raise prices, but finding the people to actually implement, sell, and support those solutions—that's the real challenge."

And the candidate pool isn't just shrinking; it's evolving. Crowley notes that today's job seekers are more willing to switch employers if the opportunity doesn't provide the compensation, growth, or culture they want.

"Clients often ask why candidates are leaving jobs every few years," she said. "It's happening across industries, not just ours. For many professionals, changing jobs is the only way to significantly boost their compensation."

That's a harsh reality for employers hoping to maximize the ROI of a long-term hire. But Crowley encourages clients to reframe the question: "If a sales rep brings in nearly a million dollars in a couple of years, was that investment still worth it even if they eventually move on?"

What Forward-Thinking Dealers Are Doing Right

While some dealers have not yet seen hiring and retention as strategic investments, others are changing their approach. "The companies that work with us—they factor in the cost of recruitment," noted Schwartz. "When they come to us, they know what they want. They're looking for individuals who already have the certifications or the experience. They understand that finding those people takes time, and they're willing to invest in doing it right."

But not every dealership has the same needs, or the same level of flexibility. Some companies are open to hiring from parallel industries or cross-training individuals who are technically inclined but lack direct OEM certification. Others insist on a narrow set of qualifications, which can stretch out the hiring timeline and reduce options.

Crowley stresses the importance of alignment and communication. "Each company is different, so our job is to really understand the client and figure out what's going to be the best fit," she said. "We can control our process, but we can't control people. And when it doesn't work out, we partner with our clients to figure out the next step."

The Hard-to-Measure ROI: People Aren't Widgets

While dealers are comfortable calculating ROI for equipment and service contracts, the math gets murkier when it comes to people. "Hiring isn't like making widgets on a conveyor belt," Schwartz said. "It's hard to calculate because you're dealing with human beings, personalities, and variables that don't fit neatly into a spreadsheet."

That doesn't mean ROI can't or shouldn't be evaluated. On the contrary, Schwartz believes more dealerships need to take a long-term approach to hiring and retention. That includes budgeting for recruiting, training, and development just as they would for any other growth strategy.

Crowley agrees. "When a client doesn't have the time or resources to fill a role themselves, they partner with us because they see the value in our reach and our process," she said. "They know we'll do the work to find the right fit so they can stay focused on their business."

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Rethinking the Cost of Delay

Every day a critical position that remains unfilled represents a lost opportunity, whether it's a deal that didn't close, a service ticket that wasn't resolved, or a workflow improvement that never got started. While some dealers try to wait it out or cut corners, the cost of delay can quickly surpass the cost of hiring the right person the first time.

"Dealers need to ask themselves, what's the real cost of not hiring?" Schwartz said. "How much are they losing in sales? How much stress are they putting on their team? How many customers are they putting at risk?"

In the current labor market, the ROI of a smart hire is undeniable. And in many cases, that investment can mean the difference between growth and stagnation.