

A Two-Pronged Solution To Your **SEASONAL WORK**

To get and keep great staff throughout the upcoming season, you need to implement a robust recruitment plan and you need to get to know more about each of your employees when they're not at work.

By Eric Chester

My father came of age in the Great Depression.

You know the type: WWII vet, grizzled, fiercely patriotic, relentless work ethic, saving every penny for a rainy day. He was the kind of dad who passed stern warnings on to his working teenage children to “keep your nose to the grindstone and don’t make waves because you’re damn lucky to even have a job.”

His house rules were made clear to us when we were very young: if you wanted a car as a teenager, you had to earn money and buy it yourself. You had to pay for the insurance, the gas, the oil, the tire changes and all the maintenance.

So at 12, I had two daily paper routes. At 14, I washed dishes in a Chinese restaurant for a dollar an hour under-the-table, and I kept the paper routes for two more years. At 16, I got hired at the local Baskin Robbins and started mowing lawns for the neighbors on my off days.

Work was a necessary evil, not something to be enjoyed. Thus, I sacrificed, scrimped and saved until I had enough to buy an ugly beater 12-year-old Plymouth. However, she was all mine, and I was more proud of that ride than any other car I’ve owned since.

There was a kid on my block, Randy, who got a job in a concession stand at a local pool. I was insanely jealous of him because he actually got to work at a place that other people went just to have fun. Randy wasn’t paid any more than the other kids who had grunt jobs like mine, but that didn’t matter. He got to swim for free, and he would tell us stories about all the girls that would stop by and talk to him while they were there sunbathing.

As I reflect on the jobs of my own teen years, it’s hard for me to imagine any kid who wouldn’t jump at the chance to work at a waterpark today, even if meant mopping the deck, cleaning filters and emptying the trash.

However, times have changed, and it’s no longer every teen’s dream to work at a



COME HEAR MORE FROM ERIC CHESTER,

as he continues the conversation about how to hire and retain the best employees for your facility during his Keynote Session entitled, **"Fully Staffed – Finding, Developing & Keeping Great People In Your Waterpark."** This Keynote address will take place at the **2019 World Waterpark Association's 39th Annual Symposium and Trade Show** on October 9, 2019 at *Disney's Coronado Springs Resort* in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, U.S.A.

FORCE WOES

waterpark because many kids don't need to work at all. Some of today's parents that were as hardscrabbed as mine didn't (or don't) want their own kids to have to work through their teen years, so they bought cars for them, paid for their insurance and kept those cars full of gas and adequately maintained. Moreover, many have been handed the latest electronics, fashions and fun-filled experiences that were totally inconceivable to me as a kid.

On the opposite side of this coin, many other kids have not had the opportunity to work because employers have been mandated to pay much higher wages than they can justify paying an untrained, unskilled workers; so those jobs go to more mature, experienced workers.

The point here is that the days of easily finding and keeping enthusiastic, determined, capable young people (teenagers and early twenty-somethings) in front-line jobs at a pool or a waterpark are over.

Regardless of whether the blame is put on the parents, schools, society, government, video games or the man-in-the-moon, it doesn't really matter. The challenge is upon employers who need a steady stream of smart, motivated young people to fill the many seasonal positions in and around a waterpark, and who need those part-timers to be fully engaged and to remain engaged in their jobs until the end of the season, or at least until the first day of school.

The pool (pardon the pun) of energetic young people yearning to work has never been lower, and the competition to hire the ones that do is fierce. To win this war and become fully staffed means that you've got to improve your game on the only two things that matter:

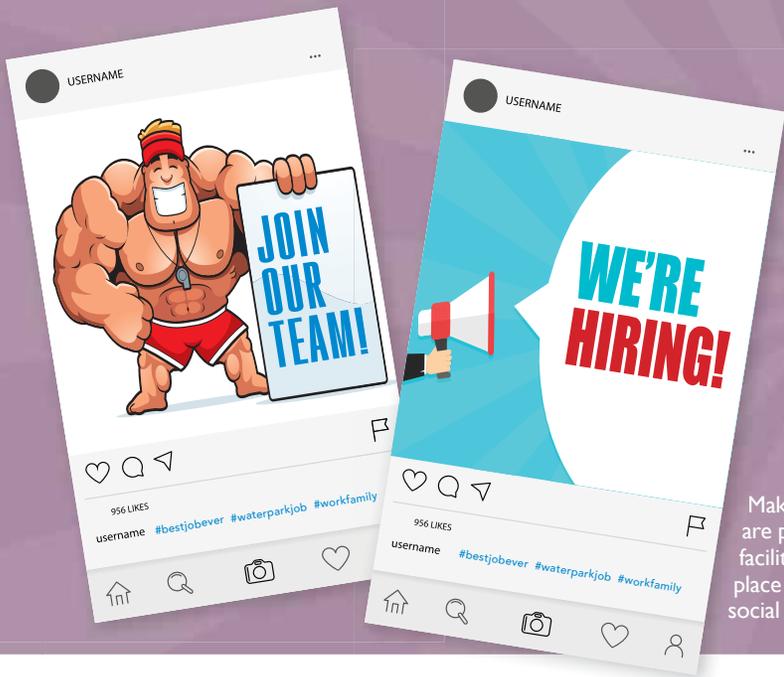
I. RECRUIT LIKE A NINJA

Are you working closely with key contacts (i.e., instructors, counselors, coaches, administrators, etc.) in your schools, churches and community colleges? These adult influencers often know the students better than their own parents do, and they know which ones need work, which ones are reliable, which come prepared, work hard, etc.

Boost your job posting on social media by using clever hashtags that will pique the interest of your ideal candidates.

Create an employee referral program that inspires your top performers to bring in other top performers. Make sure to include an incentive or bonus if both the current worker and the person they refer are still with you at the end of the season.





Make sure you are pitching your facility as a great place to work on social media.

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2. BECOME A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

You know how to pitch your waterpark to someone who is looking for something fun to do. Do you know how to pitch your waterpark as a great job to someone who may be looking to earn some money? If they can get a similar wage and benefits working at a fast food restaurant or supermarket, what makes working at your waterpark a better job? You need to be 100 percent prepared to make that argument, but it's just as crucial that other employees know how to describe the culture in an appealing way.

To get and keep great staff throughout the upcoming season, you need to know more about each of your employees when they're not at work. For example, what are their dreams for the future? What activities and interests do they have? Are they saving for a car, or college, or travel or just to get out from living in their parents' basement?

Learning more about your front liners as individuals will help you create the kind of interpersonal connection most crave and aren't getting from other adults. And if they feel you're truly

interested in them and begin to trust you, they will open up and tell you what they like and don't like about the job so you can improve your workplace.

That, in turn, will make it easier to attract, develop and keep other dynamic young employees.

No, this new crop of seasonal part-timers are not some kind of radical new generation, so set aside the XYZ demographic stereotyping for a minute. Regardless of the labels that have been assigned to them by Ivory Tower researchers, there's little doubt their ideas and perceptions of what a part-time job is and what an employee/employer relationship should look like are radically different from those you had when you first entered the workforce.

It's just that this new workforce continues to evolve, and if you don't evolve your management tactics and strategies, you're likely going to disconnect. •

ERIC CHESTER IS AN AWARD-WINNING KEYNOTE SPEAKER, WORKFORCE RESEARCHER AND BESTSELLING AUTHOR ON FINDING, ENGAGING AND KEEPING GREAT EMPLOYEES. READ HIS LATEST BOOK, *ON FIRE AT WORK: HOW GREAT COMPANIES IGNITE PASSION IN THEIR PEOPLE WITHOUT BURNING THEM OUT*. HE CAN BE REACHED AT ERICCHESTER.COM.



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