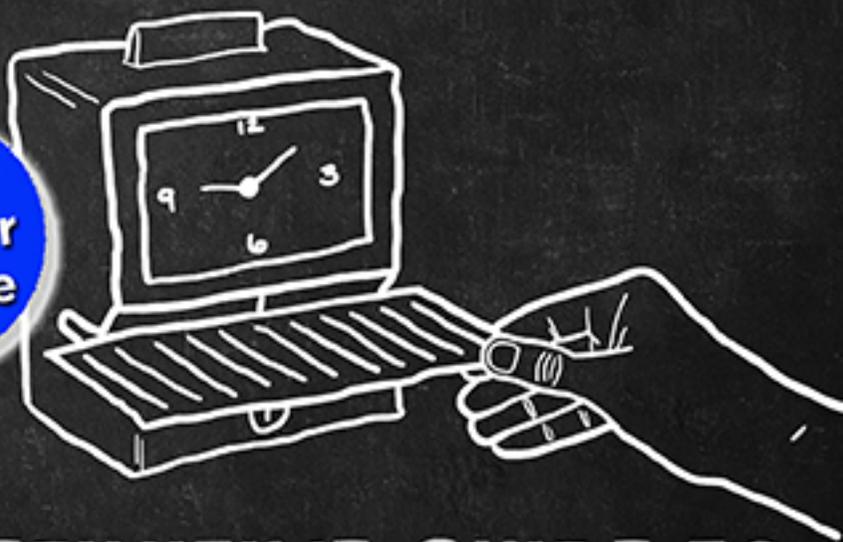


# FULLY STAFFED

**ERIC CHESTER**

Author of REVIVING WORK ETHIC and ON FIRE AT WORK

**3**  
Chapter  
Sample



THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO  
FINDING & KEEPING  
GREAT EMPLOYEES  
IN THE WORST LABOR MARKET EVER

# **ABOUT THIS SAMPLE**

**Thank you for downloading these three sample chapters.**

**FULLY STAFFED contains 18 Chapters divided into 3 sections. This sample includes one chapter from each section.**

**We hope that after perusing these 3 chapters, you will agree with dozens of other employers that you need the entire book to help you become FULLY STAFFED!**

# CONTENTS

(The Chapters included in this sample are highlighted below)

## **PART I: SURVIVING THE SHORTAGE.....9**

### **Ch. 1 THE PERFECT STORM WHY YOU'RE STRUGGLING TO FIND EMPLOYEES ..... 11**

### **Ch. 2 STOP FISHING AND START HUNTING .....25**

### **Ch. 3 BEFORE YOU HUNT, MAKE YOUR COMPANY A GREAT PLACE TO WORK .....37**

## **PART 2: FINDING GREAT EMPLOYEES ..... 49**

### **Ch. 4 1960 CALLED AND WANTS ITS "HELP WANTED" SIGN BACK. .... 51**

### **Ch. 5 EMPLOYEE REFERRALS GET YOUR A-TEAM RECRUITING FOR YOU. .... 65**

### **Ch. 6 SAVVY MOBILE AND ONLINE RECRUITING STRATEGIES ..... 83**

### **Ch. 7 HUNTING AT JOB FAIRS WHERE THE GAME COMES TO YOU! ..... 101**

### **Ch. 8 STAFFING AGENCIES AS WORKFORCE OPTIMIZATION PARTNERS. .... 117**

<b>Ch. 9</b>	<b>COMMUNITY NETWORKING</b>	
	<b>TRANSFORMING CONTACTS INTO CONNECTORS . . . . .</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Ch. 10</b>	RECRUITING STUDENTS FROM HIGH SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, AND TRADE SCHOOLS . . . . .	147
<b>Ch. 11</b>	NAVIGATING WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEMS . . . . .	163
<b>Ch. 12</b>	AN ARMY OF TALENT WHY, WHERE, AND HOW TO HIRE VETERANS . . . . .	175
<b>Ch. 13</b>	BET ON BOOMERS: HIRING OLDER WORKERS AS YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE . . . . .	189
<b>Ch. 14</b>	WELL WORTH A SECOND CHANCE: HIRING EX-OFFENDERS. . . . .	203
<b>Ch. 15</b>	AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES: A GOLDMINE OF POTENTIAL . . . . .	217
<b>PART 3: KEEPING GREAT EMPLOYEES . . . . .</b>		<b>229</b>
<b>Ch. 16</b>	PERFECTING YOUR HIRING FUNNEL ASSESSING, INTERVIEWING, & TRACKING CANDIDATES. . . . .	231
<b>Ch. 17</b>	<b>ONBOARDING:</b>	
	<b>YOUR HEDGE AGAINST TURNOVER. . . . .</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Ch. 18</b>	THE ONLY REAL RETENTION STRATEGY . . . . .	267
	INDEX . . . . .	283
	ABOUT THE AUTHOR . . . . .	301

# **PART I**

# **SURVIVING THE SHORTAGE**

# Chapter I

## THE PERFECT STORM

### Why You're Struggling to Find Employees

**I**magine the headlines in today's paper are exactly as they were back on October 10, 2008. The Dow has plunged to half the value of the day before. There's widespread panic as investors are pulling out of the market at lightning speed. Banks are closing. Stockbrokers and hedge fund managers on Wall Street are considering jumping out of their plush skyscraper offices.

Unless you're operating a grief counseling center, in all likelihood your business's bottom line is going to take a serious hit. You're going to have to make severe cuts on the expense side of the ledger just to keep afloat. It's not going to be pretty.

However, there is a silver lining.

You can take down those "Now Hiring" signs and pull all your "Help Wanted" ads off Craigslist and Indeed. See, you're about to witness a BOOM in the number of job applications flowing through your inbox like you haven't experienced in a decade. Your employee turnover problem will be all but eliminated! In the past, you may have struggled to find a warm-bodied person to take a job among your ranks who has no felonies

and can pee in a cup to pass a drug test. Now, you'll probably be turning away MBAs who are willing to drive a truck, flip burgers, sweep floors, and work nights and weekends without any qualms at all!

Hooray! That dreadful hiring curse you've dealt with for what seems like an eternity has just been lifted!

Okay, maybe I'm being a tad overdramatic there, but you get the drift. In a bad economy, the good news is that a surplus of labor competes for jobs.

Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. In a good economy, the bad news is that the labor market tightens and businesses have to compete for workers. Obviously, the higher the skill level, the fiercer the competition. These are the facts, and these facts are crushing you.

## Is This Book Right for You?

The current reality is that the labor market is nearly drained. You need many more skilled workers than are available, and you picked up this book because you're having trouble finding and keeping solid workers in your business or organization.

If the above statement isn't true, you should consider reading a different book (and do a happy dance followed by a celebratory toast).

But if you're still reading, then there couldn't be a better, more timely book for you.

When you first got into business, or when you were first promoted into a managerial or supervisory role, you probably thought that your biggest problem would be finding and attracting new customers, clients, patients, etc. Right?

But all those early struggles now pale in comparison to the challenges you're facing. How in the world are you supposed to find and keep employees, especially those in the less desirable positions you rely

on so heavily? Let's be honest: these jobs are taken by people who earn less money and make fewer decisions than those to whom they report. In theory, these jobs shouldn't be so hard to fill. And yet, somehow they have been.

Feeling frustrated, exasperated, and perhaps even angry with this new emerging workforce, you want to know if there's a solution to your dilemma. You're dying to know how you can attract a better qualified and more dedicated workforce. There must be a way.

Make no mistake, it isn't just about hiring. You're also searching desperately for a way to stop the mass exodus of your best workers so you can finally reach business nirvana, that mythical place where you're FULLY STAFFED with the right people happily engaged in the right jobs. So you can once again focus on building and improving your business.

Your pain is real. And you're not alone.

If you're suffering, then you're among the vast majority of business owners, leaders, executives, managers, and supervisors in North America—and, for that matter, most countries that operate according to the principles of a free market economy.

In the United States, for example, the unemployment rate is at a 50-year low. Employers of *all sizes* and in *virtually every industry* are struggling mightily to fill positions at *all levels*. And when it comes to filling positions perceived as unsexy, that's where employers' pain is the greatest.

## What's a Sexy Job—and What's Not?

What's sexy? What's not? Let me answer those questions with a question.

**Q:** What do professional dancers, actors, musicians, and athletes have in common?

**A:** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, they're listed as the top dream jobs that our nation's youth aspire to hold one day.

What jobs didn't make this list? Roofer, custodian, waitress, auto mechanic, welder, truck driver, short order cook, pest control technician, retail cashier, call center representative, senior caregiver, sanitation worker, hotel housekeeper, and the ten other positions in your organization that immediately rushed into your mind.

While your life and mine might be less colorful if there were fewer musicians and athletes, imagine life without someone to change the brake pads in your car, patch the potholes in the street you commute on each day, bus the dishes at the table where you've just been seated, unclog the sewer line in your bathroom, and tighten the bolts on the jet you'll board in a few weeks.

Many perceive these jobs as unsexy.

But those aren't the only jobs labeled as such. Jobs as accountants, administrative clerks, production managers, traffic cops, sales reps, and middle school counselors could also be classified as unsexy. In fact, the only conventionally sexy jobs are those where someone is making huge bank doing something many other people would be willing to do for little or no money—and they're getting loads of positive attention and ego-stroking in the process.

Imagine being a talk show host, or a YouTube star, or a professional skateboarder, or a dolphin trainer at Sea World, or a tour manager for a rock star, or an actual rock star. You get the idea.

Fame, fortune, and the ability to call the shots and work *when* we want, *where* we want, and *with whom* we want—who doesn't dream of that? And who among us can honestly admit that they don't at all envy the chosen few who've magically found the Holy Employment Grail?

Reality check: For every job that the masses would define as "sexy," there are 10,000 or 100,000 or 1,000,000 that those same people would quickly dismiss, saying, "No way, no how! I'm glad somebody else will do that job, but it ain't my jam."

Feeling anxious? Are the jobs you're looking to fill among the 1,000,000 that are easily dismissed?

If so, please don't take offense.

It doesn't necessarily mean that the jobs themselves are unsexy.

It doesn't mean that your industry, your company, or your brand is unsexy.

And it doesn't mean that you have to employ people who will produce less-than-sexy results for your organization.

An unsexy job is simply a perception. If you want to change that perception, you must first acknowledge and accept that the negative perception exists. Do that, and you can begin to make the unsexy sexy.

I'm suggesting that you can make any job one that is appealing in the eyes of the candidates you're hoping to attract.

More on that later.

For now, let's get back to understanding why the perfectly honorable open positions at your company—jobs for which you offer a fair compensation, jobs that were good enough for you and for your parents and for their parents—are so doggone hard to fill.

## A Perfect Storm

Yes, the labor crisis is real. No one thing has caused the shortage; rather, a combination of factors has led us to this point. To determine the best strategies for overcoming these factors and winning the talent war, we must come to grips with five demographic, economic, technological, educational, and societal factors that have created a perfect hiring and retention storm.

**1. The cupboards are bare.** Demographers have predicted for quite some time that a labor shortage would come—and they were right. Baby Boomers (born 1946–1963) in the United States are retiring at the

rate of more than 10,000 people per day. Their successor, Generation X (born 1964–1979), is a much smaller generation in size, which creates a leadership shortage. The much-maligned generation of Millennials (born 1980–2000) is sizable, but they have entered the workforce with a vastly different idea of what work, career, and the employer/employee relationship should look like.

It's still too early to predict the attitudes and behaviors of Gen Z (born 2001–2012) toward work, but initial signs point to their being even more difficult to engage than their Millennial predecessors. They are also huge in numbers. When combined with the second wave of Millennials, those born after 1990, they comprise nearly a third of our workforce.

Let's forgo the book-length analysis on generational demographics. The real point is this: even though there might appear to be enough potential workers to fill the job openings that currently exist, the percentage of adequately qualified workers who actually want those jobs or will accept those jobs is shrinking. The takeaway? The labor pool is dangerously low.

**2. The dollars don't make sense.** When more than 200 fast food workers walked off their jobs in New York City back in 2012, they launched the "Fight for \$15" war. These restaurant workers sought to unionize and demanded higher wages. In most places, it has worked, and wages are on the rise.

Unfortunately for the millions of employers who've always depended on young, unskilled, hourly workers, this movement has been a punch to the gut. It has also been bad news for teens when employers that have traditionally been their source for first jobs can't justify paying them what the government demands. Employers have slashed hours for their employees and turned to automation to accomplish many tasks once earmarked for teen and entry-level workers.

Rising wages in the restaurant industry have created big problems in all industries. If an unskilled part-time burger flipper in Chicago can command \$15 per hour, what's a comparable wage for a muffler installer,

a law office receptionist, a community pool lifeguard, and a sewer line roter technician?

**3. Technology is creating as many problems as it's solving.** It's to your advantage when you can count on a robot to do the work of one or many. Robots are diligent, and they don't call in sick. They won't cheat you, they won't ask for a raise, and they won't abandon you for another job that's paying 50 cents more per hour down the street. Sweet, sweet music to a business owner's ears.

Unfortunately, machines and robots break. And if they're connected to the Internet, they can be hacked and destroyed from across the planet. Machines like these are expensive to own or rent, and in spite of the investment required they can become obsolete overnight.

Furthermore, solutions to these kinds of challenges require the support of highly trained, well-paid technicians who know how to diagnose, repair, and replace. (Technicians, of course, are in very high demand and short supply.)

Your frontline workforce needs to be techno-savvy, which is the calling card of the young. But your workforce must also know how to implement creative workarounds when the Internet is down and your technology is in a state of disrepair. That's the calling card of the mature, experienced employee.

---

### **CASE IN POINT**

I recently had a meal prepared at a national burrito chain. It's the kind of restaurant where the worker assembles the meal in front of you as you walk down the assembly line with them.

When I got to the cashier, I asked for a Diet Coke to go with my order.

"The Diet Coke line on our new soft drink dispenser is jammed today, and no one here knows how to unclog it," the cashier told me.

I wanted to sit down and enjoy my customized burrito, but I was now being informed that no sugar-free drinks were available on the premises to wash it down.

"Miss, this restaurant shares a parking lot with a large discount grocery store," I said to the cashier. "In five minutes, for less than \$10, you could have five two-liter bottles of Diet Coke on hand to keep customers like me happy. That would probably be enough to get you through the dinner rush. And at the price you charge for a Diet Coke, you'd triple the owner's money before you even opened the second bottle!"

"We have no process for that," she said. "I have no idea how to open this register to get \$10 out, and if I could open the register, the cameras would catch me and I'd get fired."

Technology is essential to your success, but if your employees are unwilling or unable to provide an intelligent human interface, they're essentially the human equivalent of a vending machine.

---

**4. A degree is your only golden ticket.** Another key element of the perfect storm of issues plaguing the labor pool for perceived unsexy jobs is the cultural shift toward higher education. Children are raised from a very young age to believe that a college degree is the one and only way to get ahead in life.

High school graduates have been flocking to universities because they think it's what they have to do to succeed. Many enter college unsure of what career they want to pursue and end up chasing outlandish dreams with low employment potential. What the narrative leaves out is that a job seeker boasting a PhD in Roman History is going to have a

much more difficult time finding employment than a certified welder. The PhD also may not earn as much as the welder.

In 2016, 33.4 percent of Americans 25 or older reportedly said they had completed at least a bachelor's degree. Those are the highest numbers ever reported according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That still leaves most potential workers without a four-year college degree, but the number of college graduates seeking and having trouble finding white-collar work based on the degrees they earned is staggering.

Many high-demand jobs that pay well don't require a high school diploma or even a GED. According to the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, more than 30 million jobs in the United States pay an average of \$55,000 per year and don't require a bachelor's degree.

The idea that a good job (or any job) will be waiting for every college graduate is a myth. Floods of 20-something grads with newly minted liberal arts degrees are chasing their dreams in broadcasting, film production, and political science and will soon face the reality that the demand for their expertise is nearly nonexistent. They'll take a job as a barista or Uber driver and live in the basement of their parents' home, eagerly awaiting their big break.

You've probably heard this scary statistic: Americans owe more than \$1.56 trillion in student loan debt, spread out among about 45 million borrowers. That's about \$521 billion more than the total US credit card debt.

Among the class of 2018, 69 percent of college students took out student loans. They graduated with an average debt of \$29,800, including both private and federal debt. Meanwhile, 14 percent of their parents took out an average of \$35,600 in federal Parent PLUS Loans.

And don't forget the interest compiling on their college loan debt.

As a former high school teacher, coach, and administrator and as an invited speaker to more than 1,500 schools across the United States and Canada, I'm hyperaware of the fact that the realities of today's job market often aren't shared with young people. Parents are busy dreaming about how a college degree is going to ensure their children's future

success. Their children, in turn, are busy dreaming about becoming the next big social media influencer or YouTube star.

Non-vocational teachers, counselors, and administrators aren't helping things. Their job is to help students achieve the grades and scores necessary to get into the colleges of their (or their parents') dreams. That's why these school officials don't usually talk to students about how the standardized achievement tests they spent the last three months studying for will have little relevance for them in the future. Kids are left thinking that the only way they can support themselves (and one day a family) and live a great life is if they focus all their energy and passion on getting into and graduating from college instead of mastering a skill or trade.

Think about it. And sigh about it. But don't just throw your hands in the air. Instead, recognize the situation for what it is and do your small part to stop perpetuating the myth.

**5. But what will other people think?** When I graduated from high school in the 70s, I had three choices:

1. go to college
2. learn a trade
3. join the military

My parents made it abundantly clear that continuing to live with them rent-free wasn't on the menu. They told me it was time to get out there and make something of myself. You know, sink or swim.

Back then, my parents had two televisions, and I got all my news—and most of my entertainment—through the three network channels available. When I was 18, the world seemed like an awfully huge place with a lot of scary stuff going on way over on the other side of the planet.

At the time, I was semi-aware of some of the career opportunities in metro-Denver (the only place I'd ever lived), and I knew what some of my friends were planning to do after graduation.

I didn't play an instrument, and I couldn't sing or dance, so I didn't see a future as a rock star. I had no skill in acting, so I never once considered being a TV or movie star. I was a mediocre high school athlete, so I had

no chance of playing sports in college. Becoming a professional athlete in football, baseball, hockey, basketball, golf, or tennis never once entered my mind.

The way I saw it, I wanted a good life, but whatever job, field, or career I chose was my business. My choice had to please only me and my parents (not necessarily in that order).

Who else would ever know what I did for a living? And why would anyone else care?

The world was huge, and my influences were few. Outside of a few young actors, I knew of no one even close to my age who was making big bucks. Success was a long road that began with getting a degree, finding a job at a big company, starting out at the bottom, keeping my nose to the grindstone, and rising through the ranks until I gained enough experience to provide real expertise and value.

Man, I know I sound old. And I guess I am.

My kids and grandkids have grown up in a world where 8-year-olds become instant superstars on *America's Got Talent*. Where 14-year-old gymnasts win Olympic gold and land mega-million-dollar endorsement contracts. Where professional video gamers and sunglass-wearing poker players are considered "athletes," and their "sports" are broadcast on ESPN. Where the 7-year-old YouTube star of *Ryan's Toy Review* earned more than \$22 million dollars in 2018 simply unwrapping and playing with new toys. (Boy, there ought to be a law against that kind of brutal child labor!) Where the next social media sensation is just a viral discovery away, prompting teens to rack up friends and followers by the hundreds and thousands.

Is it any wonder why so many 16-year-olds show up for their first jobs with a "you want me to do what kind of grunt work for a measly \$10 per hour" attitude?

## Separating Effort from Reward

Your emerging workforce has been completely submerged in a culture filled with images, videos, and 24/7 stories showing their peers being paid ridiculous sums of money for what typically amounts to no real contribution to the greater good. Stories of 19-year-olds making an honest living as drywall installers or rental car agents are nowhere to be found.

While the odds of your frontline workers replicating that kind of funny-money success are slim to none (they stand a better chance of winning the lottery), the notion that they are only one viral video or one cool app away from owning a private island is firmly implanted somewhere in their DNA.

I would be shocked if my own adult kids (born in the 80s) and all those who came with and after them didn't at some level believe the hype. It's no wonder that so many young people think there's a shortcut or a "cheat sheet" path to fame, fortune, and a life of luxury.

In my first business book, *Employing Generation Why: Understanding, Managing, and Motivating Your New Workforce*, I claimed that the millions upon millions of post-Generation Xers are intently focused on finding ways to *separate effort from reward*.

I stand by that statement today.

## This Storm Isn't Subsiding Anytime Soon

The five factors that have created this labor shortage are very real. Thankfully, understanding the "enemy" is the first step in defeating it.

You can't change demographics, the economy, the education system, technology, or society by yourself. What you can do is embrace what is happening in those arenas and navigate the seas ahead.

That, my friends, is what this book is all about.

I've gone behind the curtain to study hundreds of great companies and interview thousands of owners, managers, and leaders in businesses and industries that aren't considered sexy. This experience has enabled me to uncover the strategies and tactics that are most effective in attracting, recruiting, developing, and, yes, even retaining amazing employees at all levels.

I'm firmly convinced that amid this raging storm it's possible not only to survive this labor shortage but also to THRIVE.

Allow me to take you behind the scenes to show you how great employers are doing just that...

**Like what you've read so far?**

# Chapter 9

## COMMUNITY NETWORKING

### Transforming Contacts into Connectors

**T**here was a popular TV commercial that ran in the 80s for Fabergé Organics shampoo. The lovely pin-up model and actress Heather Locklear said that this shampoo was so good that “I told two friends about it, and they told two friends, and those friends told two friends, and so on, and so on...”

Fabergé’s point? The planting of just two seeds can grow a continually expanding base of customers. The same can be said for planting seeds for an expanding base of labor in your community. You don’t have to climb to the mountaintop and scream that you’re looking for great people to get applicants. All you have to do is:

**1. Be a great place to work.** (If this isn’t the case, go back and re-read Chapter 2, as nothing else in this book will matter.)

**2. Let a few key people in your community know exactly what you’re looking for,** because there’s tremendous power in the network you already have.

You might be thinking, “But dude, I don’t really know a lot of ‘key’ people.”

Please understand that I’m not referring to being on a first-name basis with your city’s mayor, or playing golf with the proprietor of the most successful business, or even grabbing coffee with the owner of the biggest house in town.

The “key people” we’re talking about here are those that can connect you to the potential employees that *they* know.

Think about the places you frequently visit around your home and office: the supermarket, the drugstore, the big box retailer, the bank, and your local coffee shop. Maybe you frequent the ballpark, a fast food taco joint, or your kid’s school. How many connections (or reconnections) with potential customers and job candidates did you make while you were out and about? How many could you have made with a simple smile and a handshake? How many of those connections could lead to word-of-mouth referrals to additional layers of connections?

I’m going to suggest that you have anywhere from ten to hundreds of community outreach opportunities each and every week right in front of you. Literally hundreds. And among them, there are connectors who can be—and who want to be—a gushing pipeline of job candidates for your business.

Imagine if everyone you run into on even a quick, casual basis (1) knew why your company is so great, (2) knew you were hiring, and (3) knew what kind of employee would make the best possible fit for your open positions. Imagine you discussed your hiring needs with people in line at the hardware store, acquaintances you ran into at the movies, the parents and coaches you saw at your kids’ games and the parents and teachers you chatted with at parent-teacher night, the parishioners you greeted each week at your church, mosque, or synagogue, etc. Now imagine that each of these people genuinely liked you and cared enough about your search for great people that they told two friends, who told two friends, and so on and so on...

## Networking Is a Long-Term Play

Networking is an essential part of marketing a business. The formula is pretty straightforward (though effective implementation may take some practice): Position yourself where your prospects and customers are likely to be. Then, make a dynamite first impression and a personal connection to as many prospects as possible. Be prepared with insightful questions, a knock-it-out-of-the-park elevator pitch, and a solid follow-up strategy. Show that you're passionate about your products and services, and focus on the value you provide to customers and the community. That's where the magic happens.

You can capture the same magic when you're recruiting. When you truly understand and believe beyond a doubt that your employees are your business and that you offer a fantastic work environment, you'll naturally start talking to people in your community about your hiring needs. These kinds of conversations will eventually come as second nature.

Your community is a wide-open field just waiting for networking seeds to be planted and cultivated. Networking is about organic growth, and it can take lots of patience and require outside-the-box thinking. It also can be a heck of a lot of fun, as well as personally and professionally rewarding.

Growing your community network starts with knowing and fervently believing in the ways in which your company differs from others in your industry and in your community. I'm not just talking about the products and services you offer. I'm also talking about the difference you can make by improving the lives of the individuals who work for you and the individuals and families who live and work around you.

Your networking success won't come by accident, and it certainly won't happen overnight. While you'll experience short-term wins along the way, the truth is that you're in for more of a marathon than a sprint. It can take years to establish a reputation in your community as someone who offers exceptional support to others without expectation of anything

in return. Just keep building a track record of outstanding service to your customers, to your employees, and, last but not least, to your community.

## Where and When to Network

In order to be a community outreach superstar, an employer needs to understand *WHEN* and *WHERE* to network.

As I mentioned earlier, a basic tenet of successful networking is to go where your prospects are—both business prospects and recruiting prospects. If your community is a wide-open field, you have limitless options. Because you don't have unlimited time, it makes sense to take advantage of the opportunities that occur naturally in the course of a day as well as set targets where you'll likely make the most important connections.

**Breadth—connect anytime and everywhere.** When and where are the best places to grow your network? In terms of breadth, it's anytime and everywhere. Each and every occasion that you spend time in your community is a chance to make a connection. When you're in line at the post office, strike up a conversation with the person next to you. When you're at the ballpark, reinforce connections with others rooting for the home team. Parents' nights at school can open the door to relationships with lots of members of the community as well.

When you become a networking master, candidates (and customers) will be drawn to you. That's the ultimate reward.

Kris Lareau, owner of the Office Pride Commercial Cleaning franchise in Visalia, California, told me, "Our reputation has grown so positive in the community that my operations manager was driving a company vehicle through a drive-through, and the person working the drive-through recognized the company and asked to apply for a job right then and there."

Where will you go this week in your community? How many connections will you make? How many connections of your connections might you be able to reach? Think about it—and then get out there and hunt!

**Depth—dig deep at meetings, concerts, and events.** In addition to moving broadly through the community in the normal course of events, you can target particular places for networking. These places can include chamber of commerce meet-and-greet events, meetings held by civic organizations (Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions), and industry-centric meetings and conferences. Work the room, investing time to get to know new contacts instead of simply hanging out with people you already know. Ask like-minded employers about their hiring challenges and success stories, and pocket some recruiting tips along the way.

Once you've found something that works in your community, stick with it and build on it. Then once you've established a strong reputation in your community, work to maintain it. Word-of-mouth marketing is gold.

How can you make yourself known as a steady contributor to the health, well-being, and growth of your community? Pick a few events and volunteer activities where you'll devote your money, time, and energy, and commit to these activities regularly so that community members begin to count on you and look forward to your participation and leadership. Sponsor the 5K run, give your employees the day off to pick up litter in local parks. Provide Thanksgiving meals to families in need or teach a class at the local community college on a topic with which you have solid expertise. The more you give, the more you get. (Not that that should be your primary motivator...)

---

### **If You're Looking to Hire Skilled Professionals, Start in Your Own Backyard**

Brian Greenley, the owner and operator of the Littleton, Colorado, MAACO Auto Painting and Collision Repair franchise, is a prime example of the power of community networking. He has solidified his business as the place

everybody in town goes to for collision repair—even those who own exotic luxury cars. On top of that, every auto repair tech in town (and out of town for that matter) wants to work for this particular MAACO.

To prove this, Greenley's MAACO has been the top revenue generator in a system of more than 500 MAACO franchises for nearly 20 years. His customer reviews are off the charts, and he has had the majority of his workforce with him for 15 years or longer—and we're talking about highly skilled and trained autobody collision technicians who are in high demand and very short supply.

Brian knows that successful recruiting can happen anytime, anywhere. He offers this advice: "You want great employees? Recognize when they're standing right in front of you and make them an offer!" By paying attention to the people he engages with every day, Brian has successfully hired a waiter from his favorite steakhouse, an account rep from a local rental car company, and even the owner of another successful auto repair business who wanted to work for Brian so much that he packed up his own shop and is now employed with Brian.

How did this particular autobody shop grow to the juggernaut it is?

The answer is simple: When it comes to growing a community network, Brian Greenley starts with his employees. He recognizes that each employee has their own network, and he makes a point of knowing each person's families, hobbies and interests, and sources of happiness and frustration. He knows what inspires them to do their best.

When I toured Brian's shop, I watched him personally connect with his people. He commented on the score of the soccer game of one of his painter's sons. He asked

one of his detailers if he enjoyed the Bruno Mars concert he had been to the previous weekend. He told one of his estimators to take off early because it was his wife's 35<sup>th</sup> birthday and he needed to shower up and take her to a nice dinner, which Brian paid for.

Regardless of how backlogged his business might get, Brian closes shop every day at 5:30 P.M. so his techs can go home and have dinner with their families. If one of his people decides to stay late to finish a job, Brian stays late with them to find out if they need help or if something else is on their mind. He wants to know if this employee is getting the mentoring they need, if they have the best tools for the job, if they need a specific kind of training, etc.

Brian Greenley is never on autopilot; instead, he's actively involved and showing he cares for his people every step of the way.

When Brian's employees are out in the community, what do you think they say about their company? You can bet that they share stories about being heard, appreciated, and cared for at work. Brian's employees are walking and talking advertisements for why MAACO in Littleton, Colorado, is THE place that anyone in the collision repair or restoration industry would want to call home.

...and on that, there's not even a "close second."

---

## How to Network

In order to be a community outreach superstar, an employer also needs to understand *HOW* to network. I've included some ideas below.

**1. Provide value first.** Doing good and doing good business go hand in hand. It's one thing to have a value proposition, but it's another thing altogether to live your values in service. Actively demonstrate the pride you have in your community and the respect you have for all those who live and work in it. It's not about a quid pro quo; instead, it's about offering your resources without expecting anything in return. (In time, of course, you will reap the rewards as your community comes to realize that your company walks the talk. When they understand who you are at your core, they will rally around you.)

A logical place to start is considering how you can donate or otherwise use your core business competencies to sponsor community organizations that matter to you. If you run a corporate cleaning company, perhaps you could provide the high school football team with free services. If you're a caterer, lend a hand at local homeless shelters. If you run a printing shop, offer to print flyers for the local arts or film festival. You can play a vital role in helping local organizations achieve their mission while also promoting your business—win-win!

Over time, your reputation will grow, and your generosity will come full circle. Rick Pollock of Total Show Technology in Las Vegas, Nevada, for example, has established a fantastic relationship with his local church community by providing free audio-visual services, including lighting and sound equipment, for church services and events. He feels good about supporting his congregation and gives freely, without seeking new business or recruiting leads in return. He has nonetheless received recommendations for several new hires from church members who respect him and his business and know Total Show Technology is a great place to work.

**2. Make it about them.** American author and speaker John Maxwell stated, “They don’t care what you know until they know that you care.” This is true in life and business. A surefire way to create a positive impression and make yourself memorable is to focus on other people instead of spending all your time trying to sell them on why you and your company are so great (even when you really are great). Ask questions and sincerely listen to the answers. Hear what’s on others’ minds. Offer a shoulder to lean on in times of trouble or a congratulatory handshake when celebration is in order. Brainstorm ideas with someone who’s struggling with a decision.

One memorable way to affirm a connection and let someone know you care is to follow up after an encounter. E-mail is nice, but it’s hard to beat a handwritten note or card. I’m not terrific at remembering names, so I make it a point to jot down information from a conversation shortly after I meet someone. I make notes about their full name, what they do and where they work, mutual business interests, how many kids they have, their birthday or other big events coming up, etc. Then I follow up with a written card and, if it makes sense, include something related to our conversation that could provide benefit to them. This insert might be a recent business article or summary of research that the recipient might find useful. My goal is to start building bridges and to reinforce those I’ve already established.

**3. Know the influencers.** A smart networking strategy is to connect with the influencers in your community. Imagine that you’re in the tenth grade, and you’re the new kid at school. Your reputation will depend in part on who you hang out with. You may want to get to know the president of the student council, the cool kid in a rock band, the most talented techie, the lead in the school play, the track and field star, or the yearbook editor. The rules of community engagement are reminiscent of the rules you played by in high school. Finding and standing with people who have a finger on the pulse of your community can open many doors for your business and provide you with timely, relevant information on how you can best fill a niche and serve. And it’ll help you fill your hiring funnel.

**4. Be an influencer.** A rung up the networking ladder is to actually be an influencer. You'll probably have to select your area of expertise within micro-communities to get started. For example, you may want to be known as someone who wholeheartedly supports the troops. You can get to know the military recruiters in the area and then hire returning military personnel. You can also visit nearby military bases, sponsor veterans' events, volunteer at the local VFW post, and run Veteran's Day specials or discounts on your products or services.

Being an influencer means people will seek you out for information and for your backing—and just to be seen with the cool kid on the community campus. That's good for your recruiting efforts and good for your business.

---

### **A Few Thoughts about Those Logo Shirts**

An effective marketing move involves placing your brand where many people can see it. Bonus: The best strategies don't necessarily require the biggest investment. A good example is T-shirts or golf shirts that display your company logo.

You and your employees are all out in the community every day. Whether you realize it or not, your brand army is on the march. Companies pay for athletes to sport their logos. They hand out free shirts and other logo swag at community events. Some even incentivize employees to wear their clothes outside of work. Why? Because it's an inexpensive promotional tool that works!

Your company logo can be a surefire conversation starter. I was recently in a grocery line, and the woman in front of me was wearing a golf shirt with the logo of a local company that seemed vaguely familiar. She also had a tape measure strapped to her belt. As we waited in line, I asked if she worked in construction. She said she did,

and we had a conversation about what it takes for a company to be successful in such a competitive industry and how people can earn a very good living doing construction work. She was a stellar brand ambassador, and I'll remember the name of the company and our positive conversation the next time I'm asked for a construction referral, I need construction help at Camelot Car and Dog Wash, or I'm asked about local jobs in construction.

And a shirt is not only a conversation starter; it can also be a brand builder. National Chimney, a leading manufacturer of steel chimney liners and components with seven factories throughout the United States, employs over 300 people. Owner and president Darin Bibeau wants everyone in every community in which they operate to know that they are a values-based company. Their impressive five core company values, each one beginning with the first letter of the acronym H-O-N-O-R, are printed in large type on the back of all employee T-shirts and hoodies. And to make sure those lofty values are always in practice, those core values are also printed on a colorful 2" x 3" plastic card that all employees carry with them to pass out to friends, family members, neighbors, and prospects. Bibeau told me this keeps his employees focused on living out those values at home and on the job, and it also attracts interest from people who want to work for an organization that aspires to these high values.

---

**5. Tell your story.** If your organization is the best of the best, then your employees are surely the reason why. Recognize them in house early and often. But don't stop there. Why not celebrate them in the community as well? Sing (or rather shout) their praises, and tell their stories to anyone who will listen. Doing so showcases the fact that you've built a

great place to work, lets your employees know that you appreciate them, and bolsters your employees' self-esteem and loyalty.

Here's another thing: Many reporters in your local media outlets are hungry for good human interest stories. Perhaps one of your employees was recently reunited with their family because Ancestry.com told them about siblings they never knew about. Maybe an employee's parents just turned 100 or an employee's daughter just got a full-ride scholarship to Stanford. Maybe an employee just celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> year with your company, or your entire team devoted five workdays in the past year to volunteer work (with paid time off courtesy of your company). If you've built your company into a great place to work, then good media attention is ready and waiting for you. Share those untapped stories.

**6. Have fun.** My final piece of advice is to enjoy the networking ride. This part of the job is about getting to know people and learning what makes your community unique. Heartfelt, ongoing networking will lead to personal and professional growth that will feed back into your company in ways you can't imagine. Through active networking, I've met friends who have stuck with me for decades.

## Community Networking in Action

Below are some examples of business leaders who have leveraged the power of their community network.

"We've found success working with an AA group (Alcoholics Anonymous) that focuses on placing people in stable jobs to help them get back on track," says Angel Lara, a multi-unit owner of El Pollo Loco restaurants in Southern California.

The HR director for the Signal 88 private security franchise in the Tampa/Orlando area volunteers to teach night security "D License" classes. This allows him to establish relationships with people who are interested in pursuing careers as security officers.

Scott Anderson, the owner of a Massage Heights location in Lenexa, Kansas, gets his employees involved and excited about recruiting in their community. He'll pay his massage therapists to get a massage at another company in town. If that individual receives great service, they are instructed to give that therapist a business card and let them know that if they should want to explore opportunities available at Massage Heights, they should simply give Scott a call. He "doubles down" on this tactic by having his therapists get massages from the students at the local massage school and invite those students who are exceptional to call Scott and begin their career with Massage Heights. *(What an awesome tactic this is for getting a leg up on the competition!)*

Mark Silver, owner of The Cleaning Authority franchise in Spokane, Washington, has roots deep in his community. "We partner with many different organizations in town. We meet with the directors of those agencies quarterly so they are aware of our current need for employees. We partner with the YWCA Women-to-Work program, the Family Promise organization that helps transition homeless families in our community, and the local WorkSource Career Center. These kinds of organizations are always willing and eager to work with their clients to help them find and keep full-time employment. They are often not what we imagine our target candidates to be, but most of the time those we hire from these partners far exceed our expectations."

David Adams, the owner of the Aire Serv franchise in Victoria, Texas, is always on the lookout for students at the local tech schools, even those who have no HVAC training. That way, he says, he doesn't have to break a lot of previously engrained bad work habits. He told me, "I keep my eyes peeled everywhere I go. If I meet a young guy who is mechanically inclined and has a positive attitude, I'll approach him about the possibility of coming to work for me. Now if I find that the guy comes from a farming or ranching family, that's the 'trifecta' because farm and ranch kids know how to work and are typically as *strong as an ox*. We have a nickname for those guys. We call 'em *CORN FED BOYS!*"

Tim Nordquist, the fixed operations management consultant for Baxter Automotive in Omaha, Nebraska, connects with the Spanish-speaking

community to determine what they utilize to attract employees and enlists their help to write “Help Wanted” ads in newspapers and make signs to post in their area.

PR Olson, owner of Olson Pest Technicians in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, shared how his customers help find techs for their company. “Our customers are some of our best recruiters. I instruct my team to ask each client if they know anyone that would want to work for us before they leave the site. That tactic has been really successful for us.”

## Tips and Tactics

The best-known brands invest heavily in marketing. Even billion-dollar companies like Coca-Cola advertise in order to stay at the top of everyone’s mind. If yours is a smaller business, you don’t need to invest a lot of money, but you should still build your brand power and visibility. The more your brand is recognized and respected by your neighbors (and their friends and their friends’ friends), the easier it will be for you to recruit in your community.

Of course, you’ll need to build real relationships with members of your community if you want to achieve real results. Here are some tips and tactics that can get you started:

- Remember that even when you’re not recruiting, you’re recruiting—anytime and everywhere. Promote your business by making sure you stand out within your community. Blending in won’t help you land new business or new employees.
- Understand your employees if you want to find more people like them. Knowing what your employees want and what your community needs will help you use your unique value proposition to their advantage—and to yours.

- Invest time and resources in getting to know the influential people in your area. Better yet, become an influencer in your community.
- Share your business's and your employees' stories to help build employment brand awareness.
- Take time to find and establish connections with the media outlets in your area, and provide them with human interest content about your business and your employees. Publications love "feel good" stories. Your employees and current/future fans will love them too.
- Recognize that networking is a journey, not a destination. Once you've established a successful community support program, continue to nurture it and build upon it.

**You can get more ideas like these  
throughout the Fully Staffed book!**

# Chapter 17

## ONBOARDING: Your Hedge Against Turnover

**T**wo well-intentioned parents want to give their young children a goldfish as a gift. At the pet store, the clerk places a goldfish in a plastic bag. The water in the bag is from the aquarium that the fish has been sharing for a couple of months with a number of fish friends and a few snails. Before the clerk rings them up, he asks whether the parents would like to buy a companion for the goldfish.

“It’s just a fish,” says Dad with a smile. “It will be fine,” says Mom. They pay for the fish, along with a small fishbowl and some fish food, and head home.

At home, the parents fill the fishbowl with tap water (chlorine and all), sprinkle in some fish food, and pour the goldfish and the aquarium water from the bag into the bowl. When the kids arrive home from school, they squeal with joy upon seeing their new family member. The parents explain that Goldie, as the kids have named her, needs to be fed daily. They mention nothing about how much to feed her or how often to change her water (these details probably don’t matter since it’s just a fish, after all). The kids promise to feed her every single day. *Mission accomplished*, the parents think.

That evening after dinner, the kids go to visit Goldie, only to find the bowl empty. Goldie has had a severe reaction to the water in the bowl and has jumped out. She is now flopping on the table, barely alive. They hurriedly place Goldie back in the bowl. "Maybe, just maybe, we can nurse her back to health," Mom says. But as soon as they place her back in the bowl, Goldie floats lifelessly on her side.

The family next door also plans to buy a pet fish. The kids have decided to name her Ariel. But before they bring her home, they learn everything they can about how to acclimate her to their new home aquarium. Every member of the family, kids included, have done their research, and they have crafted a well-thought-out onboarding strategy. They know that with proper care, a pet goldfish can live between five and ten years. They know that proper care includes setting and following guidelines for water temperature and pH level, providing enough room for Ariel to grow in the tank, and feeding Ariel the right amount of fish food each day. They also know that when they bring her home they should turn down the lights to avoid shocking Ariel and not mix the pet store aquarium water with the tank water.

"We should also adopt one or more fish so Ariel has a friend," one of the kids says.

"That's a great idea," Dad says, "especially since research shows that fish can get lonely."

"I even read that in some countries such as Switzerland, it's against the law to keep goldfish alone," Mom says.

Before they even bring Ariel home, the family has done everything they can to ensure there will be no turnover in their aquarium. The result? Ariel arrives, thrives, and lives a long, happy life.

## The Difference Between Employees Flopping and Flourishing

In both stories, the new owners' intent is to bring a goldfish home as a pet for the family to enjoy. So far, so good. But that's where the similarities end. As the two stories show, the way those goldfish are introduced into the household and treated day in and day out makes all the difference between flopping and flourishing.

The same holds true for the employees you hire. I've worked jobs where my supervisor and co-workers seemed surprised to see me on day one. Jobs where they had to scramble to find a uniform for me to wear or to figure out what paperwork I needed to complete. Jobs where I lacked the tools and equipment needed to do my job (or a desk to sit at, for that matter) because no one had thought to order them in advance.

The first day of work can be one of high expectations and great stress. New employees are introduced to the place where they'll likely spend most of their waking hours for months or, if you onboard them correctly, years to come. The onboarding experience (or lack thereof) can make or break the future of the employees you hire *and* the future of your organization.

Onboarding is the process of integrating new employees into an organization from before their first official day of work until they are successfully performing the jobs they were hired for and are fully engaged in your company and your culture. (Notice that I said it's a *process*, not an event.)

Like me, you might recall old-school onboarding "events," short orientations where you sat silently as an HR rep explained policies, procedures, and benefits and then handed over a stack of paperwork that needed to be completed. Like me, you may even remember some "fancier" onboarding events that involved a quick building tour and a formal slideshow (or the standard company video) presentation by company personnel.

News flash: Many companies are still holding one-day (or one-hour) onboarding events for their new employees (and a surprising number have no onboarding at all).

After reading this chapter, you'll make absolutely certain that your company isn't one of them.

## **Turnover Can Kill a Thriving Business**

**WARNING:** You might read on and think, "Whoa! This onboarding stuff can get expensive! I need to get an ROI on my new hires as quickly as possible, and for that they've gotta be out in the field working rather than in here meeting each other, training, and learning about the company. I'll take the discounted, streamlined version of onboarding, thank you very much."

Allow me to set you straight. When done effectively, onboarding does indeed require an investment of both time and money. But when compared with the turnover costs you're suffering because you're not effectively onboarding your people, it's one of the safest and highest-yielding investments you can make in your business. There's no downside to having an effective employee onboarding process.

The average annual turnover rate across industries is more than 20 percent. That means that a business with 5 employees will lose 1 every year, and a business with 50 employees will lose 10. Now if that scares you, you had better sit down, because the turnover rate in sectors such as retail, hospitality, and food services is between 50 and 100 percent each year. Imagine having to replace half of your workforce each year—or your entire workforce each year! (Maybe you don't have to imagine it. Maybe you're living it...)

Turnover costs include what you've spent to hire, onboard, train, and develop employees. Whether you have a handful of employees

or hundreds, turnover takes a huge bite out of your bottom line. Many experts estimate the cost of turnover for an entry-level worker at 30 to 50 percent of what you'd pay if they had worked for you for a full year. Losing a \$12/hour employee might cost you thousands once you calculate the expense of recruiting that employee, running background checks, interviewing them, outfitting them, and training them so they're producing for you. Having them quit suddenly is painful enough. But if they suddenly quit and go to work for your competitor? That really hurts.

Now if we're talking about a skilled or mid-level position, that 30 to 50 percent turnover cost jumps to 150 to 200 percent because of the size of the investment you've made in that employee. And—hold on to your hat—losing a senior leader or executive can cost upwards of 400 percent of their annual salary!

No matter how you slice it, turnover costs are a dagger in the heart of every business owner, leader, or manager.

This age-old axiom is so true: "It's not what you make; it's what you keep." There's simply no bigger drain on your ability to "keep what you make" than losing your employees.

---

### **How Much Is Going Down Your Drain?**

You can calculate your organization's turnover rate by dividing the number of employees who have left (voluntarily and involuntarily) by the average number of employees at your company. Then multiply that number by 100.

Turnover Rate = (# of Separations / Average # of Employees) x 100

### **Calculating the Savings of Reduced Turnover**

If you want to persuade leaders in your organization to adopt a more intentional hiring process, this turnover

return-on-investment calculator can provide you with bottom-line data to support your case.

**Turnover ROI Calculator:** <https://www.shl.com/en/customers/turnover-roi-calculator/>

---

## **New Hires Who Say Their “First Day Was Their Worst Day” Often Sour and Disengage**

Enlightened employers recognize that a primary goal of onboarding, starting with day one, is to confirm to employees that they made the right choice in working for you and to encourage them to stay for the long haul. Strategic, personalized onboarding programs can yield positive business results. For example, research by Glassdoor finds that a good onboarding program can increase new hire retention by 82 percent and productivity by more than 70 percent. These numbers are astounding.

Research by Gallup finds that employees who rate their onboarding program as exceptional are twice as likely to believe they are prepared to succeed on the job. (Interestingly enough, only 12 percent of employees say their company is great at onboarding). And when onboarding includes a professional development plan, employees are 3.5 times more likely to strongly agree that their onboarding experience was positive. A 2019 study by TalentLMS reports that most employees who have a positive onboarding experience feel valued at work, feel accepted by peers, and become more productive more quickly.

Would you want your new hire to say, “I love the company I work for!”? Would you want the new kid to tell others, “I was born to do this job! I know I’ll knock it out of the park!”? Would you want your new

employee to tell friends and family, “I have a future with this company! They believe in me!”?

Duh. Of course you would. That’s why I’m going to show you how onboarding is an essential part of making your organization a great place to work.

---

## Jason’s First Day

Jason, an apprentice plumber, has been hired at a plumbing franchise in Scottsdale, Arizona. Here’s an outline of his first day on the job.

**7:45 A.M. Welcome.** Jason pulls into the company parking lot, where he’s warmly greeted by Reggie, a team member who has been assigned as Jason’s onboarding buddy. Reggie emphasizes that he’ll be a touchpoint for Jason during the first few months and beyond. A week earlier, Reggie called Jason to set clear expectations for Jason’s first day of work and told him about how the company’s culture sets up employees for success. Reggie had also e-mailed a first-day schedule to Jason, along with brief bios and pictures of the team members, an organizational chart, and a link to the company’s onboarding portal, which includes work videos and employee testimonials.

Jason’s supervisor, Olivia, meets Jason and Reggie at the building entrance. She welcomes Jason, shares her excitement about his joining the team, and answers his questions.

*At my last job, I didn’t even meet one on one with my manager until two weeks after I started, Jason thinks. And at that one-on-one, I was reprimanded for an error someone else made on the job. This place seems different!*

**8:00 A.M. Team Breakfast.** Olivia and Reggie walk Jason to the breakroom. Hanging on the back wall is a large “Welcome, Jason!” sign, and 14 team members applaud as he enters the room. Over breakfast, each person tells him their name, their role at the company, and something about their lives and interests.

Samantha goes first. “Hi Jason! I’m Samantha, and I’m the manager of Extra Mile Service. I answer the phone and direct callers to the person who can best help them. I live six miles away in Tempe, and my husband and I have four kids and love to hike on the weekends.”

One after the other, the team members introduce themselves. They also share their experiences working at the company and how they’ve felt after “saving the day” for their customers and turning those customers into raving fans.

**8:30 A.M. Cubicle Assignment.** Reggie shows Jason his locker and his cubicle. At his cubicle, Jason finds a handwritten welcome note from the company president and a welcome basket. The basket includes company swag (a shirt, hat, pens and pads, healthy snacks, and a company-branded onesie for his baby girl). The supplies Jason will need are all there, along with a list of contact information for key personnel. Reggie leaves Jason to settle in.

**9:00 A.M. HR Orientation.** Jason sits down with Rhonda from HR, who takes the time to learn more about Jason and his family. Rhonda explains some of the forms and paperwork that are necessary to get Jason covered on the company’s insurance plan and make sure he’s paid promptly. Rhonda spends most of their time together talking about the company benefits, including the bonus structure. She says that the company welcomes Jason’s

ideas no matter how crazy they may seem. For example, based on one employee suggestion, the company adopted new technology to route customer service calls. Based on another employee suggestion, the company now pays for employees' gym memberships.

**10:00 A.M.–noon. Tour.** Reggie takes Jason on a facility tour. They cover the office, the tool warehouse, and the private outdoor lot where the company vans are meticulously maintained. In each department, Jason is greeted by folks who welcome him to the company.

Along the way, Reggie stops in front of a wall that shows the company's five-year vision and roadmap. Reggie lets Jason study the display, which features pictures of employees and lists many of their personal and professional goals. Jason smiles as he sees that his picture is already hanging on the wall. *I made the right choice, he thinks. I belong here.*

**1:00 P.M. Career Path.** After lunch with Reggie, Jason's next stop is with Monique, vice president of career development. Monique administered the skills and personality assessment Jason took during the interview process, and she uses the assessment results as a starting point for a conversation about Jason's strengths and professional goals. She explains that there are four phases of a career with the company: apprentice, plumber, team lead, and supervisor. Each phase has a set of skills to master, after which time the employee is eligible for a pay raise. She also introduces a well-developed training program that includes on-the-job coaching, classroom instruction, and online modules. Monique helps Jason start building a personalized development program and leaves him to try out some of the online modules.

**2:00 p.m. Ride-Along.** Jason accompanies Reggie on two customer calls. The experience includes time for Jason to discuss what he has learned so far on his first day and for Reggie to answer questions.

**4:30 p.m. Recap and Reflection.** Jason meets with Olivia in her office. She asks about his first-day experience and gives him her full attention as she actively listens to what he has to say. *My last boss usually read e-mails on his computer or checked his phone while we met,* Jason thinks. *Because he was always multitasking, I never felt heard. This really is different!*

Olivia lays out a 90-day onboarding plan that she has customized for Jason. She asks for his input and invites him to share ideas on how the first day could have been a better experience. As they shake hands, Olivia presents Jason with a gift card for a local restaurant. "Please take your wife to dinner and welcome her to our family," she says.

**5:00 p.m. Day One Is Done.** Reggie escorts Jason to his car. Jason can't wait to get home to tell his wife that he has the perfect job at the best company on the planet. He also can't wait to see his baby in her little onesie sporting the company logo.

---

## Staging and Guiding the Onboarding Process

How long should onboarding last? Experts report that it can take at least 90 days for employees to feel dialed in to a new job, confident that they can perform effectively, trusting of their manager and colleagues, and secure in their knowledge of where to go when they encounter a problem. For more complex jobs, this process can take up to a year.

Phillip Cohen, CEO of Cohen Architectural Woodworking in St. James, Missouri, brings his new employees back into the office after they complete a couple weeks on the job for an additional orientation lasting up to four hours. Then, after their first month, Phillip invites the new hires to sit down and enjoy a meal with him and his team. To prepare for this meeting with their boss, these workers are instructed to bring with them answers to several questions, like, "Now that you've been with us for a month, why do you want to continue to work here?" "Being close to home" is not a good enough answer for Phillip. He says that he wants his people to have a much deeper connection to their work than geography.

Another question they must be able to answer is "What are you doing to improve your character?" Phillip says that if his employees aren't actively working on building their character, this is not going to be a good fit for them.

Cohen's onboarding process continues for 90 days, as they are committed to building not just the highest-quality wood products, but also high-quality people who are committed to continual improvement at work and at home.

If the end game is retaining employees who are on fire at work, it makes sense that the onboarding process would take at least three months. However, 25 percent of companies onboard in one day or less, 26 percent onboard over the course of one week, and 21 percent onboard in over the course of one month. Only 11 percent of companies invest three months or more into onboarding.

To build an onboarding process with intention, you may want to put a cross-functional team in place to determine what the process should look like and who should be involved. For starters, assign team members to research ideas for onboarding and talk to peers at other companies. What are those other companies doing? What do their three-month (or three-week or three-day) onboarding processes look like? Also be sure to ask other employees about their ideas and experiences (at the company and elsewhere—learn everything possible about the good, the bad, and the truly unfortunate).

Once this team has a foundation for the onboarding practices that your organization should implement, they might anticipate and make sure their onboarders can answer the kinds of questions new hires will ask, such as the following:

- What exactly is expected of me in my new role?
- Who will I report to and work with?
- What are the tools and materials I need to do my job?
- Who do I contact if I have a problem?
- Why is my job important? How can I excel at this company?
- What is my future with the company?

Next, this team might compile questions that the organization could answer to ensure onboarding is as effective as possible. I've included some examples below.

- What are some qualitative and quantitative outcomes from the onboarding process?

These outcomes can be for the new employee, the team (if applicable), the company, and/or the customers. Examples include engagement levels, feedback from managers on new hire performance, retention data after 90 days and one year, feedback on employees serving as company champions, and new hire clarity about role and expectations.

- How long will the onboarding process last? What are the steps and stages of onboarding?
- What specific things will we do to help new hires learn our company's culture starting on day one?
- Who will be involved in developing and refining onboarding processes (e.g., supervisor, team members, HR), and what will their roles and responsibilities be?
- What personnel and financial resources will we need to develop and implement the onboarding plan?

## Onboarding Best Practices

**Pre-boarding—assign an onboarding buddy before your new hire starts.** You can take a number of actions before an employee starts to make that employee feel welcome and valued and to help introduce them to your culture. One valuable pre-boarding step is to partner the new employee with an onboarding buddy. According to the Human Capital Institute, almost 90 percent of organizations that pair a new hire with a buddy during the onboarding process find that it's an effective strategy to help the new worker become more productive sooner.

The buddy should be a friendly, gregarious, engaged employee who is at the same level as (or slightly above) someone who has performed well in the role that the new employee is undertaking. And it should be someone who willingly volunteers for the role. The buddy should exchange contact information with the new employee, as a number of questions are sure to arise when the new employee is away from work. The buddy should be in touch with the employee after the formal hiring and before the employee's first day to make sure the employee knows all about the logistics of the first day—where to park, what to wear, and what security procedures to follow (if applicable).

In addition, the buddy can do the following:

- Make sure the new employee has access to paperwork to review or complete before the first day of work, as well as provide access to important information about the company.
- Reinforce a realistic job preview, answer any questions, and listen to any concerns.
- Greet the employee at the front door or in the parking lot on day one and walk the employee to the location where onboarding will begin.
- Show the employee around, introduce them to their colleagues, and show them where they can find available resources.
- Check in regularly (once or twice a week) throughout the onboarding process to find out what the employee likes about the job and the company, what has been the greatest thrill so far, what concerns the employee has, and what ideas the employee has for improvement.

**The first day.** Structure a planned, personalized series of experiences. Yes, you may want to set aside time for paperwork that hasn't been completed beforehand, but the emphasis should be on establishing connections with other team members and helping the employee understand the company culture. One key connection will be with their direct supervisor, who can communicate clear expectations for the job and the onboarding process.

**The first week.** Blend initial training and development with more in-depth meetings with team members across departments. Employees should be encouraged to include the new hire in breaks, meals, and other opportunities for social interaction. The buddy and the supervisor should check in to make sure the new hire is beginning to feel comfortable and building confidence.

**The first month.** Continue building experiences, knowledge, and confidence. Involve the employee in meetings, scheduling, and planning.

Recognize that the first 30 days may be a time to reinforce the basics, building a foundation that can lead to job competence and mastery. Remember: People have different learning styles and build skills at their own pace, which may be faster or slower than you expect. Be prepared to adapt the learning plan accordingly.

**Months two and three.** Do not assume that the employee is fully integrated. The supervisor should observe performance on the job and provide constructive and timely feedback. It should start to be clear whether the employee would like more autonomy or may need more structure in terms of coaching and management. Their buddy should continue to check in. The buddy, supervisor, and other relevant personnel may also want to compare perspectives regarding the information, guidance, and feedback they're providing to the new candidate, as well as compare feedback that the employee has provided.

**Months four through six.** Continue training, team-building, and measuring performance; continue regular check-ins; celebrate milestones and successes; and make plans for what happens beyond the six-month mark.

## Successful Transition

Properly implemented, the onboarding process should enable candidates to master their jobs and reinforce their long-term commitment and transition to the company.

Here are five indicators of a successful transition:<sup>9</sup>

- I. Social cohesion.** New employees fit in (they're not a fish out of water), they feel respected and valued, and they feel that they're part of a team.

---

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from research conducted by Helena D. Cooper-Thomas, a New Zealand-based organizational behavior academic, and Neil Anderson, a professor in HR management at the University of Amsterdam.

- 2. Effective performance.** New employees are performing successfully in the roles for which they were hired.
- 3. Extra-mile performance.** New employees show on-fire engagement, going above and beyond to help out, fill in, and offer ideas to improve effectiveness and efficiency at work.
- 4. Retention.** New employees feel at home as part of the family and will stick around rather than look for the quickest exit.
- 5. Reinforcement of your culture and your brand.** New hires tell friends and family about their great experience at work. Another tipping point is when they start saying “we” instead of “they” when talking about the people with whom they work.

## Tips and Tactics

With the average turnover rate across industries exceeding 20 percent and some industries experiencing more than 50 percent turnover annually, the impact of employee turnover on your bottom line is immense. A solid onboarding program can help. Here are some tips to follow when building your program:

- Recognize the value of effective onboarding in terms of developing and retaining employees. Most importantly, make your onboarding process a real, ongoing process rather than a one-day or one-week “event.”
- Convene a team to design an onboarding process that will work for your company. Review the best practice ideas in this chapter and invite recommendations from others at the company. In addition, consider if you would like to customize onboarding with various segments of your employee population, such as veterans, older hires, and temp employees.

- Determine specific ways to help your new employee understand your company culture right out of the gate. It's this culture and the ways in which each and every employee lives that culture every day that will keep your employee invested in their job and the success of your company.
- Document your onboarding process so it's standard for each new hire, and update that process as you make changes. Your goals are to make sure your business is a great place to work and to help acclimate new employees to your business environment so they recognize and value the opportunity to work for you. What worked two years ago may not work now, so evolve your onboarding process over time.
- Assign an onboarding buddy to your new hires before they start. The buddy will help new hires feel welcome and connected to the company from day one.
- Determine how you will measure the success of your onboarding process—for the employee, the teams they support, the company, and your customers.

**There's never going to be a better time!**

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**S**ince 1998, Eric Chester has been the leading voice in recruiting, training, managing, motivating, and retaining the emerging workforce.

As an in-the-trenches workplace researcher and renowned employee engagement expert, Chester knows what it takes to attract today's enigmatic talent and get them to perform at their best. *Fully Staffed* is his sixth leadership book. His two most recent releases, *On Fire at Work – How Great Companies Ignite Passion in Their People Without Burning Them Out* (2015) and *Reviving Work Ethic – A Leader's Guide to Ending Entitlement and Restoring Pride in the Workforce* (2012), have been widely acclaimed by employers all over the world.

Eric Chester is a Hall of Fame Keynote Speaker who has delivered more than 2,300 paid speeches on three continents. His clients include Harley Davidson, McDonald's, AT&T, The US Army, and Allstate, to name a few.

**EricChester.com**

**303-239-9999**

# “I can’t find any good people who want to do this job.”

- the collective groan of employers heard around the world

What do a night custodian, a cashier for a big box retailer, a caregiver for a senior citizen, a pest control technician, and a muffler installer all have in common?

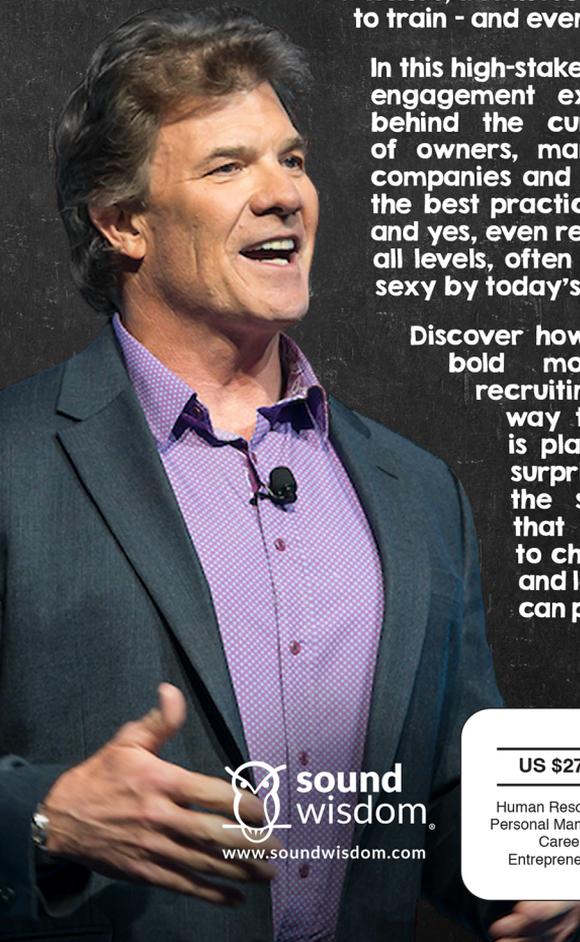
They are frontline employees who are in high demand and dangerously short supply.

The biggest threat facing today’s business owners and managers is not how they can get new customers and improve sales, but rather how they can find, develop, and keep qualified employees to do the tough, vital work that keeps them in business.

Short-order cook. Drywall installer. Call center service rep. Bus driver. HVAC technician. These are the kinds of jobs we rely on to keep the wheels of business and industry moving. They’re also the kinds of jobs where employee turnover is pandemic. Retail, manufacturing, construction, food service, and countless other industries need to find and retain competent workers, but those workers are hard to find - hard to train - and even harder to keep.

In this high-stakes hiring environment, employee engagement expert **Eric Chester** has gone behind the curtain to interview thousands of owners, managers, and leaders of small companies and franchises in order to uncover the best practices for attracting, developing - and yes, even retaining - amazing employees at all levels, often for jobs that aren’t considered sexy by today’s standards.

Discover how savvy employers have made bold moves, implemented guerrilla recruiting tactics, and transformed the way the hiring and retention game is played. These stories will delight, surprise, and get you thinking - and the strategies and methodologies that they illustrate will inspire you to change the way you recruit, hire, and lead your employees so you, too, can proudly say you’re **FULLY STAFFED**.



 **sound wisdom**  
www.soundwisdom.com

US \$27.95

Human Resources &  
Personal Management  
Careers  
Entrepreneurship

ISBN 13: 978-1-64095-112-9



9 781640 951129