

Hiring 2.0:

23 Creative Ways to Recruit and Keep Great Staff

TAKEAWAYS

- › **Web-based technology** can streamline recruitment practices.
- › Emerging leaders can learn new skills and **discover hidden talents**.
- › **Competition** for hiring the best people will be tough.

Hiring and keeping talented employees is requiring more creativity. It's especially true in these times of budget cutbacks and reduced staffing. With our organizations challenged to get the work done with fewer staff, we need to make sure we have talented people to do the job.

There is no single answer to how to attract and retain local government employees. Even as local government agencies cut back, retirements are increasing, and the need remains to recruit people who can do even more than may have been expected in the past. This means it's critical to use approaches that will enable you to keep and attract bright, hardworking, competent staff.

The wide range of approaches described here can be added to your toolkit to help your organization get the talent you need and keep the talent you have. Many of these practices can be implemented inexpensively.

23 Ways

Many traditional ways of hiring staff are not working, and organizations are changing their practices so that:

- People feel sought after.
- Candidates easily understand the jobs being advertised, how to apply, the qualifications and skills needed for the job, and the timeline for the process.
- People interested in a job get quick responses to their questions and applications.
- Departments can hire the best person for the job.

The approaches listed here are being used in local governments. To learn about other tools and to find resource people who can provide more information about these approaches, visit the website at icma.org/hiring2.0."

1. Website Marketing. Today's job seekers look on Facebook, Monster.com, jobs.icma.org, CALOPPS.org, and even YouTube. Web-based technology can streamline your practices to cut recruitment time by 50 to 70 percent.

2. Simplified Position Descriptions. Communicate an exciting and positive message early in the description, avoid jargon and exclusive language, and fully explain all benefits (for example, what exactly a 9/80 is) and how they relate to organizational values (for example, work-life balance).

3. Branding. Use consistent messaging to describe what the organization does and why. Public service, if communicated clearly as contributing to the broader community, will resonate with younger candidates.

4. Map Your Hiring Process. To streamline your hiring process, create a map of the process—from initial request to fill a vacancy to the start date of the new employee filling that job. Identify all of the steps, figure out how long it actually takes at each step, look for bottlenecks, and find ways to cut out steps and time.

5. Create a Hiring Plan. Create a plan for each step in the process of filling a vacancy—from recruitment and

outreach, to candidate assessment, to keeping in touch with candidates, to background checks, final offer, and first day on the job. Use the hiring plan as a way to move the process along quickly and keep the candidates in the forefront.

6. Employee Referral Program. Give recognition or a bonus to staff for referring a candidate who is ultimately hired into a designated hard-to-fill position.

7. Electronic Requisitions and Applications. Speed the approval process by allowing required position requisition signatures to be done electronically, using online applications, and distributing eligibility lists via the Internet.

8. Career Pathways. Provide examples on your Human Resources Department website of possible career pathways in local government.

9. Cal-ICMA Coaching Program. Engage your staff in the coaching program. Make opportunities available to them to participate in mentoring, webcasting, and other programs offered through Cal-ICMA.

10. Strategic Workforce Planning. Forecast your talent needs on the basis of turnover trends and expected vacancies.

Analyze changes in tenure, age at resignation and retirement, and other trends. Color code your organization charts to show staff ages to illustrate expected workforce turnover and opportunities for promotion for younger staff.

11. Talent Readiness Assessment. Use assessment tools for employees who are interested in moving up in the organization to help determine their readiness for leadership positions.

12. Refine the Role of Senior Managers. Require senior managers to be responsible for fostering the professional development of their staff members. Evaluate and reward your senior managers for their success in enhancing the skills and capabilities of their staffs.

13. Conduct "Stay" Interviews. Interview members of your staff, just as you would interview potential new employees, to ask about their goals and aspirations. Determine how the organization can help them stay interested and motivated to prevent them from moving on to other organizations.

14. Management Assistant or Fellowship Program. Hire recent master's degree graduates from a public administration, public policy, or urban studies program. Place them into a

rotation-based program in the organization, give them challenging and inspiring work, provide mentors, and assist them in finding permanent jobs at the end of the program. If you are not able to hire someone full time, consider sharing the position and expense with a neighboring community.

15. Management Talent Exchange.

Partner with another local government to exchange professionals for a three-month period to expose staff to new ways of doing things.

16. Mentoring and Early Career Experiences.

Pair an employee with a senior manager as a mentor to provide career advice. Enable younger staff to attend conferences and regional events, make presentations to the governing body, job shadow, take on larger projects, and have other experiential learning opportunities. These “stretch” assignments provide staff members a sense that they are making contributions early in their careers.

17. Action Learning Teams.

Engage emerging leaders in your organization in cross-departmental teams to address important problems. This enables emerging leaders to learn new skills and discover hidden talents.

18. Transfer of Institutional Knowledge.

Create ways to document and impart knowledge of retiring employees to others. This can include creating an internal local government wiki.

Forecast your talent needs on the basis of turnover trends and expected vacancies. Analyze changes in tenure, age at resignation and retirement, and other trends.

19. Life-Work Balance. Provide a variety of flex scheduling options (for example, 9/80, 4/10), depending on the needs of employees and their work groups. Allow telework opportunities and provide appropriate technical support. Offer resources (such as info-referral) and encourage self-help support groups to employees who are concerned about child care, elder care, grief support, and other family support needs.

20. Employee Orientation or “Onboarding.”

Use the new-employee orientation to immediately describe the values and expectations of the organization as well as professional development and promotional opportunities.

21. Preventive Health Care Programs.

Individuals respond positively to organizations that embrace the total health and well-being of employees. Create preventive care programs to not only reduce

cost but also result in more healthy and productive employees.

22. Ethics Standards. Communicate the organization’s ethical culture and expectations for all members. Emphasize the expected values and behaviors for employees, in doing the right things, along with the positive and negative consequences of walking the talk of the standards.

23. Environmental Responsibility.

Show a commitment to the environment and sustainability by creating programs to address these issues.

End Note

Even though public agencies are struggling to fund services and are cutting back on staff because of fiscal constraints, the need for talented employees will remain. Competition for the best people will be tough—particularly with the continuing pace of retirements. Re-recruiting the best employees you have now as well as finding ways to attract top talent from the outside will be essential to successful service delivery. **PM**

FURTHER READING

- “What Millennial Workers Want: How to Attract and Retain Gen Y Employees,” www.hotjobsresources.com/pdfs/MillennialWorkers.pdf.
- *Generation Y: Thriving (and Surviving) with Generation Y at Work*, by Peter Sheahan, Hardie Grant Books, 2006.
- *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, by Neil Howe and William Strauss, Vintage, 2000.
- *Talent on Demand: Managing Talent in an Age of Uncertainty*, by Peter Cappelli, Harvard Business Press, 2008.



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