

## Avoiding 'panic recruitment' mistakes - By Ken Burgin

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Panic happens when an event is unexpected, and you're not prepared.

But we know that staff move around - it's the replacement process that needs upgrading. The luxury of choosing from a long line of applicants is gone forever, and a new marketing approach is needed.

### **Build your list of future applicants**

Be smart with walk-in applicants. Give them an application form to fill in so the information is organised the way you want it. File for future use (which could be tomorrow).

A friendly, enticing staff page on your website is essential. Check the great 'Our Team' page at Bluestone Restaurant - owner Valerie McLean says applicants who have visited the website are usually the best suited for positions, and know what to expect.

Avoid saying 'we have no vacancies at this time'. Better to say 'send us your details so we can keep them on file and contact you when there's an opportunity'. You'll also need to be organised in keeping the resumes.

If they enjoy eating or drinking with you, they may like to work with you. Do they know it's possible? This sign (right) greets you as you leave a large hardware store - you could make something similar, and promote it boldly or discreetly.

All staff are now recruiters- offer incentives for referrals, whether successful or not. Have a printed card they can hand out, with details on who to contact.

Consider recruiting directly from overseas. Not as extreme as it sounds - there are specialist companies who will manage this for full-time staff. Again, your website can help eg your Italian restaurant's website has a section in Italian aimed at young people in Italy who want a working holiday.

Open your mind to tourist applicants, but check visa regulations carefully and understand what the passport stamps mean. Government immigration websites have a ton of information. This avoids the heartbreak of finding the 'perfect' employee and then realising they can't stay for more than 3 months.

### **Freshen up the offer**

Does the shape of the job need changing? 15 hours a week may be all that's wanted by a smart student, a young mother, or a chef who loves surfing. Nights are wanted by some and not by others. Rostering software makes this tedious job much easier, and is affordable.

Take a cold, hard look at the pay, benefits and work culture you offer. You may get away by offering high pay and a lousy culture, or low pay and great benefits/work culture. The first option is expensive, and the second option is cheaper but needs more work. If both are sub-standard, you're in trouble.

'Grow-you-own' is no longer an option, so the coaching and development you offer should be well promoted. Backed up by great systems and an understanding by all managers and chefs that 'training' is now part of their job description. Most people believe in 'hire for attitude and train for skill' - now's the time to do it.

### **Hurry slowly**

It may be better to use temporary agency staff as a stop-gap measure rather than grabbing the first warm body that applies. That method has failed before. If your systems are all recorded, a temp can get up to speed quickly.

As a last resort, reduce pressure on the short-staffed team by removing tables or closing a section while you find the replacement. Seriously.

The old recruitment methods were designed for an age of high unemployment. As you modernise your methods, the panic subsides and control returns.

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