Highly engaged employees who demonstrate alignment in technical skills and core values are what differentiate you from your competitors.

In a recent interview, George Opitz, President of Brightwing, offers some strategies to combat today’s war for talent.

How do you attract and acquire the best talent?

Take a hard look at your employer brand. Money generally isn’t the prime motivator—employees are looking for a healthy, aligned corporate culture; social consciousness; and a strong market presence. You must consistently communicate the things that make your organization a great place to work:

- Personal and professional fulfillment
- Work-life balance—not just flextime, but also how supportive your company is towards employees’ personal endeavors and family obligations
- Social consciousness
- Growth, advancement, and educational opportunities
- The caliber of your current employees, because people want to work with other smart and talented people

During the selection process, give candidates a preview of what being an employee looks and feels like at your organization. Think about the entire talent acquisition process: the job posting description, the application process, the first call,

Steve Jobs once said, “The difference between using good hardware can be a 2:1 difference for a company. But the difference between a company with superb programmers vs. average ones is 25:1.”

The real secret to success is surrounding yourself with the best people. Organizations that take hiring and retaining talent seriously reap exponential rewards. Highly engaged employees who demonstrate alignment in technical skills and core values are what differentiate you from your competitors. In fact, studies show that businesses with highly engaged employees are 21% more profitable than businesses whose employees are disengaged.¹

However, with unemployment at a 10-year low and an ever-increasing skills gap in STEM careers, available talent can be extremely difficult to find. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for July 2017 was at 4.3%. And with the job market growing twice as quickly as the labor pool,² it’s no wonder it’s taking longer to fill open positions.

This is especially true in STEM industries, where the predicted job growth from 2014-2024 is 8.9%, yet the unemployment rate for STEM workers in 2015 was a mere 2.5%.³
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Even if your talent acquisition process does demonstrate your company’s culture, you must still focus your efforts first on a prospective employee’s core value match, and then their skills match. The national talent shortage makes it tempting to hire the most experienced or technically advanced candidate, but what happens if they don’t align with the company culture?

Always keep in mind that while you can teach skills and give people experience, you cannot teach core values. Finding people with compatible core values that are in line with the mission and goals of your organization is imperative for long-term success.

I hear hiring managers say all the time, “The employee looked good on paper, but within five months we knew we had made a huge mistake.” Instead of focusing solely on education, experience, and hard skills, start hiring people whose values match the job and match other top performers within the organization. Ask questions that require answers demonstrating candidates’ actions and values.

**How do you retain the best talent and ensure employees continue to perform at their highest level?**

Employee engagement is critical to retaining talent, and it starts with the candidate experience. When you begin engaging job seekers during the submittal and interview process, you’re showing them how they’ll be treated as an actual employee. Today, 67% of American employees are not engaged at work. They are either actively searching for new opportunities or simply not performing at their highest potential. However, disengaged employees can be re-engaged to improve their performance and keep them at your company.

Employee retention can be broken into five main action items:

1. It’s essential to properly onboard your new employees. When you consider that 75% of job seekers believe that their candidate and onboarding experience with a company indicates how they will be treated as an employee, it’s clear that efforts to engage them should begin from the moment they first begin the candidate journey.

2. You must provide employees with ongoing opportunities for growth. Studies show that this is especially important for retaining Millennials, but it’s something that workers of any generation look for in a job. Career development...
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Understanding and investing in your employees is the key to winning the war for talent and enabling future organizational success.