



## STRATEGIES TO MAKE YOUR BUSINESS MORE ATTRACTIVE TO EMPLOYEES

In today's competitive job market and an industry where a large segment of the workforce is beyond the age of 50, forestry contractors are needing to do everything they possibly can to find and

retain great staff. On top of this, young people are less likely to enter the industry due to perceptions that it's against the environment, works around seasonal and erratic schedules and sometimes in remote areas. As a result, young workers may see the industry as a stepping stone to a different career.

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As a forestry contractor, it's more important than ever to take a hard look at how the industry attracts talent.

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In the past, the main attraction to a career was the almighty dollar and who paid the most. This has changed in the last few years in that employers are now commonly asked about their corporate values, contribution to the community, work-life balance and other non-compensation-based topics. Even though wages pay the bills, it's the other benefits that employees will compare to other employers. By competing in the wage field, you are entering a battle no one can win. Instead, focus on soft benefits such as paying for a tank of gas each month, buying a gift card for dinner with their spouse if they have been in camp lately, help with retirement planning, etc.

### Approachable management is more efficient

A common reason for people declining a job offer or leaving their current

employer is because they do not feel their ideals align with the management of the company. Most employees feel this is important in order to be engaged at the workplace. With proper engagement

### Know the investment return on training

employees are far less likely to leave. The first step is to ensure management is approachable so that employees feel they can approach management with new ideas. Efficiency is driven by new ideas but it will never happen if employees are told it's a bad idea every time they have a new idea or are approached to doing something.

One comment we hear consistently is "I can't afford to train a new guy." In some cases, this is true. However, the industry cannot afford not to train either. If things don't change in the next few years, we will be facing a labour shortage like we have never seen. There will be no new blood to replace the old guard and it will hurt the industry. We will be forced to turn to using more technology to replace workers in the forest. When considering training we need to realize it is a long-term investment and that we may need to train five people to find one good one.

### Embrace technology and new ideas

The next generation of forestry workers are a generation that has been raised in an era where technology is key. By continuing to embrace technology the industry may be able to overcome some of the things that detract young people from starting a forestry career. If the military

can pilot drones from half way around the globe, maybe someday we will be able to harvest a forest from a couple hundred kilometres away. In the meantime, we must remember that young people thrive on technology and the worst thing we can do is not embrace it.

### Foster continuous improvement and development

Today, employees move around from employer to employer much more. Based on current trends young Canadians can be expected to hold roughly 10-plus jobs over the course of their career. The main reason reported is a perceived lack of opportunity to improve or develop in their current role. Gone are the days when high school graduates started into a role and stayed there until retirement. A company must foster a culture of improvement. Employees need to be encouraged to take extra training and develop new skill sets and a company should be looking at its future needs and develop a training plan to fill them.

### Final thoughts

A happy engaged employee can often be your number one recruitment tool. Sometimes a good measure is to have prospective employees spend a day with a current employee shadowing their actions. This also gives the prospective employer the chance to evaluate the potential hire based on what they do during the shadow. Remember it costs far less to keep a happy employee than it does to rehire.▲

*Chris Duncan, CPA, CA, is a Business Advisor with MNP's Private Enterprise group who specializes in real estate, construction and forestry businesses. Working out of the Duncan office and serving clients across Vancouver Island, Chris draws on his unique background to deliver industry-specific advice to help business owners stay in compliance, make informed decisions and achieve their goals. Chris can be reached at 250.748.3761 or chris.duncan@mnp.ca*