



Building Remarkable Workplaces

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What Do Job Seekers *Really* Want

If you ask people the hypothetical question ‘*What do you want in a job?*’ many will reply ‘money’. If you ask them *after* they have taken a role, what motivated them to take the position, however, it is almost never money. In fact, in the numerous published rankings of the ten conditions which have the most impact on employee motivation, money usually falls between fifth and tenth on the list.

To attract and retain the best long-term recruits, then, employers must look at a number of elements, in addition to money, to create an irresistible combination. I’ve trialled and tested a lot of ideas on this front and here’s my top four:



1. Time

Because of the pressure of working, time is now a commodity. Despite technological improvements, work hours are escalating in many developed countries, so control over and flexibility in scheduling time is becoming more and more valuable, and many people are prepared to take a lower salary as a trade-off. It’s not surprising then, that companies that use this concept in their recruitment marketing, experience outstanding success.

Take the Marriott Hotel group who was looking for great people to staff its new hotel opening in Hong Kong. The company discovered a six day work week was standard there, so they implemented an attractive five day work week, and filled all their positions with employees of their choice.

My local bus company was also having difficulty hiring new drivers as most of their prospective recruits had been swallowed up by the booming Australian mining companies. After focussing on the needs of their target market, the organisation created a new shift time from 9.30am-2.30pm, and filled all their vacancies with parents who wanted to only work between school hours.

St George Bank identified that many of their prospective employees wanted time to pursue other interests, without sacrificing their career. The bank attracted more recruits by introducing a policy that let employees work four years and take a fifth year off, fully paid. It worked this way - if an employee’s annual salary was \$50,000, they were paid \$40,000 for four years and then, when they took the fifth year off, they were paid \$40,000 made up of the \$10,000 owing from each of the previous four years. This is great creative salary packaging, makes a real point of difference and the icing on the cake is that because employees lock in for five years, it reduces staff turnover as well.

Telecommuting is another way to give employees more time, as they cut down on commuting hours. The rise of the internet has increased the ability of mainstream organisations to offer this option. Multiple award-winning US airline Jet Blue, for instance, employs 700 reservation agents and they all work from home. The company has 30% higher productivity and much lower staff turnover than other airlines.

2. Brightness of Future (BOF)

I asked every person I interviewed why they were looking to leave their existing employer. Over seventy five per cent of them replied that it was because they couldn't see any future with that organisation. Many liked their company and/or their manager but there was simply nowhere left for them to go; no way for them to grow and develop; no 'brightness of future' for them.

By identifying, offering and advertising specific BOF selling points in recruitment ads for every position, employers can target and attract excellent applicants, many of whom might be disengaged from their companies, but not actively job seeking. For instance every recruitment ad I placed included 'We promote 99% from within' and this attracted many disgruntled applicants from companies who recruited their senior people from external sources.

Here are some BOF elements that I have used successfully in advertising:

- Promotional opportunities.
- Rapid growth of an organisation or job area and/or any fast-track schemes.
- Rewards and recognition programmes.
- Overseas assignments and secondments and other corporate travel opportunities.
- Job security or factors that show longevity/stability of the organisation – this has become more important following some of the spectacular corporate failures during the global financial crisis.
- Distinctive training/mentoring programmes that are outside the norm.
- Company awards or innovations.

3. An Actual Job Role That Engages

This is one of the great candidate attractors and yet it is rarely used in recruitment advertising. I applied the principle unconsciously for years, without ever understanding how or why it worked. It wasn't until I read Frederick Herzberg's best-selling book *The Motivation to Work*¹ that I began to comprehend why I had some friends who never left dreadful companies and why others quit from what to all intents and purposes were excellent organisations.

Herzberg conducted a large-scale study of worker motivation in the USA in 1959 and discovered that employees rated achievement in the actual job itself as their biggest motivator at work. This included such aspects as doing creative, challenging and varied work; the opportunity to do a job completely from beginning to end; working without supervision; and being responsible for one's own efforts. Salary, inter-personal relationships, company policy and working conditions were all inferior to these factors.

Now, I understood why one of my friends kept working for an appalling employer. His actual job was diverse and interesting so he just ignored the political in-fighting and dysfunctionality that surrounded him. The same principle applied to the ones that quit from exciting organisations. Their tangible job role simply wasn't engaging enough.

I realised that I could apply this principle to attraction. If I analysed every role I needed to fill and advertised the positive qualities of the actual job itself, not just of the organisation, I should draw in more of my desired applicants and improve my recruitment success. This is exactly what happened. When I was called in to recruit for a company manager, the position had been advertised before and had attracted no suitable applicants. After delving deep to understand the job role, we added just one word – 'autonomy' – and soon filled the position with one of more than ten suitable people that applied.

The same thing occurred when I was asked to recruit cabinet-makers for a fit-out company. It was standard practice for them to work on one component, such as drawers, and then pass their work on to the next cabinet-maker to add to it. By advertising the fact that the role we were advertising involved working on the fit-out, from start to end, and being responsible for the total finished product, we were inundated with good applicants.

¹ *The Motivation To Work*, Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner, Barbara Bloch Snyderman, Published by Wiley, New York 1959

4. To Be Inspired

Many longitudinal studies show that employees want to work for organisations that have a clear direction and purpose that engages and enthuses them, beyond the bland mission statement or generic goal of financial returns. In practice, I've found that the addition of a compelling recruitment vision, separate from the corporate vision, has a big impact on applications and candidate interest.

Here's one of my favourites from Gore, the company behind GORE-TEX, which at time of writing had made it onto Fortune Magazine's Best Employer's List for fourteen consecutive years and had annual sales of US\$2.5 billion:

*'Discover how a Gore team developed a device that changes the way doctors treat patients with serious heart defects. Discover how a Gore team invented a guitar string that inspires musicians to play. Discover how a Gore team engineered high performance fabrics that change the way fire fighters respond to emergencies. If you are searching for a company where you can have an impact and make a difference, we're looking for you! What can **you** change by joining Gore?'*

Every time I read this I want to go and work for Gore. It's much more engaging than if the company just outlined that they produced fabrics, medical devices, electronics and manufacturing and its certainly better than the old chestnut 'people are our best asset'. It also sends a strong message to candidates – 'We are looking for achievement-oriented people who want to make a difference'. Those who respond to this message are more likely to be high-quality and a good match for the company's cultural requirements.

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Source: www.mandyjohnson.co/blog