



# Enterprising Rural Families<sup>TM</sup>

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This newsletter is an instrument of the *Enterprising Rural Families: Making It Work* program of the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service. For further information concerning the Enterprising Rural Families program or on-line course contact [information@eRuralFamilies.org](mailto:information@eRuralFamilies.org) or go to <http://eRuralFamilies.org/>.

## TIPS OF THE MONTH:

- Old Chinese proverb: If you want to be successful for one year, grow grain. If you want to be successful for 10 years, grow trees and if you want to be successful for 100 years, grow people. A healthy succession plan is really an investment in people. It's the way for a dream, the business, to carry on for generations.
- Family business partners work daily with other members of the family, and family relationships and work relationships constantly affect one another, not always to the benefit of the company.
- Stay ahead of the curve:
  - ⇒ Read...
  - ⇒ Always ask questions...
  - ⇒ Study your neighborhood...
  - ⇒ Visualize problems...
  - ⇒ Write your future history...
  - ⇒ Map your operation...

## Hiring Secrets for Small Businesses

by Susan James

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Small-business owners often feel a disadvantage when it comes to hiring qualified, talented employees. When competing with larger corporations or businesses that can provide attractive benefit packages, entrepreneurial businesses are often constrained by cost to offer these programs. In tough economic times, it is critical to make smart hiring decisions to avoid costly turnover.



Planning is key before the search for a new employee begins. The first thought that comes to mind when a vacancy occurs is a sense to immediately fill the position. To avoid the hasty hiring of a new employee, several key steps should be taken. These include planning, developing a job description, recruiting applicants, interviewing applicants and selecting the most qualified employee who is the right fit for the job.

Think about all the positive benefits of working for a small business. Small-businesses can attract talented workers, if they know what to emphasize when advertising and interviewing for jobs. Prospective employees sometimes worry about stability in a small firm. There can be a perception on the part of job candidates that there is a certain instability associated with smaller businesses. Share with applicants how long the business has been in existence.

A small company can offer a really ambitious, bright person a chance to learn more. They'll be getting more job responsibility right up-front and will have the ability to directly influence the businesses growth and development. If financially feasible, a smaller company that offers solid health coverage, and a 401(k), and vacation time should be very competitive. What's more important is to emphasize that the employee can test new ideas, skills or business practices, and work independently.

Smaller businesses can often hire faster. They typically don't have hiring committees and hierarchies of management that have to give approvals. So they can move quickly to secure quality personnel and make them feel valued. In today's economic times, an employee who can begin work soon after an interview, may view that as a strong selling point for the company.



Also, smaller companies have more line-of-sight management, the owner or manager will work side-by-side with employees at every level. This should be emphasized when it comes to interviewing. The highest-level person possible should meet with job candidates and take an active role in follow-up. A corporate CEO likely will not follow up with a candidate after the interview, decision makers at a small business can keep the lines of communication open and steady with leading candidates, making an immediate, positive impression.

Small businesses should play up perks such as casual work environments, flexible schedules, telecommuting, social activities, extra vacation time and personal time, or any other supportive or family-friendly policies they offer that larger companies have difficulty supporting. Additional benefits, such as employees working from home, at least part-time, or flexibility of work schedule can be important. You may not be able to pay as much as a large corporation, but they'll stay with you because that flexibility is important to them.

Other important things are making the workplace fun and encouraging social networking so your employees get to know each other and make friends. Retention studies show that people don't like to leave jobs where they have friends.

Job Descriptions should be detailed enough to tell the prospective employee the major responsibilities

*Bookkeeper  
Guys Small Engine  
Repair*

Full time position with benefits. Bookkeeping knowledge required. Must be proficient in QuickBooks. Position requires some administrative assistant duties. Excellent customer service and phone skills. Please send resume with three references

and duties of the job, and knowledge, skills, and abilities required to be successful in the position. A concise one page job description is ideal. On the job description lists position title, hiring salary or salary range, location of work, the purpose of the job, duties and responsibilities. Include minimum qualifications required to be successful in the position. Include the application process. Examples might be to complete an application form and/or submit a current resume with three to four names and phone numbers of references.

When recruiting applicants, a short concise ad in local papers or trade journals can be effective. State or local workforce centers can also be a good source to locate qualified candidates. When advertising through newspapers, ask if they also offer classifieds on-line. Many job applicants today search the Web for potential jobs. Word of mouth, bulletin boards, and drop-ins will also expand your applicant pool.

As applications arrive, a short screening tool can assure you are selecting candidates to interview based on work related qualifications.

List duties and responsibilities and characteristics desired for the position. Using a check list, note if applicants possess required qualifications.

Plan for the interview. Depending on the number of applicants, selecting three to five individuals to interview will provide a sufficient pool. Do ask the same general questions for all candidates. Require the standard for all applicants. Treat all applicants with fairness, equality, and consistency. This can be accomplished by following a structured interview plan to achieve fairness in the interview.

- Ask questions based on responsibilities of the job.
- Listen, more than you talk. Spend 80% of the interview listening.
- Share positive aspects of working for your company.
- Ask open ended questions which require a thought process – who, what, where, when, how and why. Questions which are situational in nature, how an individual handled a situation in the past, are good indicators of how they will handle similar issues in your workplace.
- Self-assessment questions will help candidates provide job related behaviors and attitudes.

All businesses should follow Equal Employment Opportunity compliance guidelines. Do not ask any personal or family related questions. Do not ask question relating age, arrests, credit ratings, citizenship, national origin, marital or family status, disabilities, race, or religion. Make judgments based on work related qualifications, not on information obtained from a third party. During the interview, take care to not make careless or off hand questions or remarks.

Planning does take time, but the investment will pay off in successful placement of talented, qualified employees.

*References:*

Klein, Karen E., August 14, 2006. Small-Business Secrets to Hiring. Business Week.  
<http://www.businessweek.com>.

University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (1998) About the Law.

Zoller, Chris. Filling a Position in a Small Business. Ohio State University Fact Sheet, CDFS-1381-96.



✧ As no two job applicants are the same - advertise widely, and diversely.

✧ Provide detailed, yet concise, job descriptions to stand out among others.



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