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## Finding the right employees takes a good strategy - and adequate time

Your employees are the heart of your business. As a smaller or mid-sized operation, they may be fewer in number - and thus even more valuable to your operation and bottom line. This early fall issue of InfoPays will provide some insight on how to recruit them better - and incent them to stay loyal to you longer with an affordable benefits program.

### Hiring Smarter for Small Business

Have you been considering adding some skilled people to build your business this fall? The following tips can help you get started in a recruitment campaign, whether you want to bring on a team of 10 or an occasional backup!

**Don't hire another you!** If you are looking for a right hand person, it is a good idea to hire someone who can balance your weaknesses. For example, If you are a "fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants entrepreneur with a casual style, you will definitely want to hire a more

detail-oriented, structured individual. Your business should look for unique and qualified employees that bring a range of different skills and strong suits to the table

**Borrow from the competition.** Another smart idea is to scour your competition's ads for similar positions: What skills are they seeking? And what are they offering in return? Two strong sources are the individual Internet job boards or Indeed.com, which aggregates thousands of job sites. And if your competitor is successful, this step can also give you a good idea of where to spend your want-ad money.

**Know exactly what you expect from your new hire.** Before you advertise for help, sit down and write a very concise job description. List your goals for the new hire. By spending time working through your thoughts on hired help you are setting yourself

up for a great working relationship. If you can clearly articulate the job to all applicants, they will have the opportunity to determine if this is a mutually agreeable fit.

**Leave sufficient time.** If you expect to hire someone by the 15th of next month you may be setting yourself up for failure. You can't always put a deadline on your hiring process. In other words, plan to advertise, interview and train until you find the RIGHT person.

**Create a disciplinary and review process** Whether you need to tackle issues of poor performance, or chronic absenteeism -- have a policy in place before you bring on your first team member. Questions to address in this process include: How many emergency absences are acceptable in a given time period? How will you deal with customer complaints and

concerns? How will you reward outstanding performance?

**Find a "background check" company that you can trust.** If your company's product or service requires your employees to access clients' or their information, do not overlook the importance of conducting a background check in each instance, you will need the applicant's signature and understanding that you will have a third party conduct a background check as a condition of employment.

**Don't stop recruiting.** Rule No.1 for small-business owners: Never stop recruiting. The moment you're done hiring, you should be keeping your antennae up for the future. That's something that flexible smaller companies can do that bigger firms cannot. By following these tips, you will be certain to hire smarter - and attract the right individuals to your business.

## Employee Benefits for Small Business

### Benefits programs are no longer just for big business

Medical and drug coverage. Therapy and counselling services. Not to mention annual contributions to employee RRSP programs. "Phew," you may think. "Thank goodness, as a small business, I'll never have to worry about things like benefit packages." But think again.

More and more Small Business owners today are seeing the light, and the real value in developing some kind of competitive benefits program for their employees – regardless of small numbers and limited budgets. Not only has it become a necessary investment to attract and retain top talent to your firm, a good package can pay you back in greater productivity levels, fewer sick days, higher morale and a significant reduction in HR recruiting costs due to turnover.

There are many cost-effective and creative ways to build a good program that are enticing and value-packed without overspending. Here are a few pennywise ideas to start you thinking:

**Company Discounts:** Offer your employees a significant price break on your own company products or services. Even better, strike up some partnerships with local businesses – like gyms, theatres, etc – and see if you can pass on some great group purchasing discount savings for your staff. Who does not love a bargain, like getting ball game tickets at 30% off?

**Computer Loan Interest Free:** Consider offering you employees the ability to buy a computer interest-free through your company. To do this you need to determine a limit of the dollar value of the computer on the plan and set up an automatic payroll deduction for repayment.

**Paid Community Hours:** Encourage your employees who "seek more meaning" to give back to the community. Offer a determined number of regular pay hours in community service time. This means when your staff member is involved in a volunteer event, your company picks up the tab. It's a great way to win the hearts of the staff and community.

**Education Reimbursement:** Help your employees keep their talents sharp – and their minds inspired. Your small company may not be able to pay the tuition costs of an MBA program but for many seminars and community college courses reimbursement is affordable. You'll also benefit from employees with updated knowledge and skills

**Telecommuting/Work at home option:** These days work-life balance is a huge motivator for professionals. By showing trust and offering your employees the option of working at home one day a week, you rise to the top of the best employer pack – and become a much coveted workplace that will attract top talent

**Flexible work hours –** Offer your employees the option of staggered work hours – like 8 to 4 and 10 to 6 shifts. The opportunity to avoid rush hour, get an extra hour of sleep etc. will be an equally desirable benefit for 'balance seeking' employees today.

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**INFOPAYS** is published monthly.

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