

# Follow these tried-and-true tips to find and keep high quality employees

By Dan Wortman

One of the best things you can do for your business and your future revenue potential is to put procedures in place for careful hiring and detailed training. Retaining good, well-trained employees is great for business and better for your customers. The opposite - high turnover - breaks up teamwork, productivity, continuity and safety. And worse, it's expensive and time consuming if you have to continually recruit, hire and train new employees. Low turnover is good for everyone!

## Hiring

The CEO of a large international company once said, "Hire Slowly- Fire Quickly." He meant take your time to thoroughly vet applicants before hiring. But down the road, if you've discovered a flaw in their character or work ethic, fire them quickly. Whether you agree with this system or not, it tends to work. We can't fix personalities, and employees with the wrong attitude can only damage employee morale or effect customer relations negatively.

## The Interview

Always have two or more people interview each applicant. An additional interviewer may discover something,

good or bad, that will sway your decisions and it also helps when discussing each applicant's qualifications. Most operators are looking for an applicant that has a lot of time to devote to working. At our rink, we look for exactly the opposite. We want an employee involved in many school activities such as sports, band, clubs, etc. These kids tend to have better grades, are well adjusted and are more social.

We tell them during the interview that their schoolwork is our top priority and that work comes second. We know we'll have to schedule around their activities. We just keep more employees on staff for coverage. The side benefit is that the parents love us and we get high quality employees who like kids and customers. We become known as the place parents want their kids to work.

## Expectations

Before hiring any employee, make sure they know your "minimum level of expectations," your dress code, late policies, personal conduct while on duty, and your policies on customer care.

Example: We expect all of our employees to be a part of the "show" - be able to participate in games and dances with customers on the floor, and dress up in costumes and participate in theme night.

Let them know how they will be

trained and, most importantly, that someone will always be available to answer any questions they may have - since your goal is that they be trained accurately and fully. Believe it or not, employees prefer detailed training. They feel more secure and confident in their jobs, and they quickly fit right in as a productive member of the team.

Before any employee starts work, we have them read our handbook and a book called, "Customer Love," by Mac Anderson. It's a terrific book about the care and appreciation of customers. It lets them know how serious we are about our guests and their treatment, and it gives them a foundation for how our business was built.

## On the Job Training

New employees need to feel they are in the care of a competent trainer. Train a new hire only with a certified trainer for consistency, and always insure the trainee is an extra employee- not responsible for holding a particular person. Do not leave a new employee alone until they are thoroughly trained. You want them to develop good, consistent and correct work habits. If left to their own devices they will do what they think is best- even if it's not the correct procedure. Trying to correct poorly trained employees later can be very difficult. Well-trained employees create great teamwork, crew efficiency, and high quality and consistent customer care. And remember, always cross train employees in all areas of your operation. This makes them more versatile in a pinch, and helps keep them from getting

bored with a repetitive job.

## Continuous Coaching

A well-trained employee is a good start, but ongoing coaching by your entire management team is the cement that will reinforce that initial training and adherence to procedure. Coaching is a series of "reminders" that start before every session. Before customers arrive, give employees priorities for their particular positions, stressing areas of past concern. These simple "reminders" bring an emphasis to the procedures your management team sees as needing additional attention, or new items you want to introduce. This along with observance during sessions will give you confidence your team members are efficient, customer-friendly, and a part of the show.

## Bottom Line

At our facility, we have a very low turnover for our industry. We look for kids with active engaged lives. We put schoolwork first- job second, therefore, we are sought after by kids and parents alike as a place where they want their kids to work and stay for years. We have employees that start at age 16 and stay through college and beyond. The result is a long-term, well-trained team that helps us grow as a business year after year.

*Daniel Wortman has 36 years experience in the skating industry, and has been a consultant and operator. He has owned United Skates of America in Rumford, R.I., [www.unitedskatesRI.com](http://www.unitedskatesRI.com), a 30,000 sq. ft. FEC with skating, laser tag and rock climbing, since 1993.*



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