

# New Challenge for the Effective Art of Networking

BY DONNA MESSER



**B**OOMING economy is causing a recruiting squeeze. Canadian manufacturers, distributors, and retailers are all hollering for help as they realize the world of human resources is changing. Gone are the days of just finding a good employee. Today we have to not only find them, we have to offer them better benefits than the competition! The effective art of networking has taken on a new challenge: finding and keeping good employees! I was amazed that companies are now in a position where they have to use their network to compete for good employees. Our world is changing!

How do we use networking to attract and retain talent in any industry? We know that organizations are changing and are now looking for a different type of employee. In the 40s and 50s, we were looking for employees with production capabilities. As we moved forward into the 60s and 70s, we entered the world of marketing. Continuing into the 80s, education was very important, and we hired MBAs and others with a quality university degree. The 90s saw a move towards the information age, with technology a major factor in the hiring practice. Being Y2K compliant was extremely important.

Where are we going in this century? What kind of employees are we looking for, and how can we find and keep them?

Our declining birth rate is causing labour shortages. Our workforce is better educated and unemployment is down to 5.6%. We have a strong economy and we see many new and booming industries. Employers have to be able to attract and retain talent. There is a new buzz phrase out there: "Sustainable Competitive Advantage." Companies are using networking to bring this information on the advantages of employment to potential employees.

## Sustainable Competitive Advantage—how to use networking to find that perfect employee

*Internally: spread the word—it's a good place to work!*

- Start an employee referral program;

- Create a new hire-marketing kit;
- Advertise internally. Use newsletters, pay stubs, email, Intranet.

*Externally: spread the word—advertise!*

- Community newspapers;
- Industry publications;
- Your website and industry websites;
- Open house at your location;
- Through suppliers and customers;
- Alliances with special interest groups;
- Alliances within the local community, schools, churches, community centres.

*How do you keep that perfect employee?*

- Create a corporate culture where employees feel valued;
- Add value to society;
- Become an exceptional place to work;
- Profit share;
- Employee stock options;
- Medical coverage;
- Pension plans;
- Telecommuting or telework;
- Sabbaticals;
- Flexible work arrangements.

According to Carolyn Starshuk, CHRP of the *Human Resource Professional Association of Ontario*, "Finding and keeping good employees starts with senior management and their commitment to people. They must lead by example, be consistent, and integrate people processes with business. They need to know what the competition is doing, set goals annually, review performance to goals, give salary reviews based on performance; and communicate, communicate, communicate!"

"Companies are hiring for talent, not skills and knowledge. Skills can be taught, talent is something that shines through," says Valerie Oberle, former vice-president of Florida's *Walt Disney*. According to Carolyn Clark, *Fairmont Hotels & Resorts (Canadian Pacific Ltd.)* "People want to work for the best. Talent attracts talent."

Companies that take time to identify the type of people they need, and design programs to meet those needs, will achieve success. Companies that can differentiate them-

selves to attract and retain talented people will win! It all comes down to people: who you know, what they know, and who needs to know that you need to know them! It used to be that networking got you working. Now networking is what may *keep* you working!

Networking is not just for those of us who are looking for employment—it is now an essential skill for those of us who need employees. Whether we are corporate Canada, or a small up-and-coming business, our growth and success is based on finding and keeping the right people.

For more information on hiring and inspiring, rewarding, and retaining good employees connect with Toronto based Work/Family Directions Canada (WFD), an organization that gathers information on improving life at work and shares their findings at no cost with those businesses participating in its surveys. Email to [info@wfdcanada.com](mailto:info@wfdcanada.com), or call 416-492-3475. **SBCM**

*Donna Messer is an international speaker, trainer, facilitator, and author. Founder of ConnectUs International, the company designs, develops and delivers business-training programs. ConnectUs also offers a unique matchmaking service, which links businesses to opportunities around the world.*

### Did you know.....

- ➔ Industry Canada estimates that we have 200,000 more jobs available than people qualified to fill them.
- ➔ Canada's service-related businesses are outpacing economic growth and job creation in all other sectors.
- ➔ The cost of hiring the wrong person for a job can be \$10,000 - \$30,000 according to a survey by U.S. based Thomas Magnum Company
- ➔ Knowledge-based industries (KBIs), highly dependent on employees to create innovative products such as software and biotechnology, are the fastest growing small businesses with revenues increasing at 16-33 percent per year.
- ➔ Nine percent of working Canadians did part of their jobs at home in 1995—the average was 12.4 hours weekly. Those aged 45-53 were more likely to work at home, probably because they're more likely to be self-employed.
- ➔ In 1995, 171,000 working Canadians were job-sharing, many of them in the 45-55 age group. Job sharing is most common among occupations requiring a higher level of education.
- ➔ More than half of self-employed Canadians work from their homes and 40 percent hire others to work for them.

*Statistics from The Definitive Guide to Managing Human Resources for Small Business Owners.*

**Contact Donna Messer:**  
[dmesser@connectuscanada.com](mailto:dmesser@connectuscanada.com)