

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute and *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about two new tools when it comes to winning the war for talent. This comes from a couple of articles, one from Harvard Business Review in January of this year and another from chiefexecutive.net in June 2021. The Great Place To Work Institute, I didn't know there was such a thing, but I'm glad there is, studied Fortune's top 100 companies to work for, so these are the companies that finished top of the pole. And one of the questions they address is, this is a fun place to work. Fun. This is a fun place to work. They found that for the companies that are at the top of the Fortune list, 81% of employees said, "Yes, this is a fun place to work."

The next level of good companies, 62%, so that 19% gap was the biggest one in the survey. That was a huge differentiator for the companies at the top of the list versus the companies that were simply rated good in the list. So, one of the articles is, "In the talent war fun is the new competitive weapon." Is it? Fun? The other article, the Harvard article says, "It's the little things that make employees feel appreciated." Now, is either fun or appreciation the key ingredient? Is that all you have to do to attract top talent. Well no, writers have to write. Writers have to produce something and they're always looking for things that are new and things like that. I think fun and appreciation are key ingredients in attracting top talent.

Are they the only ingredients? Well, no. No, of course, you've heard us talk about hiring and attracting talent so many times, they're not the two only ingredients, but I do think that they are important ingredients. So, let's address why they're important. What about this is important to you? Good performance, good employees can choose where they want to work? Good economies, bad economies, it doesn't matter. They can always choose where they want to work. And you want to get your fair share of those top people, so fun and appreciation should be ingredients as we talk about culture, if you're going to improve your culture, fun and appreciation should be a part of it.

There's a big gap between what managers think they deliver in terms of appreciation and what employees perceive the managers deliver in terms of appreciation. So, I think that's probably normal, managers, bosses, always look at it through rose colored glasses. "I'm doing a good job. I'm appreciating my people," et cetera. You'd be surprised to find on maybe a survey that your people, they don't always know how much you care. You have to show them. You have to demonstrate. You have to tell them. How many times have you told your spouse I love you? It's a message that you can't say often enough, right? So, you can't say that I appreciate people often enough in your organization.

So, let's talk about fun and we'll talk about appreciation as two ingredients in winning the war for talent. First, fun starts at the top. Well, suppose you're not a fun person. Suppose you're not a lighthearted person. You're not a joker or something like that, you tend to be fairly serious. That's okay. Find people in your organization that are fun and why not create a fun committee? Get the people that are your big extroverts, your party planners, your people that just can't get enough of each other and let them plan some things that would be fun for the organization, whether it's a picnic or bowling night, I don't know, pick. Figure out what the folks like and try to deliver it to them. Let your people decide what fun is.

I think we did the blog some time ago about the boss that want to appreciate his people by taking them to kayaking, because he loved kayaking. Well, nobody wanted to go kayaking, he didn't ask, he just imposed this on them. It became more of a drudge than a source of excitement for the employees. Let your people decide what fun is and then go along with them. Don't take yourself too seriously. Over the years I've seen a lot of folks that have sort of read their own press clippings, if you know what I mean. Don't take yourself too seriously, that's a fun killer. That is a fun stopper. So, you've got to allow for some levity in your organization at some point, don't you? And then finally, create a fun committee, as we talked about before.

Now, appreciation. For us, we put appreciation at the top of the agenda. It's literally written on the agenda; appreciation is the first item. Why not put it on the agenda? And you're going to have to encourage your people if you haven't done this before, you, the leader, are going to have to lead every time. You might have to have 10 or 15 appreciations, because

last week, last business week, last month, last year? Ancient history. People can't remember what they had for dinner yesterday, much less why they appreciated the little things that happened last week. So, you have to write those things down and you, the leader, are going to have to demonstrate what it is to show appreciations for other people each week, okay?

Make notes to yourself. I have a weekly planner and I make notes in there, so I don't forget, because it's important to recognize the little things. If we exceed our revenue target, well, that's there for everybody, good for us, we can pat ourselves on the back. It's the little things that make a difference when it comes to appreciation. Visit with your people, management by walking around as Mike Flentje calls it. Visit with your people and don't talk about work all the time for gosh sake. "How's it going at home? I see you got a new car." Whatever it happens to be, make conversation with your folks and engage with them, especially now, because we have the work from anywhere environment, post pandemic. Make sure your people don't feel isolated, so there again, engage with them. If they're remote workers, if they're part-time, remote and in the office, make sure that they feel like they're a part of the team. I think that's going to be a big challenge going forward, because so many more people are going to continue to work from home or work from anywhere, which is a more fair statement.

And so, culture, engagement with employees, all those kinds of things are going to be harder for us now, than they were two or three years ago, because we're not always going to be together in a tight group. And then one thing that really pays off is personal notes. Buy some note cards, and at an employee's anniversary, work anniversary, or at the time of a big life event, a new child, a graduation or something, write a note and just say, "Golly, surely we thank you for all the hard work you put in." And just put some personal sentiment in there. Nobody writes handwritten notes anymore. It's all emails or texts. Handwritten notes, I'm telling you, they go a long way, that's a great way to show appreciation.

Having fun in the company and showing appreciations, it takes very little time and it usually doesn't cost much money, if any at all. Why not add these two ingredients as you try to attract top talent into your organization? We'd like to hear what works for you.

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