



Tackling Your HR Challenges Head-On

Industry Topic Specialists

Name: Mark Goobie

Position: Managing Partner

Company: [Westridge HR](#)

Location: Grimsby, ON

Email: mark@westridehr.com

Specialist Highlights

- Tourism and hospitality are facing staffing challenges, skyrocketing vacancy rates and the drain of employees due to the pandemic.
- Traditional recruitment practices posting jobs on multiple websites and attracting hundreds of applications are not working anymore.
- Think strategically and creatively about how you can attract talent and positively differentiate your company.
- Candidates are more discerning than ever. They have strong values and have grown up in the digital world. As a result, they are checking out your company online to learn more about what you value and how you treat your employees.
- Be sure to monitor your online reviews, address feedback promptly and manage your online reputation on your website and platforms such as Google, Glassdoor, Indeed, Yelp, LinkedIn, Facebook.
- Employees are looking for these top things in order of priority: meaningful work, competitive pay and benefits, and empowering work environment, personal growth, and recognition for stellar efforts.
- Some turnover is a reality, so focus your energy on retaining your core team and building a strong company culture. Retaining existing staff is much more cost-effective than recruiting.
- It's critical to think creatively about where you might find potential staff and research programs that might fit your company.

Discussion Ideas & Tips

Attracting and retaining the right staff was a struggle for many tourism businesses before the pandemic; it's even harder now. Ensuring that you can effectively communicate the value of working in tourism, the benefits your business offers, and having the right human resources strategies in place to effectively attract and retain employees is critical.

Companies that are doing well retaining and recruiting staff provide feedback to team members, formally and informally, they are involved in their communities, have team member events, and build an intentional culture of learning and development.

"Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients."

– Richard Branson

Tips for success

- Retain your core staff, then you can focus on filling other staffing gaps as needed. The best recruitment method is retaining your existing employees.
- Analyze your compensation. Being at the mid-point of the market is important.
- Benefits are being used to recruit, so look at ways you can offer benefits, health spending accounts and/or non-monetary compensation (i.e. uniform programs, staff events and community involvement).
- Tailor jobs to the individuals and their skill sets, abilities and needs.
- Be welcoming and inclusive to employees regardless of their age, abilities, race, or background.
- Create a positive culture in your company where staff are valued, appreciated, and their feedback is important.
- If you have high staff turnover, take a critical look and ask yourself what you can do to improve to retain staff.
- Expand where you are looking for employees and get creative with your recruitment, e.g., seniors, ethnic communities, Indigenous communities, ESL students, people with disabilities, students, seasonal partners, foreign workers, and referrals.



Programs, Tools and Partnerships Ideas

- Canada Summer Jobs, Propel Student Work Placement Program, Mentorworks, Canada Student Work Placement Program and the Destination Inclusion Program, are just a few of the programs that tourism businesses can tap into for recruitment.
- Another attraction and retention tool can be developing a publicly available sustainability or diversity, equity, and inclusion policy or, if feasible, consider becoming a [B Corporation](#). Showing action and progress in policy areas such as sustainability and DEI. It is important to celebrate wins to strengthen your brand and retain and attract employees.
- Staff recognition is vital to retaining and building a positive company culture. [Gusto](#) is an online tool that is a wonderful and inexpensive way to acknowledge and reward employees.
- Partnering with universities or colleges with experiential or co-op programs can be a great way to find staff and create positive opportunities for the students. For example, one participant from London worked with Innovation Works and Western, Fanshawe, Pathways, Goodwill and Youth Opportunities to find co-op students for their business. It was mentioned that [Skylon Tower](#) partnered with a high school culinary program to recruit and train staff.
- Creating a Friends and Family Referral Program was brought up to recruit and retain employees. When staff refer friends or family, provide monetary incentives if the new hires stay on longer than six months or one year.
- Hosting cool events can be low cost and boost staff morale. For example, a company hosted a series of online events, one of which was a [magic show](#).

Other Key Insights

The following ideas were shared to support and encourage tourism businesses in retaining and recruiting staff.

- When hiring, it is crucial to think of accessibility, aging demographics, and non-visible disabilities. Think of what you can do to ensure your company is welcoming and inclusive to this large and untapped pool of potential employees.
- The [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act](#) (AODA) became law in 2005 intending to make incremental improvements to achieve an accessible Ontario by 2025. They provide resources and partner organizations to assist in finding employees of all abilities and make the appropriate accommodations for the specific employee.
- Multi-generational recruitment is a huge opportunity. Seniors and retirees are an under-leveraged group of potential staff who may have transferable skills from their work in other industries or sectors. Although you can't explicitly target a certain group of people in your job ads, language that addresses their employment needs and desired working conditions, such as part time or casual work etc. can open doors to previously untapped groups of human resources. [Over 55](#), based in London, Ontario, is an organization dedicated to supporting mature entrepreneurs with services that help seniors and the elderly age safely in place.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies are crucial to attracting staff and ensuring all people feel welcome at your business. Showing support for Indigenous reconciliation and Black Lives Matter could be reflected in policies but requires a more profound, authentic commitment to action than just a social media post.
- Build-in systems and processes that help your business avoid implicit recruiting bias.
- Everything you do should be intentional and be built into the strategic level of your company. Having champions at all levels of your organization involved can set a positive and inspiring company culture.
- Putting employees first is becoming a new mentality as more employers in the tourism industry realize the importance of having loyal and values-aligned employees. Creating a personable, open workplace and values-based company culture can increase loyalty and make the team feel that you are all working toward the same goal.
- Stay connected with staff in the off-season or if layoffs happen (i.e., COVID-19) through newsletters, emails, calls or social media, where appropriate.



- Cross-functional training can be used to share staff within your business to alleviate staffing shortages. Other strategies, such as partnering with another company to share employees to provide full-time employment has been successful in some destinations (e.g., seasonal winter businesses are partnering to share staff with seasonal summer businesses).
- Making staff feel appreciated through being aware of birthdays, treating staff to ice cream on a hot day, noticing little details or staff needs at the right times. One person mentioned that they noticed an employee’s mitts were damaged on a cold day, so they bought them new mitts.
- Take a genuine interest in the individual employee and their needs, then tailor the job to the person to be set up for success. Every new employee, even an inexperienced one, comes with special talents waiting to be discovered that could help your business succeed in new ways.
- Younger people are looking for fulfillment and meaning through their work. They are also looking for the organization's values and what positive impact, sustainable or inclusive practices they stand for. They are not just looking for a job.

What Employees Look for In Their Employer, by Generation

Young Millennials & Gen Z: 1989-2001	Older Millennials: 1980-1988	Gen X: 1965-1979	Baby Boomers: 1946-1964
1. The organization cares about employees' wellbeing.	1. The organization cares about employees' wellbeing.	1. The organization's leadership is ethical.	1. The organization's leadership is ethical.
2. The organization's leadership is ethical.	2. The organization's leadership is ethical.	2. The organization cares about employees' wellbeing.	2. The organization cares about employees' wellbeing.
3. The organization is diverse and inclusive of all people.	3. The organization's leadership is open and transparent.	3. The organization's financial stability.	3. The organization's financial stability.

GALLUP

Source: <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/336275/things-gen-millennials-expect-workplace.aspx>

Additional Helpful Links

- [Indeed](#)
- [Glassdoor](#)
- [Tourism Industry Association of Ontario](#)
- [Tourism and Hospitality Emergency Recovery](#)
- [Tourism HR Canada](#)
- [Government of Canada’s Student Work Placement Program](#)
- [Propel Student Work Placement Program](#)
- [Mentor works](#)
- [4 Things Gen Z and Millennials Expect From Their Workplace](#), Gallup 2021.
- [11 Steps To Reduce Unconscious Bias In Hiring Processes](#), Forbes 2021.
- [Destination Inclusion](#)

Disclaimer: In providing your business with the information above and other support or advice, including information, support and/or advice relating to the Covid-19 crisis, the Tourism Café Canada facilitators, session sponsors and topic specialists are not responsible or liable for decisions made, strategies adopted or third-party program results, and specifically disclaim any responsibility for any consequences, financial or otherwise, of a business relying on our advice or using information we provide. Businesses must understand and agree that they are responsible for all actions they take and decisions they make and that they must do their own due diligence and seek appropriate legal, accounting, tax, or other professional advice as they may require.