

# Staffing Decisions™



Staffing Services of Texas

"Do the Right Thing"

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## 'Gamification' Options and Opportunities

The heavy influx of millennial workers into offices has led many HR professionals to consider a new tool as a training option: *gamification*.

Gamification is training via the use of game-playing, scoring and competition, usually using modern technology. Vic Cherubini, president of the Epic Software Group in The Woodlands, TX, says, "Right now we are working on an incredible gamification training project for one

of the largest oil and gas companies in the world. The company will be losing many experienced employees through retirement, and it believes gamification may be an effective way to attract and train new hires."

Why gaming strategy for millennials? Because this generation cut its teeth on digital games and devices and many companies are finding that these "digital natives" need to be spoken to in their native language.

Liz D'Aloia, founder of Dallas-based HR Virtuoso, says training and onboarding are obviously great places to *gamify*. "Instead of having a boring video with tests, why not 'gamify' the information and make it more fun and engaging?"

Gamification can be part of an organization's performance management programs, says Dominique Jones, VP of HR for Halogen Software, in Ottawa, Canada. "If your employee rewards are based on gamification, you can reward employees on an ongoing basis, rather than once a year."

Gamification can be set up in different ways. For example, employees could earn points on a regular basis for their accomplishments, with those points counting towards a higher reward.

But gamification may not be a cultural fit for everyone in your organization, especially older employees.

Meredith Falb is an HR expert and marketing manager at CorporateRewards in New York. She says gamification can be effective if:

- There is something in it besides the game itself, such as points, prizes or other rewards.
- It is actually fun. The purpose of gamification is to take something that's not very exciting and make it appealing. If you layer a boring game with a boring activity, no one will play.
- It is social. Competition is only fun if you can see how you rank against your competitors and enjoy the public recognition of having your name in the top spot.
- Your game is promoted. It may be the most addictive game in the world, but if nobody knows about it, nobody will be playing it.
- It encourages the right behaviors.

Before starting a gamification initiative or creating a game, Falb says, "Be sure you have a clear goal in mind and can link the actions encouraged to successful outcomes. Otherwise you've just created a fun way for your employees to waste time." ▲



### For More Information:

eLearning Industry: The Power of Gamification in HR

<http://elearningindustry.com/power-gamification-in-hr>

Wired: The Yawn Known as HR Gamification

<http://www.wired.com/2014/11/the-yawn-known-as-hr-gamification/>

### Hot on the Inside

#### What About E-Cigarettes? . . . . . 2

Should they be banned, like "regular" cigarettes? Or does it make sense to have different rules for e-cigs and vaping?

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For some small-business owners, outsourcing some HR functions may let them concentrate on core business.

# E-Cigarettes in the Workplace: Do or Don't

**M**ost organizations have long ago grappled with the issue of smoking in the workplace, and the vast majority of workplaces today are tobacco-free. But just when companies thought they had this issue under control, up pop e-cigarettes and “vaping.”

There is a difference between e-cigarettes and vaping. E-cigarettes look like cigarettes, but are electronic devices that heat liquid nicotine to produce a vapor that can be inhaled. Vaping is done through a vaporizer that is larger than an e-cigarette. Vaporizers allow the user experience to last longer and are refillable. Both allow users to consume nicotine without needing to smoke tobacco.

Advocates claim e-cigarettes are safe. Others say the jury is still out. That doesn't make things easier trying to find a balance between practicalities and employee-friendly policies.

## In the Workplace?

But even if e-cigarettes are safe, do e-cigarettes belong in the workplace? V.J. Sleight, author of *How to Win at Quitting Smoking* (Stop Smoking Stay Quit, 2015, 5<sup>th</sup> edition) says, “No. Currently, electronic cigarettes are a recreational item that have no place in the workplace. They trigger asthma attacks and allergies in non-users. The FDA has received hundreds of complaints of the effects of secondhand vaping.”

Others take a more nuanced view. Jeremy Gregg, president of Calamity Gym, in Dallas, says, “I believe a company should focus on defining the type of culture it wants. Does it want a culture in which health and wellness are perceived as important? If so, banning vaping can be a part of building that overall culture.”

On the other hand, he says, if the company wants to “come across as innovative, edgy, and appealing to millennials and younger generations, embracing vaping might be a good opportunity to help build that kind of culture.”

There are legal considerations, of course. State and local governments have addressed the issue, some banning the use of these devices in public places. Federally, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is also taking notice. It released proposed regulations last year, and received more than 80,000 comments during the notice period. It's an issue very much in flux, and one you'll want to watch closely.

If you're a company that's part of the e-cigarette and vaping space, the decision may be more straightforward. Alicia Alvarez-Iglesias, HR director at International Vapor Group, in Miami Lakes, FL, says, “We are an electronic cigarette company that allows employees to vape in the office, and over half of our employees do so. In my time at IVG, we have not received a single complaint from employees who do not use electronic cigarettes, nor from building management or other tenants in the building. Furthermore, we have not had a single incident related to employee health arise as a result of staff vaping in the office.”

## Check Laws First

Darin Mackender, a partner in the Denver office of Fisher & Phillips, says the first step is checking state and local laws that may affect vaping and e-cigarettes. “Many state and municipal governments have included e-cigarettes in their smoking bans, or have introduced new laws that prohibit the use of e-cigarettes in indoor spaces.”

There are practical considerations, as well. Mackender says that employers should also determine whether use of e-cigarettes in the workplace aligns with their key business interests. “An activity that looks a lot like smoking may not contribute to a clean public image.” ▲

## Leave Juggling to the Jugglers

HR professionals have to juggle diverse responsibilities these days: benefits and compensation, training and development, recruiting, compliance, and so much more. Given the constant pressure to do more with less, recruiting too often receives a diminishing share of resources, time and focus. On our side of the business, however, recruiting is a major part of our daily life. We talk to people constantly, with a goal of *separating the chaff from the strong contenders*.

Recruiting is an art *and* a science. Our staffing professionals are trained to *contact and engage* people in the enduring tradition of person-to-person, face-to-face contact. And we do it *every day*, not just some days, which makes us pretty adept at the candidate-screening process.

So if you can't focus solely on recruiting because you're juggling too many other priorities, leave the juggling to the jugglers and give us a shout. We can help you build a pipeline of strong contenders, as well as offer fresh insights and an external perspective to make your life easier. *We're real people here, and we're here to help.*

## For More Information:

### **The Atlantic: The Nicotine Fix**

<http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/11/the-nicotine-fix/382666/>

### **Medical News Today: What Are E-Cigarettes?**

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/216550.php>

### **The New York Times: The E-Cigarette Industry, Waiting to Explode**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/27/business/the-e-cigarette-industry-waiting-to-exhale.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/27/business/the-e-cigarette-industry-waiting-to-exhale.html?_r=0)

# Overcoming Today's Staffing Challenges

In our ever-more-unpredictable economy, as boomers begin to retire and technology demands new competencies, companies small and large face recruitment challenges as they compete for the best and the brightest. How can companies meet these challenges in ways that boost the odds of building an engaged workforce?

"Think of your company as a membership organization," suggests Robbie Kellman Baxter, author of *The Membership Economy* (McGraw-Hill, 2015). She recommends considering the following when focusing on staffing challenges:

- What would it take to get a new member to join your employee community?
- What is your value proposition?
- What benefits can a new member expect?
- How will you onboard new members for success and connection with your community?

The best organizations, she says, are moving from a transactional model to a relational one.

A membership approach is closely tied to the concept of a strong employer brand. Employees want to be members of organizations they admire.

## The Employer Brand

"The key to engaging the best and brightest recruits is to have a strong recruiting brand that reflects the company's culture," says Liz D'Aloia, founder of Dallas-based HR Virtuoso. "We all want transparency and authenticity in our dealings with corporations as consumers, and this is even more true with job seekers."

D'Aloia suggests taking a critical first step: Make it easy for people to apply. "The days of taking 20 minutes to fill out a long job application are over," she says. "The best and brightest don't have the time or patience for that process." Beyond keeping the application process simple, it's important to have a recruiting process that focuses on engagement

every step of the way. Make sure candidates know where they stand in the process.

Just as with consumer-purchase behaviors, it's unlikely that you're the only company an applicant is applying to. In many cases, she says, and particularly with top candidates, the first good offer will be the one that nails down the right candidate.

D'Aloia also emphasizes being honest with candidates. It doesn't pay to lure someone on board only to have them leave because the organization and position were not as described. "If you don't follow through on the commitments you've made in the recruiting stage, you'll not only have high turnover, but damage your recruiting brand," she warns.

Finally, consider out-of-box thinking in candidate recruitment. For instance, Debra Ruh, CEO of Ruh Global Communications, in Rockville, VA, says, "Many companies are encouraging recruiters to tap into candidates with disabilities to create a more diverse and innovative workforce."

Recently, Ruh notes, Microsoft, SAP, Freddie Mac, IBM, AT&T, Ernst & Young and other multi-national firms have instituted programs to actively recruit candidates with disabilities.

Another great source of candidates is returning veterans. According to Hire Heroes USA, an estimated 10,000,000 men and women are expected to leave the military and transition to the civilian workforce in the next four years. They bring unique skill sets and experiences that can benefit organizations in many industries.

And don't forget flexibility. Dena Gillies, a consultant with Capital HR Solutions, in Alberta, Canada, says, "It's always baffled me that nearly every job is 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year minus



vacation. Certainly, there are many who would like to work less and could still meet the needs of the position. Consider job sharing for the new parent, a reduced work week for the semi-retired to squeeze in a few golf games, or a two-month leave of absence for that star performer to travel the world."

Flexibility, Gillies says, creates loyalty and supports engagement. That can go a long way toward meeting staffing challenges that are likely to continue for HR professionals and their organizations. ▲

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## For More Information:

**Forbes: How to Grow a Small Team: Nine Hiring Best Practices**

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/gaurisharma/2013/05/21/how-to-grow-a-small-team-nine-hiring-best-practices/>

## Outsourcing HR for Small Business No Dedicated HR Staff? No Worries.

As small companies grow, so do their HR needs and concerns, especially regarding the complexities of compliance. Focusing on HR issues, though, can divert small business owners from their primary focus and personal passions.

That's where outsourcing HR comes in. Many HR areas can benefit from outside expertise, including background and credit checks, payroll and tax reporting, regulatory compliance, employee benefits administration, and recruiting.

Aberdeen Group, a Boston business-intelligence research firm, points to some direct bottom line benefits to small- and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in its April, 2015 report "HR Outsourcing in the SMB: A Story of Time and Value." A few highlights:

- SMBs that outsource HR are 20% more likely to have a lower rate of cost/headcount compared to sales income.
- Best-in-class are about 2.5 times more likely to align changes in organizational profitability to employee engagement efforts compared to others.

- Organizations that use strategic recruitment process outsourcing are able to save on hiring costs by 8%.
- Businesses that outsource HR are 45% more likely to clearly define HR effectiveness metrics when compared to all others.
- Outsourcing can minimize overhead costs while ensuring that organizations have access to the latest, most-reliable information on issues that affect them.

Outsourced compliance work has become a growing niche for Chris Cooley's firm, MyHRConcierge, in Ridgeland,

MS. "What we see in the industry is that state, federal, and now local issues are becoming more and more onerous to business owners," says Cooley. In addition, he says, they often don't understand the requirements and sometimes mistakenly think, "I won't get caught."

Cooley's firm ensures that appropriate documents are filled out, appropriate policies and procedures are in place, and risk-heavy actions, such as employee terminations, are handled properly.

### Finding Suppliers

When looking for companies or contractors to provide outsourced HR services, Cooley suggests the following:

- Look for organizations or individuals with expertise in your industry. For example, a healthcare organization's requirements can be quite different from a financial institution's.
- Find out how long they have been in business.
- Learn about the background of any people you will be working with.
- Ask for examples of things they've done for other clients.

In an environment where the federal government is more focused than ever on enforcement in areas such as proper definition of employees as exempt vs. non-exempt, or contractors vs. employees, along with proper preparation of I-9 forms, it pays to be sure that everything is in order. ▲



### For More Information:

**Forbes: Top 5 Reasons HR is on the Move**

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/meghanbiro/2013/12/01/top-5-reasons-hr-is-on-the-move/>

**Inc.: Outsourcing HR: Big Savings for Small Business**

<http://www.inc.com/fiscal-times/human-resources-big-savings-for-small-business.html>