

## FOCUS ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT/MBA PROGRAMS

# Retaining, recruiting workers in today's tight labor arena

Businesses should have a professional development plan for each category of employee.



ILLUSTRATION/DENISIS MAGILOV

By **CYNTHIA JOYCE**  
and **MARILEE FALCO**

Special for Lehigh Valley Business

Richard Branson, entrepreneur, philanthropist and founder of the Virgin Group, astutely asserted that if you “take care of your employees, they will take care of your customers.”

Happy employees will more readily deliver on a company's mission, resulting in more satisfied customers and clients as well as a more successful business.

With the labor market as tight as it is, indicated by extremely low unemployment (4 percent), employers would be wise to do everything in their power to retain exceptional employees while simultaneously recruiting strong candidates.

With regard to employee retention, workers are more likely to want to continue to work at a business that budgets for a strong benefits package. When employees receive great benefits and competitive pay, they are more likely to feel valued and

appreciated and are more likely to remain engaged at a company.

Businesses would do well to offer health savings accounts and 401k's, with the requisite company match, to contribute to the long-term financial success of employees.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Employees today are drawn to firms that adopt a team approach to serve clients. Having the opportunity to work collaboratively with co-workers is valued by millennials and older employees alike.

In addition, companies that budget for each individual employee's professional development have a competitive edge for retaining and attracting employees.

Businesses should put a professional development plan in place for each category of employee, be sure to communicate resource availability and overtly encourage employee participation in the plan.

#### TARGETED RESOURCES

When recruiting candidates, employers are well-advised to focus on resources that are targeted and filtered.

Many hiring platforms are less expensive than traditional recruiting methods, such as head hunters and classified ad placement.



Joyce



Falco

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### ONLINE

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annually to help students complete their degree faster and offer scheduling flexibility. Full-time students can complete a DeSales MBA in about a year.

“We feel this sets us apart,” Falk said.

Ideal candidates are professionals with an accredited bachelor’s degree in business.

Foundation courses for those without an undergraduate business degree also are available, Falk said.

#### FOUR SESSIONS A YEAR

Falk said students are attracted to the DeSales program from health care management, data analytics and supply chain and project management.

DeSales MBA classes are offered over four sessions per year.

Falk said hybrid learning – a mix of in-person and online classes as well as an entirely online or in-person

campus-based program – was critical to respond to student needs.

#### CHAT FORUMS

Virtual platforms and discussion forums provide a way to engage other students and professors outside scheduled online class times.

Chat functions also provide a way for students to connect. Hybrid classes, which would include a mix of online and on campus, are other options.

“I don’t really see a downside to online learning,” Falk said.

DeSales began its online program 19 years ago.

“We’ve grown with the market ... and [are] responding to the needs of a changing workforce,” she said.



Yao

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With resources such as LinkedIn, Indeed.com and Handshake, employers have easy access to affordable avenues by which to attract talent.

Employers don’t even need to pay for an ad on social media.

#### PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

By linking a company’s web page job posting to a personal LinkedIn page, for example, an employer likely will reach more qualified candidates.

LinkedIn connections may share the job posting, and these more personal connections are apt to result in candidates who are a better fit for the company.

Employers can place an ad with Indeed.com while using their free trial. Such an ad will inevitably attract many candidates, but not all will be qualified.

#### SIMULTANEOUS POSTINGS

Handshake is a platform for recruiting enrolled students and alumni of colleges and universities.

This resource saves a great deal of time for a human resources department since it enables companies to post jobs simultaneously through many colleges.

Simply register the job at Handshake and choose those websites where you would like to post the job (for example, Lehigh, Lafayette, Penn State, University of Pennsylvania, Muhlenberg, Moravian or Northampton Community College).

The university must approve the job post, but using Handshake means that an HR employee no longer needs to individually email a job posting to each college or university.

#### QUALITY OF LIFE

Businesses hiring in the region should be sure to promote the benefits of working in the area.

Affordability, quality of life and strong public and private schools are some obvious upsides to this region.

Proximity to Philadelphia and New York City also is a plus – enabling employees to take advantage of big city offerings while making their home in the comfort of a smaller community.

#### LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Local colleges and nearby universities – and the intellectual and cultural events they sponsor – also add significantly to our area’s appeal.

Another item in the pro column for living in the region are leadership opportunities available through community organizations and local charities and non-profit organizations.

It is easier to become a community leader and make a lasting impact in our smaller pond.

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