

EXERCISE 5.2

Permalco's Recruiting Challenge

Overview

Chapter 5 describes the human resource planning (HRP) process and the relationships among resource planning, recruiting, and other human resource activities. Recruiting candidates who will be top performers for an organization requires good planning, targeted strategies, and supportive human resource processes. This exercise formulates a strategy for a company that faces the challenge of recruiting production leaders during a time of change and downsizing.

Learning Objectives

After completing this exercise, you should be able to analyze a company's recruiting challenge and

1. Identify the company's problems, threats, and opportunities.
2. Identify the impact of other human resource processes on recruiting.
3. Suggest logical, efficient recruiting solutions.

Procedure

Part A: Individual Analysis

Before class, read the scenario below. Answer the questions on Form 5.2.1.

Part B: Group Analysis

Working in groups, review each student's answers to Form 5.2.1. Formulate a recruiting plan for Permalco. Include in your plan

1. Short-term and long-term strategies.
2. Measures of success.
3. Sources of candidates.
4. Recruiting techniques.
5. Recommendations for changes to other human resource systems.

Scenario

Tracy Johnson threw open the doors of the storeroom supply cabinet and grimaced at the disarray. She pulled out a few old brochures, dusted them off, and closed the cabinet doors. Shaking her head, she noted that at least half of the people pictured in the brochure were no longer with Permalco.

As she emerged from the storeroom into the aluminum smelting plant, she stuffed her long brown hair under her hard hat and donned her safety glasses. Although the early spring weather was cool, the plant was sweltering. Her heavy safety boots clattered against the brick walkway. Here and there someone was tending

carbon-lined shells, called pots, where alumina is dissolved into a molten chemical bath. It still amazed her that the electric current that entered the pot and separated the alumina into oxygen and aluminum was so strong that a paper clip chain on the pot would stand straight up like a flagpole. Ahead of Tracy, a crew was siphoning molten metal into a large container called a crucible. The flames and smoke from the pot seemed like hell, but the computer-generated voice from the loudspeaker chanting, "Pot 8. Anode Effect. Pot 8. Anode Effect," reminded Tracy that the smelter was a high-tech facility.

"Hey, sweet thing, how come you don't visit me more often?" shouted Cyrus "Hound Dog" Palmer. Although sexist comments from the crews bothered her, she knew she could accomplish more if she played along. "Hound Dog, I couldn't stand the excitement," retorted Tracy, continuing on her way. She heard the rest of the crew laughing at Cyrus.

Tracy's office was in an area outside the smelter. She had a few minutes to prepare an agenda for the first meeting of the recruiting team. Tracy glanced out the dirty window as a crucible hauler roared by and shook her desk. She recalled her first exposure to Permalco. Permalco's booth at her college career fair proudly displayed pictures of young engineers at work in various parts of Permalco's Landon Works, a smelter located in the mountains of western North Carolina. Landon's recruiter, a young man with a lovely southern accent, was animated as he spoke about Landon Works and Permalco. "The salary and benefits are top notch. You'll have opportunity to advance and transfer to other divisions. You're a mechanical engineer?" Tracy nodded. "We're installing a fume control system in the plant now. It's like playing with Tinker Toys. You'll love it."

And she did. Permalco had recently modernized Landon Works, and Tracy loved working on the high-tech equipment. However, she had accepted an entry-level position at Landon with the thought that she would be able to transfer to a facility closer to a metropolitan area. Although she loved the people in the community, she found it hard to meet other young professionals. Her dream of moving beyond Landon died when the CEO made each division a separate business. She didn't even hear about position openings anymore.

She sighed. The worst part was that after eight years she was worried about her job. Landon had recently laid off 30 percent of its employees, mainly young people.

She walked to the conference room at the end of the trailer. Carbon dust from the plant blanketed the steel table and mismatched chairs. She had just finished writing the agenda on the flip chart when the other members of the recruiting team walked in.

Elizabeth Gomez and Jim Brownwell found seats around the table. Elizabeth pulled off her hard hat to reveal dark hair plastered to her forehead. "I've been taking pot temperature readings all day. I swear I drank two gallons of water from the fountain in the hall. And it's not even summer yet."

Jim responded, "Switch to the graveyard shift. Even though you don't have a life, at least it's cooler." Elizabeth laughed.

Jim turned to Tracy, "Can you believe after all the layoffs we're looking for people again? Are the managers crazy?"

"Yes, what is going on, Tracy?" asked Elizabeth.

Tracy paused before she spoke. "There's no doubt about it. This is a challenge. As the managers look at the people in our line organization, they believe there are not enough people to fill our future production leadership positions. They have asked us to begin a recruiting effort focused on future leaders. They asked for both of you because you are good performers and they feel you can talk in a motivated way about opportunities at Permalco."

"Opportunities at Permalco?" snapped Jim. "How can I talk about opportunities when I'm not sure about my future?"

"How many people do they want to hire, Tracy?" asked Elizabeth, sighing.

"Two people this year, if we find people that meet our standards. We need to continue feeding the pipeline with good candidates each year. And by the way, our recruiting focus will be on females and minorities."

Tracy leaned toward them. "Remember, when we were hired, Permalco looked for the best engineer. The engineer with the highest grade point average. The managers hoped that engineers would emerge who had the desire and skills to be a production leader. That strategy won't work today. We must look for a special person. The person who wants to be a leader. The person who was the captain of the football team or head cheerleader.

President of the fraternity or sorority. The person whose gleam in his or her eye says, 'I want to make the million dollar decisions.'"

Jim shot back, "Yeah, the person who wants to do shift work for five years. Shift work used to be a temporary developmental assignment—a way to pay your dues before moving up the ladder. Since the layoffs there isn't anywhere for the production supervisors to go. They're stuck. The good salary and benefits have handcuffed them to Landon."

Elizabeth spoke. "I'm concerned, too. This plant is not the ideal place for a female or a minority. If I hadn't married Bill I imagine I would have left for a different company by now. There are no other Hispanic professionals in the entire town! That's one of the reasons why so many minorities have left Landon."

Tracy nodded, "You're both frustrated with this project. I am, too. But we're going to need people in these critical positions in a few years. Starting now gives us ample time to bring the right people in and develop them. Are you ready to put together a recruiting strategy for the plant manager? By Friday?"

Jim and Elizabeth reluctantly nodded. Tracy grabbed a flip chart marker. "So, where are we going to find these special people?"

"Tracy, you remember what it's like on campus," recalled Elizabeth. "The qualified minorities have been targeted by the large firms before their sophomore year. And for females the competition is intense, too. I had at least three summer internship offers each year. How are we going to attract the top students?"

Jim replied, "Campus isn't the only source of candidates, Elizabeth. Permalco hired me through a recruiting firm when I was leaving the military. Once you've been on a submarine for three months, shift work is no big deal."

Tracy smiled as she began to record the ideas on the flip chart.

FORM 5.2.1

Name _____ Group _____

1. Identify the SWOT at Permalco as related to recruiting production leaders?
2. What information must the team gather before it can formulate a recruiting strategy?
3. How might the short-term and long-term recruiting strategies differ?
4. What sources of candidates should the team consider?

FORM 5.2.1 (Continued)

5. What recruiting strategy has the highest probability of paying off for the team?
6. When planning the recruiting strategy, what other HR systems must the team consider?
7. What challenges face the recruiting team because of the focus on females and minorities?