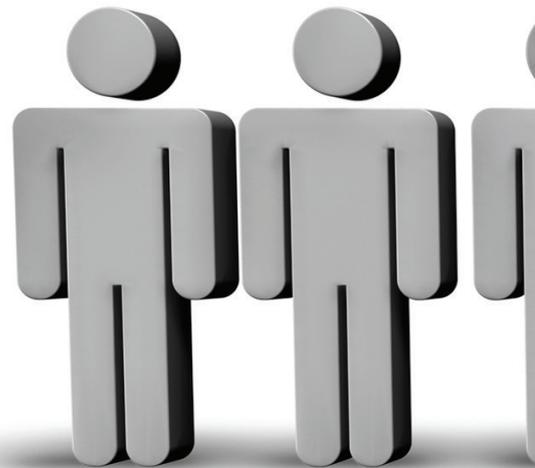


THE RIGHT EMPLOYEE IS A **HUGE** ASSET



While the right employee is a huge asset, tragically, the opposite is equally true. The wrong employee is potentially your largest business liability! Ok, I'm not necessarily pointing the finger at your people. But consider the old saying "it takes two to tango". The fact is, rarely in my travels do I witness a problem looming or created solely by a single employee where no other influencers are at play.

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People are human and that means they present an almost infinite number of variables like:

1. People have differing viewpoints on almost any subject.
2. People see answers or solutions to the same problem from a wide variety of perspectives.
3. People have personality profiles with many attributes.
4. Women and men do see things differently.
5. Least, but certainly not last, we develop traits and mindsets from family, friends and acquaintances.

It is better to accept that fact, while acknowledging in reality – it would be very boring if we were all the same!

My own experience over three decades has taught me many skills. Nowadays, I am learning totally new ways that reflect the workplace. I freely admit, retrospectively, that I could have been a far better employer! There are a million reasons why I can reflect on that comment, however I would suggest several key factors including – the pressure of work, deadlines, unrealistic demanding customers (they are people too, at least most of them), managing the work/ life balance... and yes this list could be infinite. Stepping back, it is my view that the singular highest contributor with creative sign and print manufactures can be summed up in one statement – "Creative professionals are great at making stuff, but poor at managing the process." Its the old right hand left hand brain thing – creative versus logical. So what is the take home out of all that? Creativity comes naturally to most sign and print professionals while managing the intricacies of people skills, scheduling projects and the pressure cooker world of quote deadlines and catching up on

end of month invoicing, does not – I am hoping I have hit a raw nerve?

Let us consider some options for you:

I'm not attempting to solve this complex problem in a thousand plus words, however, a few steps may well guide you down a pathway to greatly improving the interaction between you and your team and maybe even those prickly customers.

These are some approaches that may help:

1. ENGAGE SLOWLY – END QUICKLY:

Perhaps this could be easily taken as a politically incorrect statement, let me clarify. I'm suggesting a slow and steady approach to your employment policies needs many small positive steps:

- a. Is the job real:** First and most importantly, assess the position prudently. You are going to impact on many lives – your potential employee, current staff, you and all those associated with all of you. Far too many times I see employment decisions made in haste and without considered thought. You are meddling with people's hopes and dreams – think out the position seriously and very carefully!
- b. Take the interview process slowly:** Be sure you are in balance with regulations like the privacy laws and all your state and federal employment rules. Develop a quality interview form, which allows both parties to learn about each other. Don't be afraid to conduct a second interview.
- c. Research:** Take the time to review all the supplied references and any avenue you can to ensure the person and position match, as best they can.
- d. Understand who you employ:** Personality profiles can greatly assist you to understand the personality attributes

of the applicant. When completed, professional personality profiles will offer insights into how well your team members will work together.

2. FIND THE RIGHT PERSON:

Once again there is a direct relationship to the amount of effort you expend in achieving the best results – placing an ad in your local paper only casts a local net, whereas the investment across a broader base like Seek®, high readership trade web sites and their eNews like Visual Connections Weekly eNews and other professional recruitment agencies, will pay dividends.

- a. Create a great ad:** The wording needs to suit the position and entice the applicant into reading and engagement with the potential of the position.
- b. Tell the truth:** Creatively written ads are great, however at the end of the day – the facts need to be clear.
- c. Build a job description:** If you don't know what you are seeking – anything will suffice. Take a lesson from your research about 'how real the job is' to create an in depth job description then ensure the best person for the role.
- d. Allow yourself flexibility:** The perfect person may not be available the week or month you are seeking them. A dynamic and flexible approach should include potential training, education or supporting a very good applicant to help them become an outstanding employee.



3. NOW, YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE RIGHT CANDIDATE:

Don't throw them in the deep end and let them sink! Putting a realistic twist on that statement – if you can tick all the above – why would you throw them in deep water? You have invested days and maybe thousands of dollars in resources to achieve the best result for everyone involved. You need to work to keep balance between the old and the new.

a. Embrace your new team member: it matters little if there are just two of you – induct people correctly and safely while having a meaningful and measured process to ensure the initial welcome and early months provide good grounding about your people, your company culture and your business.

b. Keeping Balance: the cop out 'we are too busy' is extremely short sighted. If you make little to no effort to create harmony – the consequences will generally be negative. Harmony in workplace relationships can grow like a weed or a flower – you choose.

c. Empower your people: Everyone wants leadership. It is an impossible dream that everyone is a leader let alone problematic! Whereas autonomy builds motivation. I am yet to see a quality creative professional who wants to be part of a machine. Likewise they will resist taking the initiative or challenges if the process is unclear, they will avoid the risks you set, and after all why should they not! Employees I interview discuss they want to feel inspired. They yearn to work and focus on what matters, to be engaged, to be their

responsibility. Almost everyone craves to be the key to success for the company, and above all to be able to make important decisions autonomously. OK, then why do employers report the opposite? Where, who, how and why is there such a dramatic disconnect?

4. KEEP THEM HAPPY: No, I am not talking about throwing rose petals at their feet, I am suggesting understanding individuals needs and wants. The adage 'good people are hard to find' is true and seems to me its getting harder! Let's look at positive ways to keep your people enjoying what they do.

a. Recognition: a simple thank you, a pat on the back or acknowledge them for a good job is a great way to start. When was the last time you thanked someone for a job well done, or said happy birthday and provided a cake on their special day? There are many reasons to put some fun in someone's day – try a Hawaiian day, Black Friday, mad hat days – its easy if you try.

b. Ask and Listen: This may seem obscure to some. However, how do you feel when someone genuinely asks "how are you doing?" One of the greatest motivators is respect. Cost – zero, value – indefinable!

c. Reward regularly: Just as recognition is important so is reward. Sure, "Show me the money" a la Jerry McGuire, supposedly proves cash is king. Yet, statistically surveys prove simple acts of genuine consideration or kindness over circumstances, rate at least equal and often better received than cash. Perhaps, time off for a young mum to have some time out for herself, or an early mark for a dad to have time with the kids. You understand my point – listen, learn and notice and above all appreciate – we are all people.

d. End before the final bell: Ok, I started on this controversial note. What I want to put forward is 'the rotten apple in the barrel theory' or the 'use by date is up', say it anyway you want. The stark reality is, if you keep people employed, yet the situation is toxic to others and yourself, you must be prepared to stand up and do something. You could start with informal chats, perhaps consulting even outside counseling. At the end of the day if you cannot solve the unsolvable – you have to turn the page and move on. No matter the short term pain.

Summary

In today's society, career paths are no longer a simple or planned journey. Employees of the past often started their own career by starting small, growing their skills, and working their way up the proverbial ladder. Rarely did employers easily recognise quality under their noses. Why? Because there was stability in skills, training, and long life cycles of products and plenty of skilled people looking for positions.

Today and in the future we are seeing the opposite.

Technology moves forward relentlessly, driving massive changes in equipment, traditions are washed away in the wake and the chaos of rapid change grows. Now, employees are looking at their positions in your company as a series of "learning experiences." Leveraging each new position to grow their worth, providing them and their families with stability. The old methods of teaching and training have lost ground as more sophisticated and savvy employment seekers are influenced by the mass social media networks. The phenomenon of 'knowledge in a click' as you simply "ask Google or Siri!" for answers to build critical skills and grow. The net result is, we are seeing huge social change and employee empowerment. Ask how prepared you are at instigating new workplace processes, how you will re-structure and why your culture needs to be reimagined.

If you would like a chat about the new employee emergence, why not give us a call on 0418 161 600 or send an email to john@controlzone.com.au