

A GUIDE TO RECRUITING, RETAINING AND TRAINING PART-TIME AND SEASONAL EMPLOYEES FOR THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN MANITOBA

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HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

The Canadian Tourism Commission is projecting 3.5% to 5% growth rates for the tourism industry over the next several years. Estimates by the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council were for the creation of 90,000 new jobs in tourism between 2002 and 2005, and for job growth to continue at 2%. While growth and job creation are predicted to increase, Canada's labour force growth rate is expected to decline from 1.4% to .4% by 2016. Businesses in

Manitoba are currently coping with low unemployment rates, with Manitoba having the lowest rate of unemployment in Canada for 5 out of the last 6 years. Finding enough skilled labour will continue to be a challenge for businesses in the future. This challenge becomes even greater for businesses in the tourism industry, which are dependent on part-time and seasonal employees.

QUICK FACTS:

IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM TO MANITOBA'S ECONOMY

- Revenues for the Manitoba tourism industry in 2001 were estimated at \$1.29 billion. The industry employed an estimated 60,200 persons.

LABOUR SUPPLY

- Manitoba's 2003 unemployment rate of 5%, was the lowest among provinces for the second consecutive year.
- In 2003 Manitoba had the second lowest rate of youth unemployment in the country at 9.8%.
- Both of these trends have continued through February 2004.

TOURISM EMPLOYMENT IN MANITOBA BY SUB-SECTOR

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| • Restaurant / Food services | 47% |
| • Transportation | 24% |
| • Recreation / Entertainment | 14% |
| • Accommodation | 13% |
| • Travel Services | 2% |

OCCUPATIONS CURRENTLY IN HIGH DEMAND IN MANITOBA AND EXPECTED TO BE IN HIGH DEMAND OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS

- Customer Service / Information Clerks
- Cooks
- Retail Salesperson
- Waiter/Waitress
- Housekeepers

As it becomes increasingly difficult to attract, hire and retain qualified staff, businesses in the tourism industry will need to become better at retaining the employees they have. The tourism industry has traditionally had high turnover. Though some of this can be attributed to the seasonal nature of the industry, there are human resource practices and programs that employers can implement to achieve greater success in recruiting, training, and retaining seasonal employees. Improving recruitment and retention

will require companies in the tourism industry to pay closer attention to their human resource policies and practices.

The following sections describe some of the "best practices" used by business owners and operators in the tourism industry that are faced with the challenge of recruiting new part-time and seasonal employees, and retaining and training existing ones.

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment is an expensive process requiring administration, time, and advertising dollars. It has been estimated that recruitment costs represent approximately 30% of the salary for a position. Employers often have a tendency to 'cut corners' when hiring part-time or seasonal staff. However, it is important to recognize that using good recruitment techniques are an investment, not a cost. If you don't recruit the right people, you will find yourself with the wrong people in the wrong job and, more often than not, you will have to go through the recruitment process again.

Finding the right employee is becoming more difficult, and more expensive. As you know, there is a reported shortage of qualified staff for the tourism sector. In Manitoba, a low unemployment rate will also add to the challenge of recruiting. A recent study by the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC) suggests that these shortages are occurring because of a strengthening economy and a perception by potential employees that other industry sectors offer better opportunities.

While the tourism industry has historically used young people to fill positions in the industry, they are declining in proportion to other sources of labour. Unemployment rates for youth in Manitoba are very low. In 2003, Manitoba had the second lowest rate of youth unemployment at 9.8%, down from 10.2% in 2002. This trend has continued in the first two months of 2004, with youth unemployment in Manitoba averaging at 9.7%.

To help employers deal with these challenges we have collected the following practices and ideas to help tourism business owners and operators with improving recruitment practices for part-time and seasonal employees.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES FOR PART-TIME & SEASONAL EMPLOYEES:

- ◆ **Look at new labour pools.** If you have traditionally recruited students for your positions and they seem in scarce supply, consider recruiting employees from other demographics such as:
 - homemakers who would like to work while their children are in school;
 - retired people who cannot work full-time because of social security limitations;
 - handicapped people who may have some limitations, but can work a few hours a day; and
 - people who have other jobs but want to supplement their income.
- ◆ **distribute it where you are most likely to find your audience.** If it's younger or entry-level workers, this may involve posting notices at high schools, colleges and universities or working through guidance departments. Also consider other locations where you may recruit potential candidates: arenas, swimming pools, recreation centres, youth centres, senior's centres, community clubs, and shopping malls. Use your existing employees as a referral source. If you already employ good part-time staff, ask them if they have friends who are looking for work. Word of mouth is quite often the most effective way of advertising a position and costs nothing.
- ◆ **Getting the word out.** It is important to have the widest possible selection of candidates to choose from. Create a job advertisement and

- ◆ **Take time to screen and interview properly.** All too often employers do not set aside quality time and do not do their homework when it comes to interviewing part-time or seasonal candidates. Preparing questions in advance will make the interviewer appear prepared and make the potential candidate feel that time and effort have been put into conducting their interview. **Ask for two or three references and check them.**
- ◆ **Budget an appropriate amount of recruitment time.** Make sure you budget enough time to find the right employee. For example, the following recruitment times have been reported in some areas of Canada: management/supervisory positions 12 - 38 weeks; and house-keepers/foodservice personnel 5 weeks. Remember, hiring the wrong person out of desperation will end up costing you in the long term. For information on high demand occupations in Manitoba, contact Manitoba Advanced Education and Training or visit their website:
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/lmi/hdo/hdo.htm
- ◆ **Understand why an applicant is looking for part-time or seasonal work.** It is best to hire people who really want part-time work, not people who want full-time work but will take what they can get in the meantime. They can be expected to leave as soon as full-time work can be found, leaving you back at square one.
- ◆ **Develop a simple employment agreement and job description.** A simple Employment Agreement listing the basic conditions of work (start date, finish date, rate of pay, hours of employment, benefits) will go a long way to ensuring that there is no misunderstanding of the position. Include a detailed Job Description, clearly identifying all principal duties and responsibilities, so expectations are clear.
- ◆ **Put an emphasis on online services.** One company decided to use technology to help in its hiring. Using an online service allows potential candidates to view job descriptions, request information and begin the application process immediately. If you have a company website, create a careers section. Check to see if your local newspaper has an online job posting section.
- ◆ **Maintain an updated list of seasonal employees and regularly communicate with them.** Maintain an extensive seasonal employee database, and then encourage employees to return by planning “reserve your spot” events. Use the up-to-date database to send seasonal workers catalogues, notices of “friends and family” sales, and company newsletters during the off-season. Regular communications help workers feel like a part of the team year-round. Birthday cards accompanied by a discount coupon are another way to engender goodwill among seasonal workers.
- ◆ **Reward returning workers.** Raise the base pay for returning seasonal employees by a fixed hourly amount per year of service. This increase in pay will be offset by the returning workers’ familiarity with staff and customers, workplace procedures, products, and experience.
- ◆ **Set up a “Buddy System”.** Let employees set up a “buddy system” where two or three part-time employees cover a 40-hour shift. As a team they set their own schedules and turn it into you a week before each pay period ends for your approval.

RETENTION

The tourism industry has historically had very high turnover, with more than half of new workers leaving their jobs in the first year. Given the time and expense of recruitment, you will be far better off if you can retain your current work force and avoid having to recruit new employees.

Money is not the only factor when it comes to retaining seasonal and part-time staff. Employers are finding that people are not looking for just 'a job', but rather, a more well rounded 'employment experience' that fulfills an emotional quotient. Tourism studies have shown many employees are attracted to other industries because of better human resource practices and non-monetary forms of compensation.

The key to successful motivation is targeting the needs and wants of the employee. Part-time and seasonal jobs attract a full range of workers, from students to retired people who may just want to earn extra cash and may not see the position as a career. For this reason part-time and seasonal workers should not be lumped into the same program as full-time employees. Recognizing these differences and instituting appropriate policies, rewards, and considerations lets part-time employees and all other employees know that part-time and seasonal workers are an important and valued part of the company.

The following best practices and ideas have been collected to help business owners and operators with the retention of part-time and seasonal employees.

RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR PART-TIME AND SEASONAL EMPLOYEES

◆ General Human Resource Practices

- **Give them an orientation.** Start things off on the right foot. New part-time and seasonal workers can easily feel lost if they are not oriented to the workplace. On arrival, take the required time to describe their job duties and show them your facilities. Also consider instituting an orientation program for peak seasonal hiring periods.
- **Assign a mentor.** Even with a good orientation, the new employee may soon feel confused. Full-time staffers may be so busy that the new employee hesitates to approach them for advice. The result is the new employee is demoralized and operates at less than peak performance. Assign a mentor to each new employee. Select someone who is willing to teach and is patient. The mentor will also feel good about the added responsibility and confidence you have placed in him or her.
- **Appreciate part-time and seasonal employees for the job they do.** Recognize them if you want them to continue to do a good job. Everyone knows it is important to acknowledge employees that do a good job if you want them to continue to do such work. Even if the employee is only at work part-time or brought in as seasonal help, their need to be recognized is as great as any other employee. A little appreciation can go a long way. For some employees, having their manager know and use their name, and taking time to talk with them is enough. Take the time to get to know your part-time and seasonal employees, and find out what might motivate their superior performance, then deliver such incentives when you receive the desired performance.

- **Treat part-time employees the way you want them to act.** If you want part-time employees to have a long-term perspective then treat them with a long-term perspective. After all, you get more loyalty and productivity from a person you treat as part of a team. This starts with basic consideration and consistent professional treatment, even for employees that may only work with you a few hours a week.
- **Provide new challenges.** Part-time and seasonal workers are often assigned all the low level work. Try offering them new challenges by moving them around the company and exposing them to new tasks.
- **Encourage part-timers and seasonal employees to take initiative.** Recognize part-time and seasonal employees for taking the initiative to provide, for example, better service. All sales associates at a department store, based in the Southern U.S., are encouraged to make independent decisions in solving customer complaints. The only person that is allowed to say “no” to a customer is the store manager. This motivates sales people by encouraging them to think for themselves.
- **Growth opportunities.** Some part-time or seasonal employees may be looking for full-time employment after they have finished school, college, or their children are in school full-time. Sit down with the employee to map out a career path and demonstrate the opportunities that exist within the organization for them. Giving them an understanding of the “big picture” and future opportunities is also a motivator. Show them career possibilities and dissuade them from the notion that jobs in the tourism industry are “entry-level”.
- **Show part-timers and seasonal employees that their jobs matter.** Motivate them by showing them how their jobs relate to the company’s overall goals. One suggestion is to give them resources to be productive, including the proper information and the right equipment to do the job. Also important, employees want to know how they are doing in their jobs and how the company is doing business.
- **The Personal Touch.** Everyone, especially part-timers and seasonal employees, needs and wants to feel a part of the “team” or “family”. Send birthday cards and graduation cards to strengthen the family unity feeling. Maintain regular contact either through staff meetings, phone calls, or periodic drop-in “check ups”. Invite seasonal staff to the company Christmas party. Create an open door policy and be responsive to the needs of your part-time and seasonal staff.
- **Incentive Programs.** Don’t just let the staff leave at the end of the season. For example, throw a celebration, an internally promoted beach party, barbeque, etc., open to employees who finish the season. Also if they finish the season, reward them with an hourly bonus, retroactive from their date of hire.
- **Re-hiring status for the following season.** One way to keep seasonal employees to the end of the season is to grant those that “finish” automatic rehiring status for the following season. Not having to beat the streets looking for a job next year may be all the reason some need to come back.
- **Conduct exit interviews.** Make sure you don’t repeat the same mistakes twice. Find out why an employee is leaving. Departing employees may identify policies, procedures, practices, or compensation levels that should be reviewed.

◆ Direct Subsidy Benefits

- **Provide Incentives.** Traditionally, benefits and bonuses have been reserved for permanent staffers. However now, employers are setting up programs for part-time and seasonal employees to stimulate enthusiasm for performance. Some companies are trying to have the best of both worlds: employees who feel linked to the company, but don't expect the same benefits package as full-time workers. To accomplish this, companies such as Sears, Taco Bell, etc., have implemented an array of programs and activities that make the work environment more exciting and fun. For example, they have part-time or seasonal employee of the month awards. Winners receive prizes of cash, merchandise, gift certificates or travel packages for meeting certain sales criteria or reaching specific objectives. In addition, some facilities hold optional, after-hour activities, such as picnics or softball games, for their workers. Other companies, such as Seattle-based SeaFirst Bank, have tried to build some equity into the process. Its "casual" workers, those who work less than 17.5 hours a week, receive a 15% pay premium to compensate for their lack of benefits.

◆ Indirect Subsidy Benefits

- **Use the company's programs.** These employees are entitled to use any and all of the company's programs, whether it's a health club, career counselling or child care facilities.
- **Childcare services.** A variety of childcare support services, including information and referral services, assistance with external suppliers, or on-site centres.
- **Eldercare Services.** A variety of eldercare support services including information and referral services, assistance with external suppliers, or on-site centres.

◆ Intangible Benefits

- **Telework.** A work at home arrangement wherein employees work at least some of their regularly scheduled hours at home and for pay.
- **Flexible Time.** A substantial portion of part-time and temporary employees are doing this type of work because they don't want to be tied down to nine to five hours. Some have children to care for and may have problems finding sitters. Capitalize on that. You can also avoid panic situations by encouraging your crew to let you know in advance of anticipated scheduling conflicts. For example, the Australian Hotels Association says that the hospitality industry is making increasing use of agreements to manage issues of shift work and overtime effectively. New statistics support the view that collective agreements, or enterprise bargaining practices, are fostering increased flexibility and efficiency in the accommodation and hospitality sector. In Australia, the hospitality industry is the most likely industry sector to include provisions in relation to shift work in enterprise bargaining agreements. Over 30% of agreements outline flexible workplace arrangements for different types of shifts, including length of shift or allowing split shifts. Also, the hospitality industry includes agreements with provisions for time off in lieu of overtime.

TRAINING

Often overlooked because of cost or time constraints, training is a key to the success of all employees, including those hired on a part-time or seasonal basis. Employees need to know what is expected of them and how to do it in order to perform effectively. Seasonal or part-time employees are not less skilled than full-time employees, they just work fewer hours.

Employees must be trained properly in order for them to be effective. You've spent time and money already to recruit the proper staff, why sell short your investment now? Do not make the mistake of investing too little in training people because they have been hired as part-time or seasonal staff. Make sure that new staff have the required information on products and procedures to function properly in your organization. Training courses will show new employees that you care, are investing in them, and are a strong influence on the culture of the organization.

Training an employee is a three-step process: The first is to give detailed oral instructions, followed by a visual demonstration, and finally, to follow up with inspection and oral feedback to the seasonal employee.

Some of the very basic parts of a training program should include the following:

1. Key policies and procedures to be followed.
2. Customer Service Training (emphasizing how to greet people, how to serve people, the importance of recognizing customers, how to handle difficult situations, etc.)
3. Sales and Marketing Training.
4. Emergency Procedures.
5. Lines of authority and vehicles for communication.

Orientation is very important, as the Walt Disney organization illustrates. Even employees who work as little as six weeks a year in Disney theme parks get three full days of training. Disney believes a person working 15 or 20 hours a week should be seen as contributing to the bottom line and, thus, as important to a business's success as a full-timer.

BUSINESS PROFILE: WALT DISNEY CORPORATION

Disney is recognized as one of the top-performing companies in the world in terms of customer satisfaction. Disney goes to great lengths to ensure its guests are happy and that they keep returning to Disney parks. Almost 70 percent of guests to the Magic Kingdom are repeat visitors. Consider, for example, how Disney trains "cast members" for the job of street sweeper. Disney realized that when their guests had questions, they were most likely to ask a member of the custodial staff. Custodial staff now spend two weeks training so that they'll have a working knowledge of the entire park and will be able to direct guests, or tell them when the next parade begins. And most likely they'll do so with a smile because the time and attention they receive during the training process makes the employees feel that they are a valuable part of the Disney team.

The following best practices and ideas have been collected to help business owners and operators with the training of part time and seasonal employees.

IDEAS TO IMPROVE TRAINING: PART-TIME AND SEASONAL EMPLOYEES

- ◆ **Invest in training videos and or materials appropriate to your business** (customer service, marketing, etc). This is much more effective than giving them something to take home and read after hours.
- ◆ **Train multitaskers.** Teach seasonal employees to perform a variety of functions. Women's apparel cataloguer Coldwater Creek rotates its seasonal workers across several functions "to provide our seasonal work force with a greater overall understanding of our business" says Vice President of Human Resources. This will keep workers from getting bored or restless and gives you added staffing flexibility.
- ◆ **Encourage job-shadowing and mentoring.** Choose a senior employee who will demonstrate the kinds of behaviours, attitudes and skills that you would like new or young employees to develop. These relationships will also provide the employee with a medium for informal feedback about their development and performance.

BUSINESS PROFILE: KNEE LAKE RESORT

Knee Lake Resort, located 400 miles north of Winnipeg, is a tourism-based business that offers fishing vacations. The resort is now operating in its 15th year, and is open from the last week of May until the first week of September. The majority of its guests are from the United States, primarily Minnesota and Illinois. The resort employs full-time staff, with an additional 60 seasonal employees during operating months.

Knee Lake Resort has been fortunate in that it has never encountered difficulty recruiting seasonal staff. A very low turnover rate reduces the number of new candidates that must be considered each year. Recruitment for any vacant positions has not been a problem, as the resort's reputation as a preferred employer generates more than enough quality candidates. Unsolicited resumes and 'word of mouth' advertising provide a big enough pool of potential candidates to fill any vacancies at the beginning of the season. Employees are well compensated, fed, housed, and develop a sense of honour while working at the resort. Given the high level of service expected by guests at the resort, management recognizes the value of quality staff.

One area of human resource management that remains an ongoing challenge for the resort is internal communication. As much as possible, management updates staff when changes are to happen at the resort and the rationale behind them. This openness contributes to the sense of team and family amongst staff and management that exists at the resort.

Retention of seasonal employees from one year to the next is also very high. This can be attributed to the high level of support and respect that management has for staff. Employees are well compensated, and are given room and board. The resort also ensures that employees have the right tools to do their jobs and goes beyond a "maintenance" attitude. Management doesn't just fix problems, but rather, tries to fix them before they happen. For instance, the resort purchases new motors each year, thereby decreasing the likelihood that guides will encounter mechanical problems while out on the lake with guests. At the end of each season staff know whether or not there is a spot for them the following season and in March, the resort follows up with staff to see who will be returning for the summer.

Training is a challenge given the time required for spring set-up, the distance between the Winnipeg office and the resort, costs, and the short season. Knee Lake overcomes these challenges through organization, coordination, and dedicating the required resources. Guides are given training in boating safety, food handling and first-aid, in addition to the resort's in-house Guide Training Program, which is a one to two year apprenticeship. The resort plans to continue with its practice to invest in training for its employees. Marketing Manager, David Claeys, notes that "There are always ways to come up with the funds required for training. It is a matter of how committed a company is to training to be able to find ways to make it happen."

BUSINESS PROFILE: TRAPPER DON'S LODGE & OUTFITTING

Don McCrea has been involved in the hunting, fishing, and trapping industry his whole life. He has operated his own businesses as well as acted as the manager of Big Sand Lake Lodge. His current operation, Trapper Don's Lodge & Outfitting, provides guests with guiding services for hunting black bear and whitetail deer. Most of his customers come from the United States. Don currently operates for two months of the year, plus spends four months of the year marketing.

During the two operating months, seasonal employees are hired on as cooks and guides. Recruitment and retention have not been a problem for Don. He views each employee as critical to the success of his operation. "The team is only as strong as its weakest member," he remarks.

With this in mind he ensures that staff are given a high level of support and training. He understands that there is much information that new guides need to learn within a very short season, and thus ensures that he is attentive to their needs and questions. New staff apprentice with experienced guides for several years before they are given the responsibility of leading expeditions. Radios and other essential equipment are provided to the guides to ensure that they have the support they need.

Don also credits developing a sense of pride in the acquisition of skills and in becoming a guide with the lodge as a key component to retaining seasonal employees. He notes that there can be a stigma held by those outside of the industry regarding seasonal work, which can be difficult for some seasonal employees to deal with. Developing a sense of pride in being a guide and a sense of team amongst members is important to counter this perceived stigma.

BUSINESS PROFILE: OAK HAMMOCK MARSH

Oak Hammock Marsh is a 36km² Wildlife Management Area that provides a habitat for 25 species of mammals, 296 species of birds, and numerous amphibians, reptiles, and fish. In 1993, an Interpretive Centre was constructed to foster public awareness and knowledge of the values of wetland ecosystems throughout North America and to rally public support for their conservation.

The Interpretive Centre features a 120-seat indoor multimedia theatre, a café, gift shop, meeting facilities and offers a variety of public programs such as children's programs, adult workshops, day camps, and special events. The facility is open year round and receives 200,000 visitors a year. The Interpretive Centre is staffed by 12 full-time employees, 40 seasonal employees, and a large pool of volunteers.

The initial employment strategy envisioned by management at Oak Hammock Marsh was to hire, retain, and provide benefits to as many full-time interpreters as they required. Management discovered, however, that people interested in this industry and the working environment did not want to work full-time; rather they placed a high value on work-life balance and wanted flexible hours. In response to the needs of its employees, the Interpretive Centre has adjusted its human resource strategy and now has a large pool of part-time employees that it draws from to fill its staffing needs.

In order to be effective, this strategy requires that part-time employees in the pool be able to work in a variety of positions and have a broad base of skills and abilities. Management recognizes this need and accordingly supports and encourages training for its employees. Though training is the most expensive human resource cost at Oak Hammock Marsh, management views putting untrained individuals on the job as a greater expense. The in-house training program consists of fifty to sixty modules and includes both written and practical tests. There are two major training sessions conducted each year, each session lasting four days, though individuals can take training modules at any time during the year. Management encourages employees to always be working on a training module. In addition to providing new employees with a good foundation, the four-day training sessions are also helpful in two other ways. Although management is diligent in the hiring process, it also finds the training seminars help to weed out poor hires - employees who realize that the job isn't the right fit. Part of the training sessions also include volunteers, and provide them with an insight into what it would be like to work at Oak Hammock Marsh.

Management meets with individual employees twice each year to discuss where they would like their employment path to lead them. Based on this discussion, expectations are established and the employee gains an understanding of the training required to achieve their goals. Employees provide feedback during these sessions, although it is encouraged and welcomed at any point throughout the year.

A key to success for Oak Hammock Marsh has been to attract and retain good people. This is achieved through its reputation and word of mouth via existing employees. Management looks to identify candidates with a certain amount of passion for "the natural experience" that is found at the marsh. Their reputation as an employer and workplace attracts applicants from all over Canada.

Management has initiated some unique programs for staff at Oak Hammock Marsh, including:

Officer of the Day – Each day, a senior staff person, with the required level of training, is selected to be the Officer of the Day. They are responsible for running the day for the entire staff and making decisions on what needs to be done. There is a chart with each staff member and the areas in which they have received training in order to help the Officer of the Day determine how tasks and jobs should be assigned.

Ferris Bueller Day – One day a year, staff are allowed to play hooky, as long as there are enough appropriately trained staff on hand to cover.

Five Finger Practices - Human resource policies and workplace culture at Oak Hammock Marsh are reinforced through the Five Finger Practices, which are:

1st finger – always measure up to industry best practices

2nd finger – pay attention to detail

3rd finger – listen to the customer

4th finger – recognize and reward good work when it happens

Thumb – you have to strive to get better; you have to be part of the team.

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