

The Catalysts for Intellectual Capital 2020



Proseminar in Civic Entrepreneurship 2010



The Attraction and Retention of New Hires to a Region and the Role of New Hire Orientation Programs

Leading from the Confluence

The Catalysts for Intellectual Capital 2020 (CIC2020)

2010 Proseminar

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Human Development '10

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Introduction:

An essential component of the civic and economic development of any community is a commitment from local businesses and organizations to attract and orient new hires to the community and region in which they will be working. In today's economy, communities such as Binghamton and the Southern Tier must think of new and innovative ways to attract the talent necessary to compete in today's competitive economy. One resource that Binghamton and the Southern Tier have that other communities and regions do not, is Binghamton University. The fact that such a nationally recognized and renowned university is located in Binghamton gives the

community the competitive edge necessary to compete with technologically advanced areas like Boston, Silicon Valley and the Research Triangle of North Carolina which also have universities. A partnership between Binghamton University and the different sectors of the community has the potential to make Binghamton and the Southern Tier one of the top research and innovation capitals of the United States. An essential part of ensuring the success of this partnership is the ability to attract new hires to this region and facilitate high-quality orientation and acclimation practices. Companies must realize that, in order for all aspects of a company to grow and prosper, they must attract new and innovative individuals who will invest the time, energy, and knowledge necessary to move a company forward. The aspects of the community in which new hires will live in, play an integral role in what attracts new hires to a region. Companies and organizations must be committed to facilitating orientation and acclimation between new hires and the community. If a region is known for having outstanding resources for a new hire to benefit from, and programs in place to familiarize new hires with these resources, individuals are more likely to choose Binghamton and the Southern Tier as their place of work.

Importance of New Hire Orientation Programs for Attraction and Retention:

The attraction and retention of new hires in today's economy is a hot issue that all companies must take into consideration when they review the steps necessary to succeed. Today, companies are setting up New Hire Orientation (NHO) programs that assimilate new hires into all aspects of the company. NHO programs need to incorporate new hires into both the company

and the community. NHO programs give companies the opportunity to educate new hires on exactly what the company is about and how each new hire as an individual will fit in. It is common for many new hires to leave a company within the first 90 days. A study done by Wal-Mart on turnover rates found that “67% of the first-year turnover was in the first 90 days” (Peterson 87). Although some companies might not have as high a turnover rate, many companies have found that new hires tend to leave a company in the first 90 days. The fact that new hires decide to leave a company within the first 90 days is interesting because a new hire has barely been employed within a company long enough to truly experience the culture and atmosphere of a company within such a brief period of time. New Hire Orientation Programs must take this into account and analyze what factors may play into why a new hire chooses to stay or leave a company.

One factor that new hires cite as important for attracting them to a company is the involvement of senior leaders in the new hire orientation process. If a new hire meets and talks to a senior leader of the company they will be working for, it shows them that the company is investing in them personally. Companies such as Motorola treat new hires to a lunch with a vice president and the “president and COO of the Ritz-Carlton greet new employees on day one of the NHO with a stirring address” (Heyroth 3). New hires realize that the senior leaders of a company have worked hard to get to the position they have and to interact with such influential and innovative leaders offers a unique opportunity.

A second aspect of NHO programs that is important to the attraction and retention of

new hires is the ability for companies to create a shared vision which must be one that both new hires and management agree upon and strive to promote. The shared vision must be something that conveys “how important their roles are in meeting the company’s business objectives” (Heyroth 4), but also how a company influences those both involved with the company and not. A company with a great vision is one that takes into account the community in which they are a part of along with their own business goals and objectives. A vision that “makes it clear to new hires (and their families) that they have joined an organization that is serious about excellence” is something that new hires will appreciate and take into account when considering staying the “long haul” (Erickson, 6). Companies with visions that incorporate community involvement and partnership are places that new hires will want to be a part of especially if they are not from the area. The ability to convey the importance of community involvement in the vision of a company is something new hire’s will recognize and appreciate.

Internships as a Means of Attraction:

Many new hires migrate to where there is the most opportunity for experience and success. Regions with companies and organizations that offer these opportunities are companies that new hires will invest interest in and consider being a part of. One means by which students and new hires gain valuable experience is through internships. Internships provide students and new hires with an opportunity to learn more about the field in which they are interested in without having to commit to a full time position. They give companies the opportunity to bring

an individual onboard that could provide assistance and innovative ideas without having to pay them a full time salary. Internships provide a win-win situation for both companies and students/new hires alike. Many of these internship opportunities could lead to full time positions within a company which benefits the intern, but internships also provide employers with extra help in the office at a lower pay rate or without compensation.

Internships can be looked at as a means by which regions and communities attract and retain new hires. Binghamton in particular has the ability to provide many internships to valuable and innovative students from Binghamton University. Many Binghamton graduates are from outside the Southern Tier such as downstate or out of state. Internships in Binghamton and the Southern Tier would “help all graduates – and especially non natives, who have lower retention rates – learn more about local job opportunities and form networks in the region” (Sasser 2). Students with internships learn more about what the region has to offer both from a professional and social standpoint. Many internships allow students and new hires the opportunity to meet local professionals in the field and learn more about what is happening in the field on a day to day basis. Students that participate in an internship are more likely to stay in the area than students who did not take advantage of such opportunities (Sasser 2). Some universities and communities with multiple companies have formed a partnership in order to provide internships and work related experience and information to students. An example of such a partnership is Bentley University which “fosters close connections with a host of employers, and gives them a menu of opportunities to raise their visibility among students” (Sasser 3). Bentley also “sponsors a

program that enables companies to establish an on-campus presence as an “employer-in-residence,” by designating a senior employee to visit the university weekly to consult with students” (Sasser 3). By bringing the companies to the university, students that may not have the opportunity to get off-campus have the chance to meet employers and hear what they have to say. Having companies that are invested in the possibility of students becoming members of their organization, whether it is through employment or internships, is a valuable way to form a partnership between the university and companies. This will not only benefit those directly involved but will also benefit various other sectors of the community. A region with great community-university ties is one that will thrive in today’s economy and local companies are an integral part of a community.

Community Involvement as a Means of Attraction and Retention:

Companies that thrive in today’s economy are those that do not focus on just one area such as productivity or development, but rather many different areas. Regions with thriving economies and community development are those that possess a perfect balance between the community, university, and local businesses. New hires, especially those from other regions, look for more than just what a job has to offer but what the community as a whole has to offer.

Companies that are actively involved with their community and facilitate orientation and assimilation into these communities are companies that thrive. Also, regions with active community involvement from businesses tend to attract other businesses because entrepreneurs will move to where they know their business will succeed. A great example of a region where

companies are actively involved in the community is Maryland. Calvert Mutual Funds based out of Maryland gives up to 12 paid work days per year for volunteer work in the community and the National Oceanographic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA) employees lend their expertise to helping with the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay (Chalofsky 1099). A local bank, Sandy Spring Bank has “an in-school banking program to help kids learn how to save and manage their money” (Chalofsky 1099). These companies are just some examples of how local companies in a region can give back to the community which will in return improve the community which will attract new businesses and new hires. Companies such as these “spend time and money thinking about and implementing ways to serve their communities. Social responsibility is an integral part of their organizational culture, not just a nice thing to do or just for the public relations value” (Chalofsky 1099).

Binghamton and the Southern Tier has the resources available for companies to become involved with the community and if local businesses invest time and effort into this process we will see this community grow even further. Community events such as Binghamton Senators and Binghamton Mets games are venues for companies to orient new hires with the community in a fun and welcoming atmosphere. Companies that facilitate the assimilation into the community and not just the workplace are companies that will attract more employees and increase employee satisfaction which will lead to increased retention. A partnership between community events such as sporting events or the Arts is a great way for companies and new hires to become involved with the community they are a part of.

Best Practices:

An example of a local organization in the Southern Tier that has reached out to students and new hires is the Southern Tier Association of Human Resources (STAHR). This group has reached out to other students and I at Binghamton University and with their help the student chapter of the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) has been reactivated on campus. STAHR holds monthly meetings in which professionals and students are able to attend and learn about a different topic related to the field of Human Resources. This monthly meeting also provides a great opportunity for students and new hires to network with local professionals in the field of Human Resources. STAHR has provided an opportunity for students and new hires to interact with both the community and local HR professionals. If more organizations and companies in the Southern Tier worked more closely with new hires and students, these valuable connections and experiences would form and could lead to the attraction and retention of more students and new hires to the region.

A second example of a beneficial practice in the Southern Tier is the mentor-mentee program facilitated by the Professional Employees Council at Binghamton University. This program takes new professional hires at Binghamton University and matches them with a mentor on campus. It gives new hires access to an experienced professional to ask questions about a variety of topics ranging from where a building on campus is to what a fun activity to do with their friends or family may be. Programs such as this allow a new hire to familiarize themselves with both the job and the community to improve their experience as a new hire and lead to their

interest in staying within the community for many years to come.

A third example of a best practice and one that I find especially impressive is the New Blue new hire club at IBM in Endicott, NY. This group has been designed for the benefit of new hires to help facilitate acclimation and orientation to the Greater Binghamton area. The group has developed three venues in which new hires are able to become actively involved with both the company and the community. These three venues are social events, professional development, and community service.

Social events are important to the attraction and retention of new hires to a company and region because new hires want to live and work in a region that they will be able to thrive in both professionally and socially. The IBM New Blue new hire club hosts monthly gatherings at different local restaurants in the area for all of their interns and new hires. A great example of this practice was when the new hire club held an event at Saketumi in Downtown Binghamton. This event not only provided new hires with the opportunity to meet outside of the workplace, but also brought new hires to Downtown Binghamton to a local restaurant. This partnership between IBM and local restaurants such as Saketumi is something valuable that benefits both IBM and the restaurant. Other social events held by the new hire club include picnics in which new hires and interns are able to meet each other, attending Binghamton Mets or Binghamton Senators games as a group, and doing fun activities such as mini-golf. These events give new hires and interns the opportunity to meet one another and talk about things other than just work. They are able to form bonds and friendships with each other, which is something that is very important to new

hires, especially the younger generation. These events also pique the interest of new hires to local restaurants and events in the region.

Professional development is another way in which the new hire club is able to orient new hires with the company specifically. This practice includes the involvement of senior level management from the different divisions within IBM. The new hire club tries to arrange monthly meetings between new hires and different senior leaders within the company to facilitate discussion and show new hires that the company is personally interested in the success of all employees. The access to senior level management, especially to new hires, is important because new hires are able to ask many questions about a variety of topics ranging from career paths to why a policy exists, thus availability of senior-level management is very important to the attraction and especially retention of new hires in a company.

A third venue in which new hires are actively involved within the community is community service activities throughout the region. The New Blue new hire club is actively involved with Habitat for Humanity, Relay for Life, and Meals on Wheels. The new hire club also posts new information on community service opportunities throughout the region. New hires can volunteer with community service on an individual basis or as a group. Service activities with Habitat for Humanity or Relay for Life are generally done as a group and activities such as Meals on Wheels can be done on an individual basis.

Other programs and activities that have come about as a direct result of the New Blue new hire club include detailed postings of local restaurants and bars that are affordable and have a

great atmosphere. The new hire club also posts apartment and condominium listings for new hires that are looking for places to live. These postings are a direct result of new hires who currently work for IBM that had trouble finding an apartment or condominium.

A fourth example of a best practice in the Southern Tier that deals with the attraction and retention of new hires is the creation of the Broome Leadership Institute (BLI) in 1988. This program “draws prospective leaders from a cross section of the community to stimulate these promising individuals to work more effectively within their own spheres of interest and influence and to expand their civic and community activity. It seeks to foster a network of leaders who are committed to understanding and improving the quality of living in our region” (Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce). This program gives professionals in the Southern Tier the opportunity to learn more about the community they work and live in and how to become a more active member of the Southern Tier. By enrolling in this program professionals are able to learn from other professionals in the community who have completed this program and learn new ways to improve Binghamton and the Southern Tier. The establishment of this organization has provided a valuable platform for leaders of the Southern Tier to come together from various sectors of the community to help improve the Southern Tier.

Recommendations:

At Binghamton University, there are some different means by which students are able to find internships off campus but they are not overwhelmingly popular and many students feel as if many fields of interest are not represented. Building further on such programs such as

e-recruiting with the career development center on campus would be able to provide students with a valuable resource to find internships. Going out into the community and speaking with these different companies about a partnership between the university and companies through internship opportunities would be very beneficial for all involved. Furthermore bringing representatives from organizations and companies within the region to speak with students on campus also provides students, such as underclassmen who live on campus, the opportunity to meet and listen to local professionals in the area. Students who know about the local companies and organizations of the region in which they are attending college are more likely to become involved with the community through internships, clubs, or even their job search post graduation.

A second recommendation I would like to make is that more companies need to create new hire clubs modeled after the New Blue new hire club at IBM. These new hire clubs provide new hires the resources and activities necessary to embrace the culture of both the region and workplace. In order for Binghamton and the Southern Tier to attract and retain new hires, companies and organizations must brainstorm new and innovative ways to keep new hires happy by facilitating efficient social and professional community involvement. Putting together social events located at local restaurants and venues not only bring new hires together but also bring them out into the community to see what the region has to offer besides just a salary and somewhere to work. The generations of new hires that are entering the workforce are looking for more than just a good salary and place to work. They are looking at the “whole picture” which

means that communities where new hires are able to socialize and meet new people are essential to the attraction and retention of new hires to a region such as the Southern Tier.

A third recommendation I have is the creation of more partnerships between local organizations and the university. A perfect example of such partnership that I am directly involved with is the partnership between Binghamton University students interested in Human Resources and the local SHRM chapter, STAHR (Southern Tier Association of Human Resources). These partnerships give both students and professionals in the Southern Tier the ability to connect and form valuable relationships that could lead to internships, future jobs, and the ability for students to speak with professionals in their career field of interest about how they got to where they are and ask questions. Students are always looking for more than just sitting in a classroom and listening to a professor talk for hours. While this is necessary, students also want to be able to meet people who went through what they are experiencing and how it will all play out in the end. Partnerships between the university and local organizations present the opportunity for these connections to be formed and these partnerships will not only benefit students but also professionals and the Southern Tier.

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