

EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION¹

by James W. Zindel

Hiring and keeping key employees can be one of the most important responsibilities of a department manager. Zindel's Tree and Lawn Care, Inc. presently has 20 employees. They are divided into four divisions: interior plantscapes, landscape design and construction, lawn management, and tree care. Three employees were hired for the summer only, seven are seasonal, taking a 6 to 8 week layoff in the winter, and the other personnel are full time.

Presently, we do not have a recruitment program in effect. We rely on the walk-in applicant or referral system (from friends, employees, business acquaintances, etc.) to fill vacancies or for growth.

Our company offers two weeks vacation after one year (one week may be taken after six months), personal days, sick leave, and one-half of the employees health insurance premium. The beginning wage for a new employee is well above the minimum wage set by law. Performance evaluations are at 3 months, 6 months, and one year. The 3 months and 6 months evaluations are verbal. The annual evaluation is written. It is filled out by the employee and the supervisor. Salary increases are based on these evaluations. There are no set increases in effect, although employees holding similar positions and job skills are on the same pay scale.

A safe work environment is stressed at all times. We support our personnel in their accomplishments, on and off the job. Praise for a job well done is for everyone to hear. Mistakes are discussed on a one-to-one basis. We also feel that it very important to foster working conditions that

promote a pleasant comfortable and fair atmosphere. Employee cooperation and respect for one another is required. Therefore, if we have an employee that is not working productively, we want and need to know why.

We maintain an open door policy, i.e. if an employee has a personal or work-related problem which is affecting his/her work performance, we want that employee to feel free to discuss it in confidence. Then the appropriate action can be taken.

All of our crew leaders started at an entry level position and have earned promotions to their present positions.

We try to have one or two social gatherings a year. A cookout in the fall and a party at Christmas. Christmas gifts of hams or steaks are given to all employees. As a service industry, we maintain a high profile. We pride ourselves in being the best in the business. Our employees are responsible, hard-working individuals and project an image of professionalism. All personnel wear uniforms. All equipment is maintained. Our trucks have the same color scheme and identifiable logos. We feel that all of these factors combined help to attract the new employee.

We realize we cannot rely totally on these past methods of hiring. With the help from our junior college, which has recently started a horticultural curriculum, I expect the company to be supplied with a new source of employees.

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1. Presented at the annual conference of the International Society of Arboriculture in St. Charles, Illinois in August 1989.