

## ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TOP TALENT

World-wide the 'war for talent' is on and, South Africa is no different. Today's highly competitive business environment has led to people becoming a key differentiator for most companies and brands. Businesses need to have the right people - top talent that make a difference to the bottom-line. Attracting and retaining top talent has become a strategic imperative.

So, you've attracted the right candidate and your offer of employment has been accepted. Think the job's done – think again says PAG.

“Attracting the right talent is only half the battle won. Retaining your top talent is an ongoing battle; a battle that starts before the offer of employment is made. How you act following the offer of employment can make the difference between securing top talent and settling for number two. In super-paced, manic-competitive times, one vital element is often ignored – *the people element*.”

“Top talent is rare and while companies compete for business; top talent compete for top jobs. The days of long 'gold watch careers' are gone; talented employees are not only demanding the top jobs - but the top employers!”

“It is crucial for HR to know their 'target talent market' and the employers they are competing with. Knowing who is a possible threat to your target talent pool offers unique opportunities to attract the best-of-the-best. Understanding what employment differentiators your competitors offer can provide you with a competitive edge that could greatly contribute to the success of your talent attraction strategy.”

Finding top talent is a challenge for companies. PAG points out that identifying top talent in a market saturated with job-hungry candidates has become sophisticated and time-consuming; something most companies do not have. “Sifting through hundreds of applications can be frustrating and missing out on that 'one' great candidate can easily happen. Increasingly businesses, large and small, are relying on their staffing partners to ensure the right talent is identified and attracted.

Finding top talent will also be the focus of your competitors, a signed letter of employment does not necessarily mean the candidate is 'on board'. Employers shouldn't sit back and wait for the new recruit to start. Rather, she says: “use this pre-starting period to court the new recruit. This not only confirms that they have made the right choice to work for you; it also builds the vital employer-employee relationship and shuts out competitor offers.”

“Companies often regard the offer of employment as the final step in the talent attraction process. Acceptance of the employment offer should be considered the 'starting day' for the new employee. Career and job change is stressful for anyone. The period between accepting an offer and the actual

start date is usually characterised by doubt, compounded by the thought of leaving the familiar and taking on the unknown. The new employer should step up activities and follow a courting strategy until the start date - and beyond!”

PAG offers a few pointers for companies to include in their courting strategy:

1. Start placing the new recruit on distribution lists; the more he or she knows about current projects and information vital to the job, the less time it takes to become productive. This often also creates a sense of excitement about new challenges that lie ahead.
2. Put together a ‘new starter’ marketing pack that contains exciting marketing materials, company information, company achievements, relevant product and service information and maybe even a corporate video. Providing valuable information will also get the employee up to speed quicker.
3. Invite the new recruit to appropriate company functions. New starters take time to adapt. If they get to know their co-workers before starting, they will feel more comfortable once the actual start day arrives.
4. Invite him or her to company meetings that may be of relevance or value.
5. Ensure their work-station is ready; nothing wastes more valuable time than ‘kitting out’ a new starter. Add a personal touch with a company branded coffee mug with coffee waiting when they arrive.
6. Prepare a welcome pack for the first day; not only will the new starter feel special, but he or she will know from the pre-starting phase that yours is the best company to work for!