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**RETAILING**

**TONY GATTARI**

# Treat recruitment like marketing

**A SHOPKEEPER** needs a full-time sales assistant to replace a long-serving employee who has decided to retire. So she places an advertisement in the front window

“FULL TIME SALES ASSISTANT REQUIRED – APPLY WITHIN”

Being in a strip mall location, the shopkeeper receives around four applications from people who pass by the shop. After reading through the interviews, only one of them is suitable for an interview. The shopkeeper interviews the candidate in a café prior to the commencement of trade but at the conclusion of the interview decides that candidate would not be suitable.

So it's back to the drawing board. During this time, the shopkeeper launches a successful winter marketing campaign promoting the new season products. Here the shopkeeper sends out a direct mailer to her database of loyal clients, which included a four-page flyer of the new season lines.

She then places a half page colour advertisement in the local newspaper, updates her website which is successful in bringing in mail order clients and places displays of stock in strategic alliance partners window displays.

Why the difference?

Can you see the differences here with the efforts to attract a new employee versus a new customer? Why is it that retailers get all excited and place all their efforts and resources in attracting new clients, yet penny-pinch in trying to obtain a new employee? In attracting the right client we place an emphasis on creating 'multiple touches'. That is, the amount of different marketing elements we use to attract a customer through all of the

clutter that is out there in the market place. So how many touches are you trying to obtain to get the right employee in your business?

Here is a list of suggestions on the multiple strategies that you can put in place to get the right candidate. And remember don't rely on just one; invest in many areas so that you can expose your business to the wider labour market:

- Local paper advertisement
- Major newspaper advertisement
- Online job search engines
- Recruitment companies
- A 'careers' section on your own website; and
- An advertisement in the shop window.

I have only given half a dozen examples but there are even more ways in which you can obtain the right candidate for your business.

## Test and measure your recruits

What happens when you have a dud marketing campaign? I bet that you would evaluate the results and decide not to go down that path again, then try a different strategy. It amazes me when I work with clients that they live and die by the results of their marketing campaigns, yet turn a blind eye to the staff member who either refuses to sell or finds it hard to close the sale.

If this sounds like you, may I suggest that you stop advertising and give that money to charity, or start to look at the individual performance of your employees. Testing and measuring does not stop at marketing campaigns and monthly reviews of your profit and loss statement, it has to also be included in reviewing the

individual sales performance of your team members.

One of our clients had been spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on various marketing campaigns yet was still returning compounding losses. When we saw that they were converting the number of leads into customers at only eight per cent, we knew that they were wasting their money on marketing as the sales team was not converting the leads into sales.

So we started to measure the individual performance of each of the stores in conversion rate and gave them a benchmark to achieve. We then started to review the sales results of individual sales members and communicated the results of everyone's performance across the company.

The result? The conversion rate moved from eight per cent to 14 per cent in four weeks, with extra profits flowing to the bottom line. We are not there yet, but from simple test and measuring tools we are getting closer, and making an immediate impact.

So a simple change in mindset can be all the difference between a successful retail business and an ordinary one. Be vigilant in your recruitment of employees and do whatever is necessary in getting the right team, and ensure that they are all paying their way, just like your marketing campaigns. ●

■ The author, Tony Gattari, is the Managing Director of the Achievers Group. He built Harvey Norman's computer business from \$12 million to \$565 million in nine years.

Website: [www.achieversgroup.com.au](http://www.achieversgroup.com.au)  
Email: [tony@achieversgroup.com.au](mailto:tony@achieversgroup.com.au)  
Phone: (02) 9440 7373