



# Innovative Approaches to Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Employees

Blue Falls Manufacturing

Lacking the high wages of the energy sector, or the clean environment of the IT or financial services industries, how does a manufacturing concern get and keep good people? At Blue Falls, our answer has been to develop a blend of innovative and traditional benefits, and I'm going to share some of the best with you today.

Here is a brief video clip of our factory. It will give you a look at the environment and duties our people handle. Not quite as mucky as a drilling rig, but not quite as pleasant as a Tim Horton's store....

There is a

**DIRECT LINK**

between

# Employee Commitment



and



Customer **LOYALTY**

You can have the right



**PRODUCT**

The right

The right

**PRICING**

The right

**PRICING**

**CONVENIENCE**

The right

**PRICING**

**CONVENIENCE**

**SERVICE**

**AND still fail with the wrong**

**PEOPLE**

People are our **LARGEST** single expense!

Yet most companies spend little to no  
time on

**RECRUITING  
&  
DEVELOPING**

# So what do we do?

Arctic spa provides a wide variety of employee incentives through the year, much like many employers. Our very active social committee has organized staff BBQ's (which by the way are always Alberta Steaks), golf tournaments, family Christmas parties, and a company newsletter, we also offer full medical and dental benefits. However, these are things that employees in Alberta have come to expect. I am here to talk about what we do that we think is innovative and effective.

# Innovative Methods of Attracting People

# Sell the lifestyle



**Country living, regular hours, sleep in own bed, no weekends, regular holidays, see your kids!**

We found that attracting workers was difficult because of our location. Most individuals who live in our area could access the oil industry for employment, and probably receive much higher salaries. What we tended to focus on was playing on the areas of the oil patch which were some what of a negative, away from home for long periods of time, intense work hours followed by long stretches of down time, losing the ability to live the day to day happenings of your family. Through this focus we were able to attract individuals who had experienced the oilfield and have grown to value the importance of being home every night.

# Local Focus

- Focus on the benefits of working locally
  - Completed local ad mail drop

We have several industry's that are labour intensive in the area, to compete with for workers. We created a series of employment ads which focused on the value of working where you live: no driving, high gas prices, km cost on leased vehicles, being able to go home for lunch, meeting the kids after school. We took these ads and distributed them to all postal boxes and residences within our area. Not only was this a very cost effective way of soliciting employees, but also produced a large number of responses.

# Non-Traditional Production Workers



One of our largest growing areas in worker recruitment is in the non-traditional production workers like women, semi retired and retired individuals. In fact, 70% of our production workers are women! We have the geographical benefit of having Pigeon Lake a short drive from our facility. Many people are starting to retire to the lake, and are still young enough to want to continue in the workforce. We have attracted retired Bank managers, production managers, oilfield executives, and many individuals with fantastic skill sets that are interested in working at comparatively smaller wages for the new challenge that it presents.

# Employee Referral Program

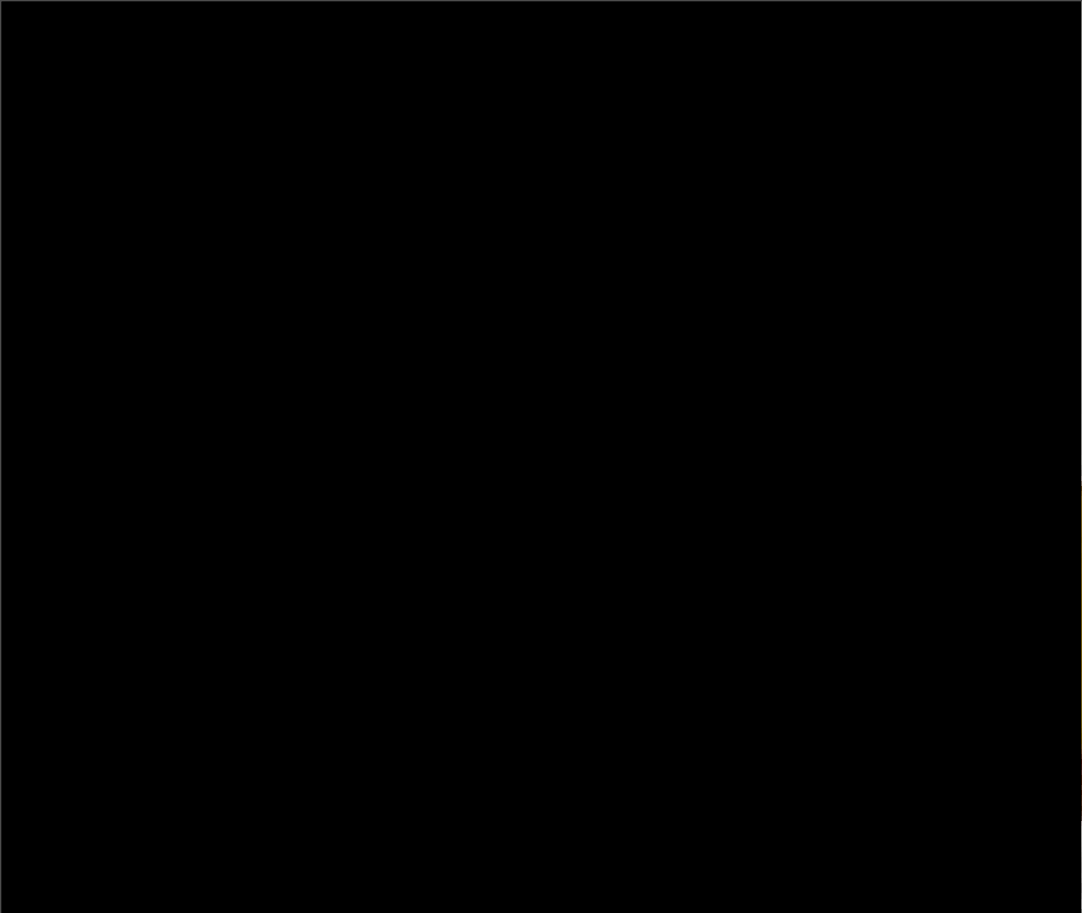
One thing we have found is that most companies who are offering new employee incentives, such as signing bonuses, but do not offer similar incentives for existing workers. We went the other way, we offer incentives to the existing employees who recruit new employees for us. We have been very successful with this program as it not only gets us new workers, but also has a built in sense of responsibility on the current employees to help the new recruits become a success. We believe that first, we need to keep the people we have, because if we keep them happy, we will never have a recruiting issue.

# Innovative Methods of Developing Employees

# The Ranch



The ranch is one of the jewels in our corporation. This is a 102 acre fully functional ranch located along the North Saskatchewan river. The ranch offers full accommodation for 20 people, along with complete training rooms, and large areas for product specific training. Employees are able to enjoy a few days of RR while developing skills that will be an asset to them and to us in the future.



Every employee has been at this facility for training, it provides a wonderful setting for team building sessions, leadership sessions, and management training sessions.



It also provides a great location to deliver key technical training on our various products, as well as, production and and installation methods.

# Cross Training

&

# Job Swaps

We train our staff in as many of the different areas as they are willing to learn. Their pay can be impacted by learning and working in more work stations. Employees can also apply to move into different departments of the company. Production workers have joined our sales team, one has become our communications officer, another our IT manager and several other key positions have all been filled from people within. We have a preference to promote from within and our staff know it. They can even have the chance to job swap for short periods to our overseas operations. This has resulted in a significantly higher employee retention.

# Innovative Methods of Retaining Employees

# Bonus Incentives \$\$\$

We had traditionally provided an employee bonus program based on the profitability of the company, and paid out twice yearly. We found that after a while this became almost an expectation rather than a reward, so we changed it. What we now offer are 3-4 challenges thru the year to help us achieve our goals, and to reward the workers for reaching attainable goals over specific time periods. For example, any day that we break a production record, everyone gets \$50.00. Another example was our May madness Dash for Cash. We provided predetermined goals and paid out tax-free cash to all on achieving that goal, and extra incentive for surpassing the goal. On average our employees took home a bonus of \$1100 each! And any money paid out in this program is tax free with the company paying the taxes.

Basically we have created innovative programs to both motivate and reward our staff for helping achieve our production goals.

# Scholarships

- (4) Four \$500 Tuition per semester
- (3) Three Scholarship for a child of an employee

We are interested in supporting the personal growth of our people. Whatever that looks like for them. In keeping with that philosophy there are no restrictions on what courses the employee takes, as long as it is offered by a certified institution, and we will pay the tuition up front not after they complete the course. So, the employee can select, and we support, even if there is no advantage to our company. We see the benefit is we are creating life long learners, and the more they learn, the better employees they will be for us. We also believe in supporting their children's learning, so we offer three annual scholarships for their children to pursue post secondary education.

# Language Labs

Free French, German and Russian language labs are available to all employees

Because we are an international company it is very important that we have employees who are able to communicate in more than one language. However, as a medium size company, we cannot afford to hire specific positions based on language ability, so we provide our employees with the opportunity to learn the different languages, and when the situation arises that we need someone with a specific language skill, then we access them from our pool of workers, and employ them on the phones or even send them overseas to communicate with dealers and end customers alike.

# Day Care

This is our latest endeavor. We have discovered that our community has a real lack of Day Care space, and it causes people to have to stay home rather than return to work. We are in the process of establishing a daycare within our community, not only for our employees, but for the whole community. Although this is not a new idea, the number of companies our size who provide this service is very minimal, and we feel the advantage to us could be rather significant.

# A Final Note

We set the CULTURE in our Company.

We love change!

We don't accept mediocrity!

We reward excellent INNOVATION!

(So our people embrace it!)  
(And neither do they!)  
Even if it fails!

By focusing on the benefits of working in the community, by accepting and encouraging non-traditional hires, and by developing a referral program that makes every employee an HR Recruiter, we have succeeded in attracting and maintaining a pool of great people.

# Respect

We recognize that all the awards that Blue Falls has earned over the past few years are founded on the efforts of our workers.

So whatever our method, however we try, our goal is above all to treat everyone on our team with respect.