

Recruit Top Candidates And Retain Your Talented Staff

A how-to guide for New Zealand
construction businesses



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Today's Biggest Construction Challenges

New Zealand's construction scene continues to be strong. However, meeting high demand, especially in the residential sector, is held back by various factors: suitable land, material shortages, long planning lead times, council delays and a lack of skilled workers. None of these issues are easily fixed, especially under our current closed borders.

Each of these issues are big enough to write books on themselves. But I've decided to focus on one of the most urgent and challenging issues

– recruitment – and discuss how you can make the best of a bad situation.

You probably already know that finding good people with the right skills is difficult right now. I'm assuming you don't have a line of people outside your door begging for a job. That's why you need to be proactive and willing to try different ideas.

But you don't have to go it alone. I've created this guide to help you.

Part 1: The Foundations

Retention Comes Before Recruitment

Before we dive deeper into the recruitment process and welcoming new hires, you should consider whether you need to be shutting the back door first.

Internationally, a significant percentage of staff are considering resigning from their job very soon. The unsettling effects of the pandemic have caused people to look at changing their location or situation to feel safer. In the US, this is known as “the great resignation”, and it appears to be happening here as well.

Dr Jarrod Haar, a human resource management professor from

AUT’s Business School, sampled workers’ attitudes at three points during the pandemic: May & December 2020, and April 2021. Haar found that, amongst the workers, thoughts of leaving their current job rose sharply during the pandemic – with staff in skilled positions most likely thinking about moving to greener pastures.

So, what are you doing to keep the talent you already have? How often do you have meaningful 1-on-1 conversations with your team? Have you checked in with them recently to see if they’re happy and to listen to what their goals are now?



Employees today are seeking better opportunities for career growth and development.

They want to enhance their skills, earn higher wages, and gain more benefits. They may even be actively approached by one of your competitors. Of course, you would never “poach” staff from other companies, but not everyone has your high moral standards. Also, your best people are the ones at risk of leaving the most. They are probably more aware of their value, and if they feel their talents and work are not matching their rewards, you have a problem.



Always Have Your Hiring Radar On

The main reasons the best people leave are:

- They see no link between their pay and their performance
- They don't believe they have opportunities to grow or advance their career
- Their contributions are not recognised and valued
- They don't get to use their natural talents
- They have unclear or unrealistic expectations
- They will no longer tolerate abusive managers or toxic environments, or the "culture of sacrifice" finally becomes too much

To start, make sure your onboarding process for new hires is solid. Provide ongoing coaching and rewards (financial and other) to ensure loyalty. Make them feel valued and help them grow their career.

The book, *"Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business"* has some great tips on developing a proactive retention strategy in your business.

If you would like a summary of this book, email me at andy@tradescoach.co.nz and I will send you a copy.

Don't wait for someone to hand in their notice before you start the search process. Although it's a fine balance between being over-staffed and under-staffed, you need to factor in the lead time of the search process, which can take weeks, if not longer. Even then, the successful candidate may need to give notice to their current employer too. If you are in growth mode, it's better to hire earlier and spend time training the person for the new role, than hiring later and putting pressure on your existing crew and systems.

How do you do this? Have your (hiring) radar on at all times. It's surprising when what you focus on comes to fruition.

Scientifically, this radar is known as your reticular activating system

(RAS). Like when you buy a new blue car, you start to notice the same brand and colour on the road. It's not that there is an increase in blue cars; it's because you are now consciously tuned in to that type and aware of them. That is RAS.

With your RAS switched on, be prepared to jump at an opportunity. When you come across someone who may be a good fit for your company, even if you don't need them right away, be prepared to act quickly and take them through your recruitment process. These days, good staff are harder to find than good customers, so be brave on the hiring front and back-fill the work to match.

This may change one day but, for now, hiring comes before sales.

Develop From Within

Looking for a good foreman? They may be sitting across the smoko table from you. Although it may be a slower pathway to fill those mid-management positions, compared with hiring externally, there are advantages in promoting from within.

Firstly, it's great for morale if your staff can see there is a real career pathway in your business. Particularly true for your more ambitious team members, if they can't see their career and earnings progressing in your business, they'll actively pursue those opportunities elsewhere.

Secondly, you know what they're like and will have an idea on how they'll perform in a new position. Better the devil you know than the devil you don't, as the saying goes.

Hiring someone externally always comes with the risk of their performance not matching "what's on the label". Once they are with your company, it could take some time to manage them well. In that time, they could cause you a headache and possibly damage the company's profitability and reputation.

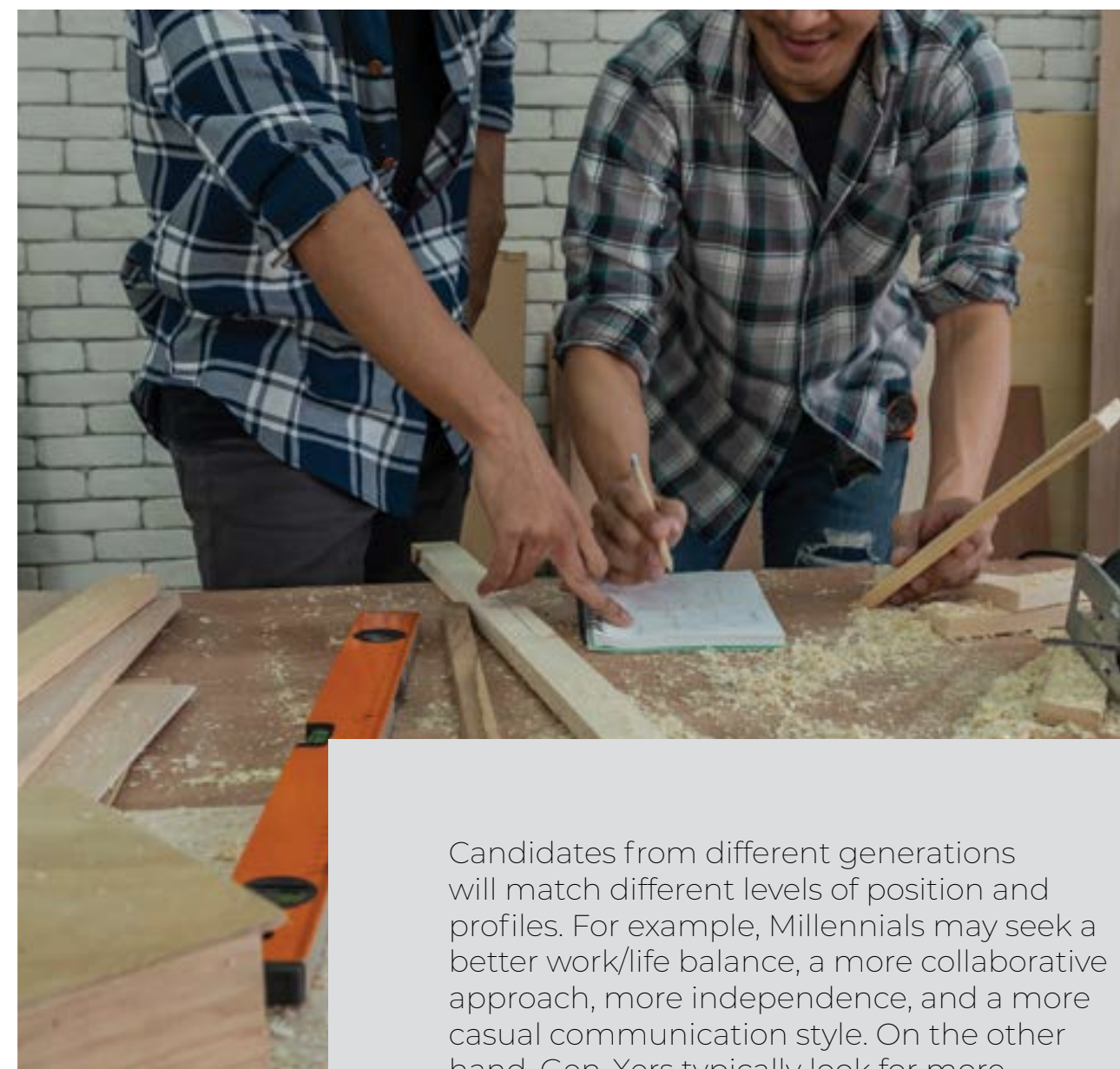


Part 2: The Process

Just Like High School... It's a Popularity Contest

Recruiting these days is a marketing exercise in its own right. Just like marketing, there are some fundamental strategies you need to consider first. Also, like how it was in high school, it's a popularity contest. You need to work hard to make your business look and sound attractive to prospective team members.

The first fundamental strategy of marketing is market segmentation. This is deciding who your target customer is and understanding how they think and behave. In recruitment terms, you need to decide what type of candidate you're focusing on and discover their fears, frustrations, wants and dreams.



Candidates from different generations will match different levels of position and profiles. For example, Millennials may seek a better work/life balance, a more collaborative approach, more independence, and a more casual communication style. On the other hand, Gen-Xers typically look for more autonomy (with feedback), rewards for hard work and a more pragmatic communication style.

You may need to adjust how you present your company to these groups and emphasise different aspects. Ask people what they value in an employment situation and be prepared to change the way you have done things in the past.

Below are some questions you should consider when marketing to new talent.

- What training can you offer?
- Is a 4-day week with 10 hours a day a more attractive model?
- What sort of culture do you promote and what are you doing to live it?
- What's the opportunity for advancement?
- What do you offer outside of work to socialise?
- Can you offer a signing-on bonus?
- What's a competitive wage or salary?

Your recruitment message needs to be interesting and relevant to your target audience. Most people will have a hot

button that will motivate them to act and contact you. At this stage, that's all you want them to do. Take the next step and make contact. Potentially, the more "extreme" your headline message is, the more likely someone will respond.

That hot button headline can be a negative/pain focused one, or a visionary/dream focused one.

Headlines like:
Stuck in a dead-end job?
Are your talents wasted in your current role?
Sick of being paid peanuts for your skills?

Or more positive ones like:
Ready to take your career to the max?
Dreaming of being a building superstar?
Are you our next project superstar?



You get the idea. Videos are often underused, but they're a great medium for helping you stand out and get noticed. You can film the video on a smartphone and include a personal message from you or the owner, as well as action footage of your crew working on a project or enjoying some social

time together outside of work. Some recruitment videos are shot by professionals and are high-quality productions.

Frankly, I don't think you need this. A raw-edged, lower quality (but not too low), real life video with a strong message will work just as well, if not better.

More Lines In The Water

When you're out fishing, it pays to have more than one line in the water if you want to catch more fish. It also pays to have the right sort of bait on the hook. The bait in question are the messaging and channels we've already discussed.

Now that you have the bait sorted, you need to cast several lines so your hiring message can be dangled in front of as many prospects as possible. Sharing the same old stale ad on TradeMe just won't cut it these days. The competition for talent is too strong, so you need a proactive campaign with multiple channels to reach as much of the

talent pool as possible. Potential channels to use in your recruitment campaign could include the following:

- Post on TradeMe, Seek or other job ad sites
- incentivise (via a bonus or other reward) your current team to find prospects
- Post on your own social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok). Don't forget to try video. Try to target the spouses and partners with a message.
- Use LinkedIn to target specific roles, especially middle and senior management



- Have your team share those posts on their personal accounts
- Partner with trade schools, especially for entry-level positions
- Share on industry social media groups
- Promote with your alliance partners: sub-trades, merchants, Council inspectors, architects
- Create a "Hiring Now" page on your website
- include "Hiring Now" signage on your vehicles along with an easy to remember email address or 0800 number
- Contact past team members.

They might consider coming back (if you want them) or know someone is looking to hire

- Radio ads (if you have the budget)
- sports clubs
- Good old-fashioned newspapers.

As you can see, you can promote your opportunity across plenty of places. This list is not finite and there are other channels you could use, excluding skywriting. You don't have to pick them all but casting your net wider and picking a range of relevant tactics will help you in the long run.

Tips For Better Recruitment Success

To summarise, here are a few ideas to supercharge your recruitment efforts in these competitive and challenging times.

For more details about these points, or anything else in this guide, contact me at

andy@tradescoach.co.nz

and we can discuss your needs.

- Always have your hiring radar on. The best time to hire someone is when you don't need them just yet.
 - Think about the key messages that will hit the emotional hot button of a prospect and write your headlines accordingly.
 - Make it easy for prospects to take the first step.
- Have plenty of baited hooks in the water.
 - Consider using video in your social media posts (you don't need a big budget – you can film them on your smartphone).
 - Offer a signing-on bonus – they get some of the bonus now and the remainder after 6-12 months.
 - Incentivise your team to find like-minded people with a financial bonus or free tool.
 - Always ask for and check references.
 - Have a standard list of questions to ask all candidates. Focus on core skills and core values.
 - Be clear on what skills the position needs and find the best fit for it.



To customise this guide for your business,
phone or email me today and book a FREE 1-hour
consultation. I will review where you are at with your team
plan, make some relevant suggestions and help you with
an improvement process.

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Take action today.**

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