

From Recruitment to Retention: Four Ways Canadian Employers Are Retaining Their Workforce

A Tight Labour Market Can Require Big Raises, Big Benefits

Express Experts Stress Importance of Showing Gratitude

TORONTO, July 25, 2018 – In Red Deer, Alberta, an increasing number of companies are covering the costs of post-secondary tuition or skills upgrading of their employees. Wages are going up, and many entry-level positions now pay more than minimum wage. In Windsor, Ontario, companies are offering more flexibility than ever before, including the ability to work from home. Nationwide, companies are doing whatever it takes to attract and retain workers, such as expanding benefits to include sick leave and caregiver leave.

Anecdotes like these are increasingly common—and for good reason. Pressure is building on companies across the country to do whatever it takes to retain workers. Earlier this month, Statistics Canada reported that job vacancies are up 20 per cent in the first quarter of 2018 compared the same period last year. It was the sixth consecutive quarter with a year-over-year increase in the number of job vacancies.

In such a tight labour market, businesses must spend significantly more energy on retention—showing employees they are appreciated and valued—given that recruiting new employees may prove more difficult.

Express Employment Professionals franchise owners report a range of new initiatives, which fall into four main categories:

- Wages and bonuses
- Family benefits
- Education and training
- Workplace culture



Wages and Bonuses

In Red Deer Alberta, Express franchise owner Curtis Debogorski sees companies increasing wages to secure talent.

“Many companies are paying above minimum wage for entry-level jobs, and we expect this trend to continue,” he said.

Colleen Gaudette, an Express franchise owner in Windsor, Ontario, sees the same trend of increased wages. She also reports that companies are using sign-on and completion bonuses for both recruitment and retention.

Family Benefits

Many employers are enhancing their paid family leave policies, offering expanded sick leave and new benefits to more workers, including for elder care. Companies are also providing more vacation time.

In addition to providing new and more generous benefits, companies are waiving the probationary period and allowing new employees to be eligible for benefits from day one.

According to Gaudette, for many employees, flexibility is key and employers are taking notice.

“In Windsor, we are seeing a trend where employers who previously may have only considered hiring candidates who can work full-time are now going the extra mile to piece together schedules for people that can only work part-time. Employers are making more effort to hire older workers, younger students and persons with disabilities who require more flexible work hours.”

Debogorski sees the same demand for flexibility with some employers creating a third shift for employees, as well as offering the ability to work from home.

Other benefits being offered by companies to attract and retain workers include RRSP-matching or covering relocation expenses to attract talent from outside of the area.

Education and Training

Businesses have long invested in education and training to help their employees earn credentials and skills that will empower them to do their jobs better. Now, companies are increasingly offering workers education benefits that will help them secure different jobs in the future—hoping that it will help them retain these workers at least for the short- and medium-term.

“We are seeing an increased focus by companies on offering to assist with the costs of professional development training or even post-secondary education,” Debogorski said.

Workplace Culture

As valuable as raises, bonuses, benefits and education can be, the most important step a business can take to retain employees is to improve the workplace culture. Saying “thank you” is both the simplest and most powerful action an employer can take.

“Personal recognition has a dramatic impact. If employees feel appreciated, they are more likely to stay,” Debogorski said.

Gaudette notes that a company with a positive workplace culture will respond to employees’ preferences, rather than assuming certain benefits will be appealing.

“We are seeing a positive trend in companies asking their employees what matters most to them. Getting creative with ways to engage your employees pays dividends. Even a small effort pays off in terms of increased performance,” she said.

Gaudette added that companies have become more inventive in how they show appreciation and keep their staff energized. Examples include companies that keep a stocked fridge with snacks and drinks to keep employees energized throughout the day, companies that provide board games or access to gaming systems to give employees an easy way to unwind on breaks and spark a little fun competition and a company that has a basketball net set up in an extra room for employees to shoot hoops on breaks when they need to get the creative juices flowing.

She said that many companies will offer discounted gym memberships or provide a full-time personal trainer with gym space on site for employees. One company even has a yoga room and an instructor who comes in twice a week prior to the business day.

Debogorski sees the same trend.

“There is a lot of competition to attract and retain talent,” she said. “Companies that are the most successful at attracting and retaining talented workers are those that show gratitude, engage their employees, provide better leadership training and take the approach that our most important asset is our people.

“It’s a job-seeker’s economy, and it doesn’t look likely to change anytime soon,” said Bill Stoller, the CEO of Express. “Any business that isn’t taking stock of the way it shows appreciation to its employees is behind the curve. As long as the labour market remains tight, we should expect to see even more

headline news about large raises and generous benefits. But even the extreme cases shouldn't obscure the fact that, above all, employers must take the time to personally thank employees."

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email ana@mapleleafstrategies.com.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the international staffing company has more than 800 franchises in the U.S., Canada and South Africa. Since its inception, Express has put more than 6 million people to work worldwide.

About Express Employment Professionals

Express Employment Professionals puts people to work. It generated \$3.4 billion in sales and employed a record 540,000 people in 2017. Its long-term goal is to put a million people to work annually. For more information, visit ExpressPros.com.