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ASK THE EXPERT

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Wow factors could be telecommuting, four 10-hour shifts

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Map This **Beta**

Jack McCallum has developed a "recruiting trifecta" for employers who lack a human resources department to turn to for help with hiring in Whatcom County's tight labor market.

It's usually the owner or a manager who handles the bulk of hiring for small businesses. These days, larger companies also are cutting back on HR as a way of lowering operating costs. Consequently, McCallum is often consulted by smallbusiness leaders because she's an expert on human resource management. A number of entrepreneurs also heard her speak recently about "The Inspired Hire" at the Whatcom Business Conference.

McCallum emphasizes the importance of investing enough time to find the right person for a job opening. Personnel typically are the biggest cost of running any business and can create the biggest liability, so every hiring decision holds potential to affect the bottom line.

The decision takes on more weight when you figure the cost of acquiring a new employee: take one month's salary and multiply it by five.

"This doesn't include the cost of a hiring agency, which can add 20 percent to 35 percent to the expense of filling a top-level management position," she said.

Of course, employers should follow their standard hiring practices. But incorporating McCallum's trifecta adds another level to the process and can ensure a successful outcome. Here is a synopsis:

Competence: The boss or manager doing the hiring looks at current competencies within the company and at upcoming changes. This type of in-house evaluation assists in clarifying their expectations and the type and level of skills the applicant must demonstrate for the job.

Commitment: Employees only stay long-term if their needs are met. Candidates likely to develop into veteran employees are people who embrace the company's vision, find opportunities for growth and are enabled to see the outcome of their efforts in the workplace. Naturally, employees want fair wages, but as important is knowing what's going on inside the company and why.

Contribution: The boss or manager considers the ability of the potential employee to meld with the company's goals, also how the organization can help him or her reach personal goals and have fun along the way.

When the best job candidate applies, the employer must turn into a salesperson.

"You need to offer more than wages and benefits," she said. "You need a wow factor."

Wow factors could be the chance to telecommute, job share or work four 10-hour shifts.

Of course, be honest and don't oversell. That creates room for future dissatisfaction and a reason for losing a great employee.

Sometimes when an employee voluntarily leaves it means something's awry in the workplace. It could be inadequate pay or benefits, no chance for personal growth or a lack of support from peers and leaders. Often the reasons for departure are ones bosses don't consider, such as the person wasn't given enough responsibility or was trained for tasks he or she didn't get to do.

JACK MCCALLUM

Title: President
Business: HR Balance LLC
Credentials: McCallum holds Master of Business Administration degrees in human resource management and organizational development and is working toward a doctorate. She has 15 years of human resources experience in various industries. In addition to conducting training, seminars and workshops, she teaches at colleges and universities.
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DAVE GALLAGHER & MARY EVITT
Business Editor Dave Gallagher writes a "Retail Tip Sheet" column each Monday and a "Biz Talk" column each Sunday. Mary Evitt, editor of Whatcom Business Magazine and a business writer for The Bellingham Herald, writes a weekly "Ask the Experts" column with local business professionals.



RICK ANDERSON & MATT MCDONALD
Rick Anderson, an information systems technician for The Bellingham Herald, and Matt McDonald, online project manager and Mac technician for The Bellingham Herald, write a "Tech Guys" column for Whatcom Business Magazine.

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Too often employers complain that their employees just don't seem to care, she said. Not always.

"It's a matter of trust, and it goes both ways. The employer feels a lack of trust and the employee feels under-appreciated," she said.

Most people want to work hard and then enjoy their leisure hours.

"People want a work-life balance," she said.

Do you need help with a business issue or do you have business expertise to share in this column? Contact Mary Evitt by e-mail: mary.evitt@bellinghamherald.com.

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