

Continuous Improvement

Public

By Sam Ciccone, Principal Reliability Consultant, Entity Engagement

Cultivating a talented and engaged workforce

The Journey to Security, Resiliency and Reliability

"You don't build a business - you build people - and then people build the business."

— Zig Ziglar, author and motivational speaker

People are arguably the most important aspect of a successful organization. RF's [Strategic Plan](#) includes the recruitment, retention and training of people, the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and the prioritization of a positive workplace. Not only are these specific and separate goals, but for successful organizations that value their people first, they are also interconnected.

Recruiting the right people lays the foundation for achieving the other goals in this strategic objective. For many companies though, this line of thinking is not at the forefront. About 40% of U.S. companies outsource much, if not all, of the hiring process, according to [research](#) by organizational consulting firm Korn Ferry. And only about a third of U.S. companies reported that they monitor whether their hiring practices lead to bringing good employees on board, according to a 2019 [Harvard Business Review article](#).

So, what are some best practices for recruitment? One is that recruitment is more than finding candidates that check off the boxes in a job description. You should also hire for the potential these candidates bring. This will supply a larger pool of resources to choose from.

Retention, which ties directly to recruiting, makes you ask the questions: why are people leaving, and what makes them stay? Retention is problematic due to a myriad of reasons including salary, being overworked, absence of work life balance, and poor workplace culture. These are all things that we as a regulator and you as an

electric utility need to work on, especially understanding that this leads to a highly secure, resilient, and reliable power grid. If you can't retain the right people, it leaves gaps in knowledge that can trickle down to the proper operation of our power grid.

Recruiting and employment agency Robert Half suggests [ways to improve retention of valued employees](#). One tactic is ensuring salary and other compensation are at least on par with the market value for similar positions. When people feel like they are underpaid, they look elsewhere. Ensuring proper compensation far outweighs the cost of replacing those employees.

Another strategy is to attempt to post jobs internally, not just externally. This develops trust and sends the message to existing employees that they can advance in their current organization. Fostering an environment where employees feel they can speak their minds is another potential pathway to improving retention.

This includes companies not just meeting with employees twice a year during performance reviews, but also providing periodic feedback on performance and managers offering help when employees face an issue or are struggling with an aspect of their role.

Once you bring in the people, training, education, and awareness are vital. In our industry, training and awareness should extend not only

For more information, see SERC Reliability Corporation's article titled ["Will there be enough skilled workers in the future?"](#)

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The ERO encourages a systematic approach to training. As an example, NERC Standard [PER-005-2](#) states that “Each Reliability Coordinator, Balancing Authority, and Transmission Operator shall use a systematic approach to develop and implement a training program for its System Operators”.

to employees, but also to contractors, vendors, and consultants. Awareness brings about desired behaviors in support of a bulk electric system that is secure, resilient, and reliable and that supports a risk-aware culture. Training remediates the skill gaps of new and existing staff, and if the skill gaps pose risks to the organization, they should be properly addressed by some form of risk management developed by the organization. Lastly, education goes beyond training, making sure

employees can better respond to unique circumstances, which is crucial for the security, resilience, and reliability of the grid.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is also tied to recruitment, as well as culture (discussed next). Per our Strategic Plan, “*We champion diversity by acknowledging, respecting, and including all races, genders, ages, ethnicities, orientations, religious backgrounds, and identities. We ensure equity by examining our procedures and processes so that everyone is treated fairly regarding pay, access, and opportunities.*”

Some of the key benefits of DEI initiatives are that they foster innovation and help to avoid group think. DEI is also essential to building a workplace where people want to work. More than 70% of job-seekers are looking to work for a company with a dedicated commitment to DEI, according to [research](#) from the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business. And companies are 35% more likely to experience greater financial returns if they have a

diverse workforce, according to [research](#) from consulting firm McKinsey & Company.

Lastly, our Strategic Plan emphasizes the prioritization of a positive workplace culture. At RF, we strive to foster a culture that encourages employees to engage and bring their authentic selves to work each day, that recognizes and incentivizes well-being and innovation, and that provides platforms to encourage team building, wellness, learning more about ourselves and our teammates, and recognizing and empowering each other. We are not alone in prioritizing a strong company culture – 94% of executives believe it’s key to business success, according to [research from Deloitte](#).

Continuously improving your recruitment, retention, training, DEI program, and culture is not easy. All of these are complex moving targets that affect each other. But organizations that make it a priority to improve in these areas have happier employees that want to stay, create a more diverse pool of employees that bring value from their different perspectives, background, and education, and show an increase in a positive workplace culture.

As the quote from Zig Ziglar at the beginning of this article alludes to, people are the starting point that can propel the growth and sustainability of a successful organization. These are things that we should all strive for, not only for compliance and reliability, but to stay on top of an ever-changing grid and world we live in today.

