

Attracting and Retaining Talent

By Laurie Ballantyne, Founder, CoHR Solutions

The employment landscape is evolving, making recruitment an increasing challenge for the tourism and hospitality sector. Attracting and retaining talent can no longer follow traditional methods. Instead, tourism businesses must recognize the key factors that drive employee retention and contribute to long-term industry success.

A holistic approach to recruitment and retention is essential—one that prioritizes career develop-

ment, employee well-being, and evolving workplace expectations. By implementing effective strategies, businesses can build a motivated, engaged, and committed team.

This resource outlines key strategies to help you attract and retain top talent, ensuring the continued success of your business.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE:

High Turnover Costs:

- Replacing an employee can cost 50-200% of their annual salary, including recruitment, onboarding, and lost productivity.

Common Reasons Employees Leave:

- Lack of growth opportunities.
- Unpredictable schedules.
- Limited recognition and rewards.
- Lack of connection to management or leadership.
- Lack of alignment with the organization's purpose and values.

ATTRACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Develop a Strong Employer Brand:

What It Means:

- Your employer brand is your reputation as a workplace. It communicates why someone should work for you.

How to Build It:

- Showcase your workplace culture through social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook).
- Share employee testimonials, team achievements, and behind-the-scenes content.
- Highlight your values, mission, and any unique aspects of your organization.

How to Market It:

- Use free platforms and tools to promote job openings with visually appealing posts.
- Engage with local communities and schools to attract talent.
- Leverage employee referrals and encourage your team to share openings in their networks.

Retention Impact:

- A strong employer brand attracts employees who align with your values, improving retention over time.

2. Simplify Applications:

- **Make it Easy:** Shorten application forms and enable mobile-friendly submissions using free tools like Google Forms.
- **Job Boards:** Effectively use online job boards by ensuring your postings are concise, engaging, and include all critical information (eg., benefits, growth opportunities, flexible schedules).
- **Call to Action:** Add clear calls to action and simple instructions to encourage candidates to apply quickly.
- **Attract Through Accessibility:** Ensure applications are easy to find by leveraging popular job boards like Indeed and local community platforms, and by cross-posting on social media.

3. Tap Into Local Partnerships:

- **Collaborate Locally:** Partner with local schools, tourism boards, and community organizations to create a pipeline of talent. (Example: Partner with high schools or colleges for internships or part-time roles.)
- **Community Engagement:** Host or sponsor community events to increase visibility as an employer of choice.
- **Cross-Promotion:** Work with other local businesses to provide mutual discounts for employees and share job openings.
- **Leverage Networks:** Develop relationships with job placement services or local career centres to reach untapped talent pools.

RETENTION STRATEGIES

1. Support Employee Mental Health:

- Provide access to mental health resources, such as free apps or community counselling services.
- Offer mental health days and encourage employees to take breaks.
- Create a supportive environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their well-being.

2. Address Personal Needs and Work-Life Balance:

- Provide flexible scheduling options to accommodate personal obligations.
- Allow shift swaps or splitting to give employees greater control over their time.
- Encourage work-life balance through policies that limit overtime and support personal time.

3. Recognition & Rewards:

- **Competitive Wages and Benefits:** Ensure wages align with market standards and consider offering benefits like health plans, retirement contributions, or discounts on services.
- **Low-Cost Ideas:** Implement programs like “Employee of the Week,” verbal praise, and small perks like free meals.
- **Celebrate Achievements:** Recognize team milestones and individual accomplishments publicly.
- **Meet Employee Needs:** Offer personalized incentives, such as childcare assistance, transportation stipends, or flexible vacation policies.

4. Professional Development:

- Offer free cross-training to build skills and show employees you’re invested in their future.
- Provide small, affordable training opportunities through online platforms.

PRACTICAL TIPS AND EXPANDED STRATEGIES CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE

Communication

- Hold weekly team check-ins to address concerns and share updates.
- Use free tools like Slack or WhatsApp for streamlined communication.

Employee Feedback

- Conduct short, anonymous surveys to gauge satisfaction.
- Act on feedback and communicate changes to build trust.

Affordable Perks

- Free or discounted meals during shifts.
- Employee discounts on your services or products.
- Flexible break policies and access to community discounts.

Tools and Resources

- Free Scheduling Tools: When I Work, Homebase.
- Communication Tools: Slack, WhatsApp.
- Survey Tools: Google Forms, Typeform.
- Training Platforms: Coursera, LinkedIn Learning (look for free or low-cost options).
- Mental Health Resources: Wellness apps like Calm or Headspace, or partnerships with local organizations.

IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN

1. Start a referral program with small incentives.
2. Schedule a team huddle to discuss retention ideas.
3. Implement one recognition initiative this month.
4. Conduct a quick survey to understand employee needs.
5. Begin building your employer brand by sharing your culture on social media.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laurie Ballantyne, founder of CoHR Solutions, is a trusted expert in HR and workforce strategy. With more than 25 years of experience working with businesses to create supportive, high-performing workplaces, Laurie will share practical tools and insights to help you elevate your retention efforts. Learn more about Laurie's expertise at cohrsk.com.