Small Business Bulletin

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Hiring Tips for Small Businesses

When you run a small business, every hire counts. A larger company can typically absorb a misstep, but on a small team, one wrong fit can affect the workload, morale and customer experience right away. Small businesses also face hurdles that bigger competitors don't, such as tighter budgets and less name recognition. None of this means you can't compete. It means your hiring must be more deliberate, and the right approach can help you attract strong candidates without matching corporate pay scales. Consider the following hiring tips:

- **Define the role before you post it.** Start by listing the job's essential functions, then separate must-have qualifications from nice-to-haves. Decide whether you need a full-time, part-time, seasonal or contract worker. Keep your job title plain and your description short and mobile-friendly.
- **Be consistent and honest.** Candidates often research a business before they apply, and many distrust vague or misleading job listings. Make sure the story you tell is the same everywhere a candidate might encounter it: in your job posting, on your website and social media, during the interview itself and during onboarding once they're hired. If the listing promises one thing and the interview or first week delivers another, you risk losing both trust and the hire. Let your team help tell the story with employee testimonials, behind-the-scenes photos or videos, or short stories about the work, so candidates get an authentic picture of life at your small business.
- **Look beyond the resume.** Attitude, motivation and willingness to learn can often determine the success of a new hire and can matter as much as experience for some roles. Skills-based assessments can help identify candidates with the right skills for the role, and candidates without advanced degrees or certifications can often prove strong hires.
- **Interview with structure.** Prepare a core set of questions and ask them of every candidate. Behavioral questions about how someone handled a past situation work well, and notes help you compare finalists fairly. Keep questions job-related and avoid asking personal questions.
- **Use the network you already have.** Your own employees can be a valuable resource for recruiting. Consider promoting from within, setting up a referral program and rehiring former employees who left on good terms.
- **Compete on more than salary.** While competing on pay against larger employers can be difficult for smaller businesses, offering flexibility, faster growth, competitive benefits and a great workplace culture can be a differentiator. Flexibility counts for a lot. Research has shown that some employees would accept a pay cut to keep a remote job or a role that allows schedule flexibility.
- **Treat candidates well.** Word travels quickly in a small market, so respond promptly and send a courteous note to those you don't select. Keep promising applicants on file for later.

Employer Takeaway

Hiring isn't about having the biggest budget or the longest list of perks. It's about being intentional. Every hire is also a chance to strengthen your team and reputation, so approach each one as an investment in your business's future rather than a task to check off.

Helping Employees Combat Loneliness

When you run a small business, your team is your biggest asset, and a single disconnected employee can change the whole feel of the workplace. Loneliness is a bigger problem than many owners realize. A Cigna Group report found that more than half of American workers feel lonely, and lonely employees are more likely to feel mentally checked out during the workday. The good news is that small businesses are well-positioned to do something about it, often with simple, low-cost changes.

How Loneliness Happens in Small Workplaces

Small teams are close by design, but that doesn't guarantee connection. When everyone wears multiple hats, heavy workloads leave little time for the casual conversations and friendships that make work feel personal. Relationships can become purely transactional, focused on the next task rather than the person doing it. Even within teams that do have more time for interpersonal interactions, many employees can still struggle to develop real connections with their peers.

Why It Matters to Your Business

Chronic loneliness drains emotional resilience and raises the risk of stress, anxiety and burnout. It can also affect physical health, including cardiovascular risk. At work, lonely employees often show reduced focus, creativity and productivity, and they may withdraw from team interactions. For a small business, the stakes are high. One disengaged or departing employee can strain everyone else, and replacing a team member is costly and disruptive.

Practical Steps You Can Take

You don't need a big budget or an HR department to make a difference. Consider these approaches:

- **Check in regularly.** Owners and managers can ask how people are doing, listen openly and build genuine relationships. A weekly one-on-one can go a long way.
- **Make room for informal connection.** Shared lunches, coffee breaks, walking meetings or a casual team activity rebuild the sense of community that busy schedules erode.
- **Protect work-life balance.** Overwhelmed people are more likely to feel isolated. Encourage breaks, use of time off and healthy boundaries.
- **Build simple team rituals.** A Monday huddle, celebrating wins or a shared channel for nonwork chat helps people feel part of something.
- **Offer growth and autonomy.** Giving employees more say in how they do their work restores a sense of control and purpose, which counteracts disconnection.
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Pair people up. A buddy system or informal mentorship gives employees someone to turn to. If your team is very small, consider connecting employees with peers through local business groups or industry associations.

Employer Takeaway

Workplace loneliness is a widespread and growing issue, but small businesses are able to address it. Close working relationships, approachable leadership and flexibility let you make changes quickly. With intentional effort and a commitment to human connection, you can build a more resilient, engaged team.

Contact us today for more resources.



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