

Our headquarters, based in Collegeville, Pennsylvania, has fewer than 200 people working in our main business campus. If we are unable to promote internally, we look for the best available candidate. Most people are delighted to work with us. We have a great atmosphere and receive yearly awards for being one of the best family run businesses in the Philadelphia area. Take great care of

your employees and they will take great care of your customers. **Tim Flynn, Allied Wire & Cable.**

Insteel has experienced employees from large companies and small companies who have found our company to be a good fit and contribute successfully. We find that an individual who has a high performance focus and a collaborative, transparent way of working is attracted to Insteel. **Christi Smiley, recruiting & employee development manager, Insteel Industries, Inc.**

Talent search: a timeless challenge

Pati Kelly, an executive recruiter for Egret Consulting Group (pk@egretconsulting.com), focuses on wire and cable. Below she shares her thoughts with *WJI*. Also, see p. 28.



Kelly

WJI: Is there a talent shortage in the wire and cable field? If so, has it gotten worse in recent years?

Kelly: I think that there is a shortage of wire and cable talent entering the field, especially when we talk about engineers. A lot of students go into industrial engineering, but we can't seem to find enough process engineers who are interested in the field, so more companies are trying to grow their own, hiring college interns and then having them come on full time after graduation.

WJI: Is wire and cable an especially tough sale for young talent that has not previously worked in the sector?

Kelly: Wire and cable companies might not think it, but they are competing for talent with companies such as Apple, Microsoft and Amazon. Most young engineers want to work in the sexier industries, like automation and software. Unless they had a college internship in the field, recently graduated engineers are not likely to think about working in the wire and cable industry. Most seem to come through prior ties, such as friends or family who worked in it, and someone were recruited on campus.

WJI: Pay is obviously a major key, but are there other elements that younger candidates want?

Kelly: When it comes to younger candidates flexible work schedules and vacation time matter a lot, but it's more than that. If we can have a company who onboard with a mentoring program, expanded responsibilities and challenges to grow in their career and team building events and high recognition for a job well done, those companies have higher retention of those candidates. It also helps to have the latest in technology and communications tools so that telecommuting is a possibility.

WJI: Can you assess whether a Generation Y (or Z) candidate will want to stick with a company for more than a year? Is "loyalty" a word that no longer applies?

Kelly: I wish there were a magic formula for that, but it seems that there is not much loyalty within the workforce in general. What I do see is that most candidates want to have a more definite career plan, one with a target time-

frame for career advancement, there is not much patience for sitting in one position for five to 10 years. Younger employees want to be challenged and mentored to help them gather the skills to move up on the corporate ladder. They also want to know that their efforts are valued and recognized for their contribution. When we look at Gen Y, they are coming into the work force with huge college debt that the baby boomers or other generations never had, so they are concerned for their financial well being, so if they can make a job change and get a 10% pay raise in the next two years why would they not?

WJI: In terms of filling a position with a veteran, are there more retirements than qualified candidates?

Kelly: The supply/demand ratio is different depending on the position and what segment it is. Finding a process engineer with 10 years of experience is not easy but finding a regional sales manager with that same experience is much easier. I think the real challenge is bringing in entry-level college students in the outside sales role or design engineering role, and then getting them to stay. We need to be able to show younger candidates that there is growth. The problem there is that most of them probably just think wireless, and don't see how that is also part of wire and cable. We need candidates to see and believe that there are exciting end uses for wire and cable, such as data centers, smart grids, utility micro grids, alternative energy, solar, battery storage, IOT, appliance power consumption, not to mention new car design like the Tesla, self driving cars all of these need wires and cables and assemblies to function. This is an exciting time to be part of wire and cable industry. Employers have to find ways to make that story real. Younger candidates are looking for more than what people were looking for 10-15 years ago. They want mentors, flexible work schedules, vacation and good salaries, but they also want a defined career path that will get them where they want to be.