

# Making Recruiting a Priority

## Thoughts from Expo 2022

by Dan Apple



I attended a seminar at IDA's Expo 2022 in Las Vegas that focused on employee recruitment. The speaker asked the audience, "how many of you could double your business (sales) if you had enough qualified employees?" At least half of the hands went up. Then he asked how many attending could "if not double your business, substantially increase it?". Every hand went up. His next question was, "what are you doing about it?".



The speaker, Brandon Vaughn – CEO of Automate-Grow-Sell LLC, then asked how many in the room had a **marketing budget specifically for employee recruitment**. Maybe one or two hands out of the hundred or so attending went up. Brandon pointed out that we allocate funds for marketing our products and services, we allocate funds for capital purchases (like trucks) with ease but when it comes to maintaining a budget for recruiting talent, most service business just don't do it. He then asked, "if doubling your sales could be achieved by adding sufficient staff, why not spend the money?"

As we've advised our clients for years, door dealers should take a position of "always hiring". Even if you do not have an opening, you should always be looking for talent. Especially since turnover is so prevalent in our industry. For years we followed the pattern that so many dealers in our industry use... hiring out of desperation. What happens? We end up with the short term solution of filling a hole rather than finding the right talent to fill the position for the long term. In the early 2000's, we knew this old method wasn't working. So I started **guerilla marketing** for talent. Basically, I took an offensive position by always being on the lookout for potential new employees as I interacted with service oriented people working for other businesses where I was the customer. HVAC techs working on my furnace, auto mechanics servicing my car, bank tellers, servers in restaurants, yard maintenance, retail sales clerks.....any place I was buying goods and services. I was on the lookout for people with good service skills. The interaction was simple. I just handed them my business card and said if they ever were looking for another career, my door business was a great place to work. And it worked! Some of the brightest and best in our company were recruited rather than answering a want ad in the newspaper.



In addition to guerilla marketing, we also reallocated our advertising budget to include advertising for people as well as our products and services. We devoted about 1/3 of our overall advertising budget to attracting new talent. In those days we still did newspaper, but we also used billboards, TV, radio, yard signs, magnetic truck signs and other "in your face" forms of getting the word out. Once websites came on the scene, we devoted a prominent page to "selling jobs" as well as products.

Of course, I knew that not every new hire was going to stick. However, we also boosted our vetting process with better background checks, personality profiles and in some cases mechanical aptitude tests. While this did increase our recruiting costs, it often kept us from hiring the wrong person. No system is perfect but at least we were putting a better, educated emphasis on attracting talent.

