Attract the Best Preschool Educators

The common challenges in the childcare industry are always shortage of qualified preschool educators. We find different ways to attract and retain good staff. It’s money that motivates the teachers, probably yes. Some principals have shared with me that if only they have the autonomy to decide to pay more to the teachers, they will be able to minimize staff turnover in their centre and attract the best preschool teachers to work for them.

It is true that salary is one of the components that can attract good educators, but it may not be the most important. If most of the childcare centres in your area offer the same salary and benefits, we will not attract the best educators by offering more salary to the teachers. Then what does it take to attract these good teachers?

By ‘word of mouth advertising’, a powerful vehicle that drives corporation and businesses to higher level of success when it’s positive and may in contrast, cause the company to fail when it’s negative. This power is within ourselves and the staff that are with us. We know how important it is to have positive support in one’s life, the teachers will be grateful to those who have encouraged and believed in them.

Positive words that passed around by your previous and current employees as well as your previous and current parents/customers are very essential. The most effective recruitment strategy is when your staff or parents spread the positive word around about the centre and the management. This is incredibly powerful; you may be surprised that you will receive many potential applicants asking whether there is any vacancy in your centre for employment. No more expensive advertisement because the positive word is out!

But beware of negative word that can spread around as well. The reality is negative word of mouth spreads faster and further than positive word of mouth. Therefore treasure your staff and parents that you currently have. Not forgetting that your previous staffs have the opportunity to share many details of their experience working with you and the company. If they felt they were treated fairly and the curriculum provided quality care and education for the children, most of them will dwell on those factors in their conversations with others. On the reverse side if they left the company with negative experiences, they will tell many people in the process of negative ‘word of mouth advertising’ that will cause serious damage to the organization.

Conflicts and issues must be addressed immediately by the supervisor to avoid destructive gossip that could be out of control. If these conflicts are not attended to, teachers and staff may find their work unsatisfying and may look for other options elsewhere and hence the turnover of staff will be high at the centre.

On the bright side, if our staff leaves the centre/organization with good feelings, they have the power to positively impact others and even potential parents. Better still if they shine in their next job, their employer may take notice and will be thrilled with how professional this person is. The new employer may think that if the company trains staff so well they will be assured that the children will be well taken care of in the centre. And that positive word of mouth will spread.

This powerful recruiting strategy by ‘word of mouth advertising’ is to generate a positive energy flow throughout your centre where people can't help but spread a positive word or two.

Be an inspiring leader in the industry by:
1. Creating an environment where direct and open communication is the key.
2. Modeling a positive style of leadership daily.
3. Being ready and open to share, open does not mean share all, only share what you want to share.
4. Building strong, positive relationships between staff and parents.
5. Understanding the competition (compensation and benefit) in the industry.
6. Following up with previous staff who you would welcome back, staying in touch with ex-staff and parents. Keep an open door for them to easily come back if they wish.
7. Making your relationships positive and long lasting especially with those who you would welcome back with open arms.
8. Showcasing your brand’s uniqueness and curriculum that makes a difference.
9. Remembering that our staff is our asset and not product.

It is important to recognize that organization and its environment are not static, they are ever evolving, even the best strategies can become obsolete. When the business is in chaos, everyone has a plan to fix it – but it takes an intelligent and thoughtful leader of real understanding to straighten things out. Don’t just do it but fix it!

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Ronald is Director, Marketing & Business Development at Asian International College. Enthusiastic in strategic management and marketing & business development operating at a senior management level with more than 20 years, particularly in the Higher Education Industry for 12 years. Ronald graduated from University of Western Sydney with Master of Business Administration (International Business).

Ronald is very familiar with course operations, experienced in marketing strategies and development of international student recruitment. He has good interpersonal skill, proven to establish positive relationship with potential customers, students and corporate clients. He brings with him a broad experience in marketing management in fashion watch industry. His experience focus on brand building and international strategic marketing to establish global opportunity for the company. Experience in Childcare operations with proven positive track record, with particular interest in close interaction with children, teacher and family.