NextGen Recruiting

10 COMMANDMENTS OF RECRUITING

1 BUILD A RECRUITMENT ENGINE YOU CAN ACTUALLY RUN

Before you create a recruitment plan, know the level of participation you can count on. We're all busy. So when someone offers their time, get a clear understanding of what that means. Once you know who can commit and for how much time, then you can build a realistic calendar that you can sustain, whether it's for a week or a month.

2 GAMIFY IT

We're a competitive bunch. Use that. Recruitment takes time, energy, and participation — so make participation fun. Gamifyyour recruitment efforts. Use small rewards, fun incentives - you'd be surprised at what people will do for a $10 lottery scratch off. I gave out watermelon knives to my team leaders. The recruitment process takes energy and commitment. Add fun.

3 FISH WHERE THE FISH ARE

Recruitment means showing up where the people are. Online, your website and Facebook page are islands. Most people won't see what you post there. Get your social media efforts onto pages where people already spend time - community groups, swap sites, school and church groups, etc.

Physically, it means advertising and staging events where your community eats, shops, works out, gathers, attends events, etc. This is especially critical if your firehouse is not located central to town.

4 RECRUITMENT IS HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT

Lawn signs, banners, flyers, and appeal letters are passive – on their own, they have minimal impact. Recruitment becomes real when you get out into the community, make connections, start conversations, collect contact information, and solicit ambassadors to get the word out on your behalf. And ask for ideas – where you might speak, where to put up communications, etc. If you ask, your community will give you great ideas. 100% guaranteed.

5 CASUAL RECRUITING IS NOT RECRUITING

We understand discipline. Training has discipline. Operations have discipline. Safety has discipline. Recruitment requires the same discipline. It's a commitment that demands a process, a calendar, assignments, follow-up, measurement, and accountability. But for many companies, it's where we put our least efforts. Recruitment is about your future health as a company. Treat it like it matters.

6 RECRUITMENT IS NOT A MOMENT. IT'S MOMENTUM

Recruitment is an uphill process. Momentum is everything. A person may see a poster, scan a QR code, fill out a form, or mention to a member "I've been thinking about this." Every one of these entry points can either usher them forward or become a dead end. It's our responsibility to remove the friction and to keep things moving.

Respond quickly. Keep communications warm. Make the next step clear. An interested person should never be left wondering, "Now what?" Set time expectations for processes like background checks. When people think nothing is happening, they can easily shift their valuable time and interest somewhere else.

7 ACT 'AS IF' YOU ARE THE FIREHOUSE YOU WANT TO BE

Ideally you want to recruit into an organization that's got its act together, but there's not a single firehouse that has time to evolve culture before it recruits. So how do you recruit into a culture in transition – a firehouse that's going through a leadership change, or where morale is not what it could be? The answer: "Act As If". Act as if your firehouse is the place you want it to be.Remind everyone to turn outward, to open their arms, to bring people inside the circle. Show potential members the best of who you are. Put folks on the front lines who make people feel welcome and can be generous with their time. Culture takes time to change, but hospitality can begin immediately

8 BE INTERESTED IN THE PEOPLE INTERESTED IN YOU.

Recruitment is not just about telling our story. It's about learning theirs. When someone shows us interest, we should be twice as interested in them. What brought them here? What do they do? What do they care about? What skills, hobbies, experiences, concerns, and expectations do they have?

Ask questions and people will know you're interested in them as humans. The other huge benefit is that you'll discover whatother skills and experience they can bring to your firehouse.

9 ALWAYS BE RECRUITING

Recruitment is a 365-day effort. Every community interaction should be seen as an opportunity to open a door and a chance to get the word out. If you're making hamburgers and hot dogs at a holiday event, a car show, or a community day, get out from behind the grill. Know who's running point. Everyone in the organization should know your recruitment message and your first lines - and it should be a lot more engaging than we need new members.

10 TRIAL AND ERROR IS THE BEST WAY TO BUILD A LONG-RANGE PROGRAM

"If at first you don't succeed..." goes the adage. With recruiting, the same holds true. Experiment, but keep your efforts as focused and compact as possible. Every community is unique and every fire house's relationship with its community is different. Testing new ideas is the only way to learn what efforts and which locations get the best response. Not every outreach is going to yield great results, but you will find the ones that do.

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nextgenfirerecruiting.com

hello@nextgenfirerecruiting.com

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