

Santa Barbara County Department of Human Resources

An organization's most valuable resource is its human capital – the knowledge, skills, and experience of its people. The increasing void in public sector knowledge, along with government seeking to identify creative measures to effectively manage its workforce, has increased the need for government managers to develop creative solutions to complex workforce management challenges and to identify additional tools to enhance the recruitment, selection, and evaluation of the new government workforce.

Effective employee recruitment is the start to addressing workforce management challenges and promoting a high functioning human resource management (Roberts, p. 106). Although it is only the start to a long process, there are many challenges that governments face in this component, and specific to this analysis competitiveness challenges the efforts of creating a high functioning human resource management.

Intro to Santa Barbara County

There are 4,600 employees in the County of Santa Barbara that contribute to the quality of life enjoyed by the county's 405,000 residents by providing a wide range of public services (<http://www.sbcountyhr.org/>). The county's human resource department provides services for all twenty-four county departments and inevitably there are various challenges that the county is confronted with. Not only are there department specific human resource challenges but also there are county specific challenges that the overall county is faced with.

Human Resource Management Challenges

Three significant issues continuously challenge human Resource Management in the County of Santa Barbara, like most other local governments. The first issue is keeping up to date on the laws regarding human resources. The laws are changing all the time and not only is it challenging to maintain up to date on the laws but sometimes they compete against each other and human resource workers must make sure that the county is abiding by all the laws. The second issue is supporting human resource management as a modern resource function, meaning that the county is trying to tailor what the human resource department does to what the organization is trying to accomplish. Because they are constantly brainstorming ideas to modernize or streamline, the challenge they face is dealing with the human element. The county and many other organizations also face a lower scale, unique crisis that does not carry traditional cost as other challenges do, but it does directly impact the demand for service. This is issue is recruiting and retaining qualified employees (Langan, 2000).

There are various case analysis written regarding the first three challenges addressed within human resource management. This case analysis will focus specifically on the human capitol challenges that Santa Barbara County is currently facing. For this case analysis an interview with Jeri Muth, the assistant human resource director for the Santa Barbara County Department of Human Capitol Solutions, which oversees classification, employee relations, employee benefits, equal opportunity office, affirmative action commission, commission for women and the civil service commission, was conducted.

County specific challenge

Employees are the key component to organizational issues; therefore creativity and increased investment with employees will only strengthen and effectively promote organizational success (Hayes page 110). Santa Barbara County is currently facing human capital challenges. There is a great need to be competitive in the market place while at the same time considering a balance of the overall financial picture, tax payers perspectives of what they want from the county, and the counties own interests.

Jeri Muth reported that in addressing the competitiveness of the county, they have taken various creative approaches. Recently the board has approved for the county to offer new hire incentives such as signing bonuses and paying for further education and student loans. Currently these new hire incentives are mainly offered to candidates in hard to fill positions such as nurses, psychiatrists, civil engineers, planners and planning directors.

Recommendation

In considering the location of the county there are many incentives already present to live and work in Santa Barbara County. Immediately upon opening the Santa Barbara County Human Resources department web page (<http://www.sbcountyhr.org/index.html>), is a beautiful scenic view of Santa Barbara and right underneath, the first paragraph of the opening page reads, “With a natural setting that includes scenic California coastline, agricultural valleys, and coastal mountains, Santa Barbara County is one of the most desirable places in the world to live and work (Santa Barbara County Human Resources web page).” It is obvious that another tactic used by the county to attract potential candidates is its location. Santa Barbara is one of

California's most famous tourist attractions and it only makes sense to use the attraction and appeal to the county's advantage.

In considering using location as a recruitment tactic, not only can this be marketed to locals but also the marketing can be expanded and made stronger. One consideration is marketing outside the state and even outside the country. With the advantages of modern technology, research is as simple as logging on to the Internet and downloading the desired information. Cost of living for various areas of the world can be researched and areas with comparable cost of living to Santa Barbara County can be considered as ideal to market to. Because typically local government like their employees to reside within the jurisdiction (Daley, 2002), it is important when marketing to market not only the job but also the benefits of relocating to the area.

Relocating to a different city, much less a different state or country is not an easy decision and people take into consideration many aspects such as their ability to adapt financially, to an area. In this case Santa Barbara County has done all the work and have demonstrated that a person coming from one place to Santa Barbara County will not be at a different status level financially as they were before but they will be able to maintain their comfortable living they were used to. Therefore not only does one have to make the huge move and not maintain their financial status but also they gain the benefits of living in Santa Barbara County.

This process is could not only be effective but it could also be efficient as there is not an increased cost to do online research and the only expense to the county would be the man hours spent on the research. Before any job is marketed outside its jurisdiction it

is important to make sure the mission statement encompasses diversity as the County of Santa Barbara's County statement does.

Conclusion

A public organization succeeds because of its people – because of their commitment, enthusiasm, intelligence and drive. Therefore it is crucial to find and choose the best employees possible. To act otherwise is to invite failure. Human resources is concerned not only with finding good leaders but also forming a group of people with different skills who work congenially together for a common good. Unfortunately, the ability to attract desirable candidates has been complicated by economic, social and organizational pressures (Lavigna & Hays, 2004). The success of any government to respond effectively to these challenges is dictated largely by its ability to recruit and retain a talented workforce.

In attempting to recruit these top performers, employers have to recognize what applicants are looking for in terms of job opportunities from the work itself to the salary and benefits offered and down to the work environment. Although that work environment of Santa Barbara County is an excellent benefit in and of itself, that alone will not attract ideal candidates rather it is an added extra incentive. It is still important how the employer is perceived in terms the employment opportunities that will directly impact on the success of its recruitment efforts (Langan, 2000).

The future of human resource management lies in the hands of the current management. They are the ones that will bring in the organizations next generation of leaders. There is potential for increased leadership skills and overall increased knowledge of human resource management as the issue of recruitment and competition is

currently being investigated and organizations are diligently working to develop and create effective and efficient methods to hire highly desirable candidate to increase the success of the organizations human resource management. This not only benefits the recruitment process of human resource management, but it will spill over into all other aspects of human resource management as candidates are more educated, diverse and experienced.

Daley, D. M. (2002). *Strategic Human Resource Management: People and Performance Management in the Public Sector*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Langan, S. (2000). Finding the needle in the haystack: The challenge of recruiting and Retaining sharp employees. [Electronic Version] *Public Personnel Management*, 29(4), 461-477.

Lavigna, R. J., Hays, S. W. (2004) Recruitment and Selection of Public Workers: An International Compendium of Modern Trends and Practices. [Electronic Version]. *Public Personnel Management*, 33(3), 237- 253.

Roberts, G. E. Issues, Challenges and Changes in Recruitment and Selection. In Hayes, S. W., & Kearney, R. C. (Ed.), *Public Personnel Administration: Problems and Prospects* (106-125). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Santa Barbara County Human Resources web site,
<http://www.sbcountyhr.org/index.html>