

Trained employees serve businesses better

"It's better to train employees and have them leave than to not train employees and have them stay."

That statement stuck with me. Employers should take the time to carefully screen their employees in the selection process and then train them on job expectations, carefully monitoring their performance. If they don't make this critical investment, no one should be surprised if these employees drive customers away with bad service.

One easy way to get a good prospective employee trained and committed for the long-term is to set up a training program called Registered Apprenticeship. This is a long-term arrangement in which the employee learns the job techniques with classroom or related instruction while working and learning on the job.

There are nearly 1,000 "apprenticeable" occupations. And the price is right - it's free to get an apprenticeship established for your employee(s) or a group of



Susan Nickerson

• Smarter Workplace

employees. This is a win-win situation, because the employer gets the benefit of having a worker who is helping staff the business while learning the ropes. It's true on-the-job learning.

The process is simple, and the requirements are few. The employer determines that the "earn-while-you-learn" scenario is the best fit for training his employees. He finds and selects classroom or other instructional materials that teach necessary skills for the job. 144 hours per year of training is necessary.

Kansas Department of Commerce Registered Apprenticeship staff can help employers find and select training materials and methods that work for the business or industry. It is the choice of the employer, who knows best which

training will lead to the skills necessary for excellence in his business. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act pays for the cost of Related Technical Instruction, if the apprentice qualifies, for businesses that focus on Department of Commerce critical industries.

A seasoned mentor from the business is matched with the apprentice for on-the-job training, coaching and encouraging. This key contact person serves as a great retention strategy for an employer. As the training components are mastered, the apprentice's salary gradually increases, which is another commitment by the employer to invest in the knowledge and skill development of the employee.

The employee/apprentice in turn commits to the multi-year program, accepts the commitment for wage increases as skills are enhanced and is more likely to stay and see the program through to the end and beyond. Most Registered Apprenticeship programs are three

to four years.

When most people think of Registered Apprenticeship, they think of the trades: plumbing, electrical, carpentry. These are popular apprenticeable occupations. Also, most employees equate Registered Apprenticeships with union work. This is not the case with Registered Apprenticeship, which is not formally affiliated with any union. A list of apprenticeable occupations can be found at www.KansasApprenticeship.org.

A popular Registered Apprenticeship for long-term care settings is the Health Support Specialist, a "universal worker" who is cross-trained over time on the skills needed in the workplace, including certified nurse aide, certified medical aide, dining services, rehabilitative aide and environmental services, with additional classes in medical terminology, culture change and dementia care.

Another popular Registered Apprenticeship is Early Childhood Associate, targeting those working in the child care and early edu-

cation industry. Apprentices will develop skills and knowledge in areas such as child growth and development, learning environment, families and communities, health/safety and nutrition and program planning and development.

Providing employees with a training path to upgrade their skills has proven to be a motivator, a retention technique and a very smart manpower business decision. Check out the Registered Apprenticeship options at www.KansasApprenticeship.org.

Susan Nickerson, west regional director for the Kansas Department of Commerce, Workforce Development Division, has experience in education, nonprofits, manufacturing, retail and corporate work.

On the Beat

THOMAS COUNTY SHERIFF Monday

1:15 p.m. - Two cows out 1/2 mile south of the nine-mile corner. Contacted the owner.

2:40 p.m. - Someone loading cattle in 2300 block of N. K-25. No one there. Reporting party was contacted.

5:04 p.m. - Civil stand-by in Brewster.

Tuesday

11:12 a.m. - Served arrest warrant on Joseph Harper.

6:29 p.m. - Report that vehicle spun out on I-70 at mile 37. Not found.



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Law cracking down on drinking and driving

The Kansas Highway Patrol and other law enforcement agencies will participate in the Kansas Department of Transportation's Special Traffic Enforcement Program from Thursday through Labor Day, Sept. 7. Troopers will be enforcing Kansas' impaired driving and other traffic laws.

"In Kansas, too many people are injured and killed every year on our roads as a result of impaired driving collisions. The costs and consequences associated with these crashes can be overwhelming. Our agency and other agencies throughout the state have dedicated ourselves to fighting these incidents and ... reducing impaired driving..." said Colonel

Terry Maple, Superintendent of the Kansas Highway Patrol.

In 2008, there were 3,366 alcohol-related crashes in Kansas, resulting in 1,999 injuries and 131 deaths. These preventable crashes cost almost \$628 million in medical charges, property damage, lost earnings, and other expenses.

The Kansas Highway Patrol is among the law enforcement agencies across the state who will participate in the 'Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.' campaign. Troopers across the state will be participating in saturation patrols and check lanes. The Patrol's Breath Alcohol Unit will be assisting road troopers and other agencies with the check

lanes to remove impaired drivers from Kansas roads.

It is illegal in Kansas to drive or attempt to operate a motor vehicle with a blood or breath alcohol concentration of .08 or higher. Penalties include loss of driving

privileges, fines, court costs, and possible jail time. The more severe consequences of drinking and driving include injuring or killing yourself or the occupants of a vehicle.

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