

Advantage

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July–August | 2022



Remote hiring tips

Be a great boss: 8 ways to manage effectively

5 websites for affordable business training

How to elevate your sales and marketing plan during slow season

A-maize-ing summer recipes | When life hands you lemons

School's out but learning never stops

Sing it with us: "School's...out...for summer!"

This may take you back to riding a yellow school bus home on the last day of school, chanting, "Jail break!" as you pulled out of the school parking lot.

We've learned a lot since those school days. And the most important thing? Learning never stops. With an abundance of learning opportunities through sites like YouTube or home improvement shows on our favorite networks, the opportunities for learning new skills or earning certifications are endless.

There's always room for improving ourselves personally and professionally, which is why we've curated the best ideas on improving your business with timely tips for hiring remote workers, becoming a better boss and expanding your knowledge with affordable online classes. And don't miss our tips for taking advantage of the summer months to elevate your sales and marketing plan.

When the days are long, and life hands you lemons, we have the inspirational quotes to restore your equilibrium (and maybe make some lemonade instead). For warm summer nights and gatherings with family and friends, we have the most a-maize-ing recipes for all you corn-ivores.

Here's to a fun (and educational) summer,

Your trusted advisors

The most important thing? Learning never stops.

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Remote hiring tips



While some companies have made the call for their workers to return to the office, many businesses are opting for a fully remote or hybrid environment to allow for a better work-life balance. That means finding the best team members is no longer just about hiring the right employee with the best skills and qualifications; it's about hiring someone who can also excel in a remote environment.

But what does that look like? Maybe it's someone who's a self-starter, can manage multiple deadlines, isn't afraid to ask for help and doesn't need to be micromanaged. That "someone" could differ based on your type of business, so it's important to know the type of person who will succeed in your remote environment.

Keeping your someone in mind, it's also important to offer a work environment where people *want* to work. With the amount of competition available for remote positions, you need to stand out from the crowd. Start with these 11 tips to help you hire the right remote workers for your business.

Get organized and create a hiring process

Before you post a new job and start scheduling interviews, stop and get organized. The competition for remote workers is fierce, and you need to put your best foot forward. Think through how the hiring process will work, including timelines for scheduling interviews, the next steps in the

interview process and how to onboard new employees. Potential candidates should see how efficient the process is, so expectations are set from the start.

Create intentional job descriptions

Don't repurpose the same job ad for each open position. Outline the specific and necessary qualifications and expectations for each position. Otherwise, you can miss out on qualified candidates because you're asking for every possible skill under the sun. Be intentional with each ad and only list the skills necessary to do the job well. Also, don't forget to advertise that it's a remote position.

Look for remote work history

While it shouldn't be a requirement, take special note of candidates who have worked remotely in the past. Chances are, someone who has previous remote work experience is likely to be more comfortable in that environment.

Use an online scheduling tool

To make scheduling interviews simple and easy, use an application like Calendly to cut down on the number of emails exchanged to nail down a mutually available time. This allows the interviewee to choose a convenient time based on your schedule.

Be transparent about the hiring process

Inform interviewees about the hiring timeline and expectations. Let potential candidates know how the process works, if they're chosen to move on to the next round (or how many rounds they can expect), what that will look like and how many days until they'll hear from you. If you leave them in the dark, chances are another company will snatch them up, leaving you with the loss of a great candidate.

Invite them to a conversation, not an interview

The interview process can be anxiety-inducing for both sides. Let potential candidates know you're just there to have a chat, and allow the conversation and questions to flow naturally. It will help you gauge whether they're a good culture fit (more about that later).

Include immediate team members in the process

To get a good feel for a potential candidate, include the team members they'll work most closely with to see how they interact. If you're a manager, take yourself out of a team interview so everyone can speak candidly. Trust the feedback your team provides you with after the interview.

Ask questions geared around culture

Any new teammate needs to be a good culture fit. Assess your current company's culture, mission

and goals, and tailor questions around them. Does the potential candidate share the same values and goals? Are they standoffish or do they look bored? Is there a good camaraderie during the conversation?

Assess final-round candidates with a trial project

Some candidates may seem great on paper and in person, but the real test is once they're hired. To prevent a subpar hire, assign a trial project. Not only will you get to see the quality of their work, but you can also observe how they perform under tighter deadlines.

Be mindful of everyone's time

Because the demand for quality employees is at an all-time high, make the hiring process as streamlined and succinct as possible. One way to do this: Include a competitive salary range in job ads. There's nothing worse than getting through the interview process only to find out that the salary is too low for a candidate.

Create an onboarding process

Once a potential candidate is hired, ensure they're onboarded to the team quickly and efficiently. Create a streamlined onboarding process so that all new employees are onboarded the same way every time.

The work landscape is changing, and more workers are looking for the flexibility of a remote position. While your business may not be able to support that at this time, it's important to consider for the future when making new hiring decisions. Use these tips to help you get started with hiring your remote workforce. ■



Be a **great boss**

8 ways to manage effectively

If your business experienced a downfall from the Great Resignation, you're not alone. As a manager, you may be asking yourself, "Is it me? Am I the reason?"

People typically leave for more than one reason—better pay, workload, advancement opportunities, culture or flexibility that allows for an improved work-life balance, just to name a few. Whether being a boss was in your career plan, or you've found yourself managing a team

through unexpected circumstances, here are eight tips to help you become a great boss and manage your team more effectively.

1 Get to know your team

Beyond just the high-level facts of your team, get to know their strengths and weaknesses to make the best use of their talents. Does someone work better with strict due dates? Place employees where you know they'll succeed and adjust when needed.

2 Think like an employee

Venture back to before you were a boss. What did you like most and least about the managers you worked for? What are things you wish managers had done to encourage and lead you? Make it a point to support employees the way you'd like to be supported, and focus on helping them succeed.

3 Check in consistently

Schedule one-on-one meetings regularly with your team to keep communication open. This can be a quick 15-minute video chat to see how things are going, what they need help with, or if they have concerns or questions. Providing this uninterrupted time (turn off all distractions!) can help them feel heard and valued...and improve your ongoing relationship.

4 Celebrate the good stuff

Some bosses tend to focus on mistakes people make and criticize wrongdoings more than they celebrate the important things an employee brings to the table. Acknowledge a job well done in a team meeting or by sending a quick message or email in the moment. While employees will make mistakes (we're all human), encouraging accomplishments and hard work is a great motivator.

5 Encourage candor

When your team faces an issue, ask them for their opinions and listen to what they have to say. Not only will that make them feel valued, but they'll also work together to solve the problem. Make sure you listen to each idea before presenting your own. Who knows—your team's ideas may be better than your own.

6 Trust your employees

Your team was hired for a reason—let them show you they're capable of completing tasks. Instead of micro-managing, empower your team by trusting them to take on new challenges and complete their work on time. They'll gain a sense of value that makes them even more productive and excited to take on new tasks.

7 Set goals and provide feedback

Work with your employees to set reasonable and measurable work and career goals so expectations are clear. Provide continuous feedback to recognize a job well done and to communicate openly when improvements can be made. When you're both on the same page, employees know exactly what they're supposed to do and how their performance is measured. It helps encourage them to do their best.

8 Share credit

Don't be the boss who takes all the credit for a good idea instead of supporting and appreciating your employees' input. Acknowledge your team's role in successful moments. Your team will feel appreciated and valued, and you'll also be seen as a team player who uplifts and encourages their staff.

Whether you're just starting out in your role as a boss or you're a veteran at the job, remember that you're human, too. You'll make mistakes just like your employees. Use the above tips to re-evaluate your management style, keep the lines of communication open with your team and strive to be a better boss every day. ■



5 websites for affordable business training

Small businesses constantly face changing trends and modern data collection techniques. And companies that fail to take advantage of growing technologies are often left behind—replaced by newcomers willing to embrace the role of a marketplace leader.

If you want to maintain a lasting presence in the business world, you'll have to continue your education well beyond the classroom. The problem is busy professionals rarely have time to sign up for university-based classes—not to mention that tuition can be prohibitively expensive.

Thankfully, there are several online courses available that are tailored for various industries and professions...and that won't break the bank. If you're looking to brush up your knowledge on marketing and sales, statistical modeling, finance laws or just about anything else, investing in a course or two makes sense.

Top online course platforms

Nowadays, finding a low-cost educational solution is a mouse click away. In fact, we have identified some of the most well-known training platforms on the internet today.

■ Coursera

Coursera promises access to the world's top professors with in-depth training that provides career advancement, certifications or even degrees. They also grant content users access to educators from a variety of fields. Coursera instruction includes programming, computer tech, arts and humanities, business, and social science. Courses are cost-effective, starting at just \$29.99 each. A few instructors may even offer a free class or two.

■ Udemy

Udemy opens the door to quality education in the fields of business, health and beauty, photography, computer sciences, marketing, language, lifestyle, and music. Like Coursera, skilled educators may present detailed courses for free or discounted rates. Udemy has several more disciplines to choose from than Coursera, with classes starting at just \$10.

■ LinkedIn Learning

With LinkedIn Learning, you get access to 16,000

classes and the ability to earn sought-after certifications. Via LinkedIn's modules, you can explore popular software like QuickBooks®, as well as Adobe® products and Google apps. Most LinkedIn courses are mobile-friendly, allowing you to learn on the go. The first month is free, and you can cancel at any time.

■ Alison

The Alison search app is a handy-dandy tool that helps you find more than 4,000 free online courses. Word to the wise here: The site has ad popups, and you'll need to sign up to take full advantage of Alison's resources. Still, it may be worth a few minor inconveniences to locate extensive training programs to help you up your game. And did we mention that most are free?

■ Udacity

Transform and modernize your skillset by looking into Udacity. The site boasts impressive stats, including the fact that 70% of graduates earn promotions or get better jobs. The ROI for companies is reported as 223% after three months. Not too shabby! Udacity's rates are a bit higher than the other courses mentioned here, but the associated costs are still competitively low.

How to choose

When seeking out a particular kind of training available online, be sure to evaluate what types of courses you'll need and why. For instance, if you're fresh out of college and building your business resume, you may want to take courses that provide certifications, which will impress potential employers and may help get your foot in the door.

On the other hand, a seasoned CPA with a small to mid-sized practice might register for intermittent to advanced courses that add to an already strong wealth of knowledge.

The sky is the limit when it comes to furthering your business knowledge via online education; the route you choose is up to you. ■



How to elevate your sales and marketing plan during slow season

Every industry and profession has a different feel and expectation for slow season. For small business owners, it's the perfect time of year to implement and try out new business-related software, especially cloud-based solutions. Tightening the ship in this regard will help streamline your marketing approach, which will increase your sales reach.

Ready, steady, go!

You must strike not only when the iron is hot, but at the precise moment when your plan will make the most sense. Researching cloud-based applications for your business is great any time of year, but the year-end switch is recommended for several reasons.

The ole switcheroo

Making substantial changes in the middle of a holiday surge or during a busy streak is ill-advised. You want to consider trying a new application or technology when you have time for trial and error.

Study and research

As you learn the software, you'll be able to investigate the latest improvements. Usually, these modifications are based on consumer demand, so you'll be able to give them what they want when things get busy again.

Better customer service

Any improvement in your specialized field aids your client base. Take this time to strategize on how to better accommodate your customers' needs.

Training your team

Invest in courses not only on your cloud software but on any upcoming industry trends. This will help your staff not only appear knowledgeable, but they'll be able to better serve the growing needs of an ever-demanding, savvy consumer.

Constant updates

With cloud-based trade software, you'll consistently receive real-time updates, which increases your ability to remain knowledgeable.

Interdepartmental communication

The marketing and sales team can really come together to devise a focused and revenue-driven plan that meets everyone's needs.

Further hone sales for end of year

Despite the market slump in some industries, summertime is the perfect season to gear up and prepare yourself for the prime season rush. Meet up with the team and see what kind of marketing plan you can dream up to let your customers know you're ready and able to address their concerns.

Prepping during summer downtime for the end-of-year busy season has a host of benefits outside of mere market strategizing.

For instance:

- You'll be able to occasionally reach out to clients with targeted advertising. Staying connected during the summer months assures them you're still working hard on their behalf. Just be careful here; you don't want to inundate your client base with emails and postcards. Slow and steady wins this race.
- Your sales and marketing team will be super excited. Their excitement will fuel the anticipation of your employees, who will feel emboldened and ready to rise to the challenge.
- You'll be well-versed in the new work pipeline, which will reduce the hiccups of learning while engaging clients and customers. This, of course, renews or establishes consumer confidence, as they'll be able to assess your expertise.
- You can slash a few prices to reach a broader audience. Everybody loves a deal, and people curious about your products or services may give them a go if the price is right.

By the time the next busy season arrives, you and your staff will be poised and ready to take on the world.

Take advantage of the silence

It's been said that silence is golden—when it comes to the summertime slump, it can become platinum. But take heart! Slow time can be the perfect time to learn new things, try new software and prepare a winning marketing strategy for the coming year.

In other words, summer downtime is an industry-saving blessing in disguise. ■



A-maize-ing summer recipes

Whether you grow it on your own, buy it from the local grocery store or farmer's market, or you have friends or family who share the fruits of their labor with you, this is the season of corn. Since fresh corn is only in season from June through September, we hope you're all ears (aw, shucks, see what we did there?) for these fun summer recipes, including fresh corn on (and off) the cob.

Traditionally boiled sweet corn

Ingredients

- Corn on the cob
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- Butter

Fill a large skillet with enough water to cover the corn by at least an inch, add sugar and heat to boiling. While the water is heating up, shuck the corn and remove all strings. Gently place the corn in the boiling water, cover and cook for 3 minutes, until the corn is bright yellow and tender. Carefully remove, drain, serve with butter and enjoy!

Husky grilled corn

Ingredients

- Corn on the cob (still in the husk)
- Butter
- Salt and pepper

Preheat your grill to medium heat (around 350 degrees). While the grill is heating up, pull back (but don't remove) the husk of the corn and place the corn in water for about 10 minutes. Remove the corn from the water and shake off the excess water. Replace the husks and place the corn directly on the grill for about 15 to 20 minutes, rotating every 5 minutes for even cooking. Carefully remove from the grill, pull back the husks, slather with butter and serve.

Corn ice cream

Ingredients

- 2 cups raw corn kernels
- 2 cups half-and-half
- 1 cup sweetened condensed milk
- Salt, to taste

Bring the raw corn kernels and half-and-half to a simmer; season with salt and cook for 5 minutes. Cool slightly. Puree with the sweetened condensed milk and allow to chill. Churn in an ice cream maker and freeze until firm.

Summer corn-ival salad

Salad ingredients

- 6-8 ears corn
- 1/4 cup diced red onion
- 1/8 cup fresh basil, chopped

Dressing ingredients

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 tablespoons vinegar (apple cider is best)
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Add shucked corn ears to boiling water and cook for 3 to 4 minutes. Drain water and allow corn to cool. While cooling, whisk the dressing ingredients together and set aside. Cut the corn off the cob and add to a bowl. Add remaining salad ingredients and toss with the salad dressing to combine. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Cowboy caviar

Ingredients

- 2 cups corn, cooked, cooled and cut off the cob
- 2 15-ounce cans black-eyed peas, drained
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, drained
- 1 cup red onion, minced
- 2 bell peppers, diced
- 1 jalapeno, seeded and minced
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 cup minced cilantro
- 3 scallions, sliced thin
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 cup Italian salad dressing

Add all ingredients to a large bowl and toss to combine. Cover and refrigerate for at least one hour (up to 24 hours) before serving with tortilla chips, on hamburgers or hot dogs, or as a side dish on its own. ■



When it rains, it pours—and if lately, you've been caught in a flood-induced deluge, it's time to find that light at the end of the tunnel. Don't succumb to crying in the rain after life throws you a proverbial curveball! Put on a catcher's mitt and keep these affirmations in mind:

This too shall pass

One of the things you learn over time is that no tough situation lasts forever. Depending on the circumstances, you may even look back on what happened with fondness or appreciation. The next time something unexpected occurs, try to find the lesson or humor in it when applicable. The incident could make for an amusing anecdote in the future.

Stop and smell the roses

Nothing brings you out of the doldrums like appreciating the good in life. Indulge in your favorite dessert. Binge-watch a new comedy show. Call a positive-minded friend or family member. Better yet, get together with the one person you know will let you complain or vent to your heart's content. These are the beautiful and sweet-smelling roses that help you keep your sanity when life is especially sour.

Do what you love

This truism applies to a variety of life events—avoiding depression is among them. It may be a little hard to get moving, but once you are in the thick of doing something you enjoy, your bad mood will shift.

When nothing goes right, go left

Sometimes, a change of scenery or a detour is in order. When all else fails, veer away from whatever is challenging you if you can. Removing yourself from the equation, even if only for a short period of time, may be all you need to restore your equilibrium and turn those sour lemons into refreshing lemonade.

Time heals all wounds

When all else fails, remind yourself that whatever has occurred will soon be in your rearview mirror. What is painful now will only be a scar tomorrow. In the interim, ward off depression by staying busy. Volunteering for a local charity, starting a journal, getting out in nature or having a much-needed friends outing are just a few activities that might do the trick.

Music soothes the savage beast

They say music is the soundtrack of our lives, and *they* are right! Everyone has a go-to tune that lifts their spirits or puts them in the mood to dance around like no one is watching! When life roars like a savage beast, roar back with a soul-soothing melody. (We do realize there are other versions of this quote, but we are going with the current more popular version.)

Above all, keep moving

With life, there's no guarantee of unending happiness...and really, who would want that?

Boring!

Things will go wrong. But when they do, remember to look on the bright side. Remind yourself of the times when your fortunes changed for the better—nothing lasts forever, good or bad. Those rains often bring the most beautiful flowers. If you keep moving, you may find happier days are just around the corner! ■



LEIF E. PETERSON, CPA

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When it comes to your financial strategies and well-being, you can count on us to help your business reach new heights. From your monthly financial management, to your tax strategies and planning, we have the knowledge and commitment to keep you growing safe and sound.

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