



IAAPA

FUNWORLD

partnershipPLUS

Join Our Team

Recruiting and Hiring in the Attractions Industry

As an amusement or attractions venue, your public face is actually 100 faces, or 1,000 faces, or even multithousands of faces. It is, in fact, any employee who comes in contact with your guests.

A critical component for the success of your business, then, comes all the way back to the very beginning—recruiting and hiring the right people for the right jobs.

Our industry may be one of the most publicly demanding, but it can also be one of the most personally rewarding. It takes special people to thrive in this type of environment, so the overarching hiring principle that many attractions seem to follow is that personality and passion are inherent, while technical skills are teachable, so put your emphasis on discovering those with the former.

"We recruit based on personality rather than qualifications alone, as we are very keen on ensuring that we take on people who are a good cultural fit for the business," says Phil Sterne of England's **Alton Towers Resort**.

With this fundamental guideline in mind, here are a number of tips and resources to help you be most effective in finding and recruiting such employees.

TIPS

▶ **Recruitment:** There are many tried-and-true sources for staff—from print, broadcast, and online ads, to networking with local high schools, colleges, and government agencies, to off-site and on-site job fairs. Sometimes, simple is best. As Talley Green of **Lake Winnepesaukee Amusement Park** in Chattanooga, Tennessee, notes: "Our most effective recruiting tool is posting a 'Now Hiring' sign at the entrance to the park."

▶ **Recruitment:** A particularly valuable method is word-of-mouth referrals from current employees of their friends or family. "One of the best ways to find a good employee is another good employee," says industry consultant Scott Brown of Ohio-based **Foundations of Service**.

▶ **Recruitment:** Online social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs have become increasingly useful recruiting tools as well. There may be no more natural pool of potential staff than those who already avidly follow your posts and tweets. These followers then spread the news further via the digital word-of-mouth capabilities inherent in these technologies.

▶ **Recruitment:** Some perhaps not so obvious sources: school teachers and administrators; stay-at-home moms (for shoulder seasons); outgoing and attentive retail or wait staff you meet (print relevant HR details on the back of your business card); and informational interviews with 13- to 15-year-olds (depending on your facility's minimum employee age) in order to build up leads for the future.

▶ **Recruitment:** Additional prospective staff segments include seniors, internationals, and interns. Workers 50 and older tend to provide increased customer service, lead to less turnover, and serve as and a good example for their younger colleagues. Nympha Maduli of **Enchanted Kingdom** in Manila, the Philippines, has seen these and other benefits in the park's Oldies-But-Goodies program.

▶ **Recruitment:** For U.S.-based facilities especially, bringing in international employees via a accredited sponsor organization can be an attractive option. Operators need to accurately assess their staffing needs and hosting capabilities, and then enter into a supportive and enriching partnership with their new team members. In return, they typically hire workers who are doubly motivated, provide full season coverage, add some global flair to the property, and can become an annual labor supply.

▶ **Recruitment:** Another source requiring some advance planning, but one that may provide longer-term employees, is internships. **Tusenfyrd** in Vinterbro, Norway, conducts a "student work experience program," and the park's Lene Lothe describes it as a "win-win-win" situation: "The schools are guaranteed a good experience for their students, the students are given a taste of working in the park through real responsibilities, and Tusenfyrd is able to open up more of the park to guests during its shoulder seasons. Plus, it helps us identify people who might make good part- and full-time staff in the future."

▶ **Screening:** Initial screening of applicants can certainly make your hiring more efficient and effective. This may be as simple as a positive yet candid company statement at the top of the application that helps potential job-seekers weed themselves out. "The statement might say 'This is a great place to work. We're glad you're considering working here, but you're probably going to have to work some weekends, and drug testing might be part of the job.'

International Association of
Amusement Parks and Attractions

HEADQUARTERS

1448 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA

Telephone: +1 703/836-4800
Fax: +1 703/836-1192

EUROPE

Square de Meeus 38/40
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

Telephone: +45 24 49 14 05
Fax: +32 2 401 68 68

LATIN AMERICA

Ave. Presidente Masaryk #111
Piso 1
Col. Chapultepec Morales
México, D.F. 11560

Phone: +52 55/33005915
Fax: +52 55/33005999

www.IAAPA.org

Even if you don't do the latter, just stating the possibility serves the same purpose," says Brown of Foundations of Service.

- ▶ **Screening:** Another way to save time with an initial assessment is to ask some general questions upon receipt of an application regarding availability, work history, and why they want the job, notes Mat Senger-Hansen of **Family Fun Center & Bullwinkle's Restaurant** in Wilsonville, Oregon, as well as to visually size up candidates if they drop it off in person. Even such basic observations and comments can provide valuable insights on whether to further consider an applicant.
- ▶ **Screening:** Attractions may also choose to utilize one of several online background screening software programs now available, which can provide faster and more affordable background checks by applying new data management technologies to existing public records.
- ▶ **Interviews:** Interviews are obviously crucial in finding just the right people for your facility. A fundamental first step is to fully review the necessary qualifications and qualities for each position and then take the time to design questions that will truly elicit this information. Interview sessions are of no help if they don't produce the decision-making info you need.
- ▶ **Interviews:** Interview your interviewers—make sure they understand the how and why of getting the most from an applicant, and then make sure that they let them talk. "An interviewer who doesn't know the right questions to ask and who does all the talking isn't going to be very effective," states Shawn DeRosa of **DeRosa Aquatic Consulting** in State College, Pennsylvania.
- ▶ **Interviews:** Consider using group and behavioral-based interviews where appropriate. "One of the most helpful methods we've found is group interviews, because you can uncover the creative thinkers who can handle exploratory questions in a group dynamic and yet still shine," observes industry consultant Alan Ramsay of **CLM Entertainment** in Cumberland, Rhode Island. According to Enchanted Kingdom's Maduli, such situational queries are also integral to the behavioral interviews they employ. Based on the premise that past experience is a good indicator of future performance, this type of interview allows candidates to demonstrate their skill in communication, teamwork, organization, and other areas by answering questions using specific examples from their own past.
- ▶ **Benefits:** The employee benefits you offer are good tools to use during the recruitment and interview process, but they also play a vital role in preserving an equally important source of high-quality staff—retaining your current workers, throughout the season and from year to year. Utilize recognition, recreation,

incentive, and growth programs as motivators during your primary season, then find ways to stay connected to relevant employees in the shoulder and off seasons. All these efforts will help minimize the direct and indirect costs of constant turnover, and can also play a key role in spreading a good word-of-mouth reputation about what it's like to work at your facility.

RESOURCES

Web Sites, Seminars, and Products

[Finders Keepers: How to Recruit and Retain Good Employees](#)—an educational product from IAAPA summarizing best practices in staff recruitment and retention.

[IAAPA Expo seminars](#), such as "Hire Fast, Hire Right," "International Recruiting," and "HR for the Non-HR Professional," at IAAPA Attractions expos 2006 (first two) & 2009, respectively. Many seminar handouts and PowerPoint presentations are archived in the Members-only section of the association's web site.

[SmartBrief on Workforce](#) (sample copy)—a free daily e-mail summary of essential news on effective people management.

[Workforce Management: Recruiting & Staffing](#)—dedicated recruitment content from the editorial team at the Workforce Management trade newspaper and web site.

Articles and Posts

"[Cattle Call](#)," FUNWORLD, February 2008—Find out how to make hosting a job fair work for your facility.

"[Effective Hiring](#)," Park World blog, 6/27/07—discusses the benefits of using online background screening software.

"[Hiring from Afar](#)," FUNWORLD, October 2006—summary of the basic steps in developing an international staffing program.

"[Seasonal Recruiting is Here - Don't forget Social Media](#)," TMP Talentbrew blog, 10/2/09—the latest insights on why and how to incorporate social media sites in your recruiting.

"[The Hiring Game](#)," FUNWORLD, February 2009—how to get good employees and keep them long term.

DISCLAIMER FOR IAAPA TIP SHEETS

The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions ("IAAPA") is a nonprofit trade association, tax exempt under Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code, and dedicated to meeting the needs of the amusement facilities industry. IAAPA conducts education and training, and publishes related materials in a variety of areas. This document is intended to provide information to those in the industry and other interested parties.

The information contained in this document is based on currently available data and is intended to be factually accurate, but further research or developments may change the current state of knowledge or best practices in the industry. While IAAPA makes every effort to present accurate and reliable information, information provided in the document is "as is" without any warranty of accuracy, reliability, or otherwise, either express or implied, including but not limited to the implied warranties of merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose, or freedom from infringement. Neither IAAPA nor its officers, directors, members, employees, or agents will be liable for any loss, damage, or claim with respect to any liabilities, including direct, special, indirect, or consequential damages, incurred in connection with the document or reliance on the information presented.

The document is the sole and exclusive property of IAAPA. Reproduction or redistribution of the document is prohibited without the prior written permission of IAAPA.

International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions

HEADQUARTERS

1448 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA

Telephone: +1 703/836-4800
Fax: +1 703/836-1192

EUROPE

Square de Meeus 38/40
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

Telephone: +45 24 49 14 05
Fax: +32 2 401 68 68

LATIN AMERICA

Ave. Presidente Masaryk #111
Piso 1
Col. Chapultepec Morales
México, D.F. 11560

Phone: +52 55/33005915
Fax: +52 55/33005999

www.IAAPA.org