



NECOG Development Corporation

RLF Quarterly Newsletter
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Keeping Happy Employees

By Alison Kiesz, RLF Manager

I was recently at a Workforce Strategies Conference and came away with many great ideas that small businesses can utilize to create a better workforce.

The first session of the event was titled “Attract, Retain, and Engage Millennials”; however, I think many of the ideas in the session pertain to all employees whether they are 25 or 65. I realize that not all of these ideas work for all businesses. For example, if you are a retail establishment, having employees work from home doesn’t quite cut it.

For example, the presenters talked about the importance of work/life integration rather than a work/life balance. They realize that work life and home life aren’t ever perfectly balanced but integrating them makes for happier employees. An integration of work and life might mean the employer has to be flexible with parents taking time off for their children’s activities; on the flip side, employees might have to expect to check emails in the evenings or weekends to keep a project moving forward.

Another important facet to retaining and engaging employees is providing a clear career path. At first glance, this may seem difficult for many small businesses in which the owner isn’t going anywhere anytime soon. However a career path may include giving out more responsibilities to trusted employees – maybe you can delegate tasks you dislike such as ordering inventory, marketing your business, or completing the bookwork. Eventually it might include a succession plan for selling the business to an employee.

Employees also appreciate transparency and knowing more about the overall business rather than only being allowed to learn their one specific job. Creating a sense of ownership will also go a long

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9 Halloween Marketing Ideas for Local Businesses

By Rieva Lesonsky, Guest Blogger, SBA Blog, <https://www.sba.gov/blogs>
Published: October 4, 2016

Thanksgiving, Christmas and Hanukkah aren't the only upcoming holidays that will soon prompt consumers to open their wallets. Halloween is on the horizon — and for small businesses, it's getting more profitable every year. 2016 Halloween spending is projected to hit an all-time high of \$8.4 billion, according to the National Retail Federation.

With Americans of all ages eager to dress in costume, throw Halloween parties and consume candy, there's no denying that Halloween has become one of America's favorite holidays. Small businesses don't have to sell costumes or candy to generate sales. Here are nine Halloween marketing ideas that will help any local business—whether retail, restaurant or service—scare up more business.

1. Advertise Halloween discounts—but get creative. For example, offer customers a discount for dining at your restaurant in costume or sharing their best party-planning ideas on your social media pages.

2. Add Halloween-themed or seasonal items to your offerings. People love limited-time products like Starbucks' pumpkin spice latte. A restaurant, bar, coffee house or bakery can attract fans of seasonal flavors with menu items like pumpkin-flavored drinks and desserts. A beauty salon can offer hair and makeup services for Halloween parties, or create spooky nail art.

3. Print out promotions. Promotional products related to Halloween, such as glow sticks, pumpkin-carving designs, spooky decals or trick-or-treat bags with your business logo will keep your business in customers' minds all month long.

4. Sponsor a local Halloween event. Look for Halloween parades, trick-or-treat events, parties, zombie walks or haunted houses held by local

community organizations that you can sponsor. Ask if you can hand out promotional products, coupons or product samples.

5. Create a Halloween contest for your customers. Make it relevant to your business or better still, crowd source ideas from your customers. For example, a pet store could hold a best pet costume contest; an interior decorator can have a contest for the most elaborate home or front door decor; a craft store could hold a poster-coloring contest for kids.

6. Advertise on cable television. October is prime time for spooky, Halloween-themed programming that gets many people to tune in. If it's in your budget, advertise on a horror series like American Horror Story or The Walking Dead, or during one of the many Halloween movie marathons found on cable this month. Other options that might fit your budget include advertising via social media or via live-streamed shows online.

7. Partner up. Join other local businesses in your community and host a trick-or-treat night or scavenger hunt for local children. As kids go from one business to another with parents or guardian in tow, you can hand the parents coupons or other discount offers.

8. Mail greeting cards. No one expects to get a Halloween card—but you'll get a head start on holiday mailings and be top-of-mind when customers open yours. Include a special offer, a thank-you or just seasonal greetings.

9. Support a charitable organization. Offer customers treats in return for "treating" those in need by bringing in canned goods, gently used toys or clothing, or whatever the local charity of your choice is looking for. Publicize your charitable efforts on social media and with local reporters to get more people to pitch in (and visit your business).

Are You Looking In All The Right Places For Your Next Employee?

by Kelly Weaver, Small Business Development Center Regional Director

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and South Dakota is fully engaged in helping businesses make use of this underutilized human resource. You may have noticed the Ability for Hire ads which have aired in recent months. With South Dakota's low unemployment rate, the time may be right to broaden your workforce. Here are some options to help you investigate this opportunity.

The SD Division of Rehabilitation Services is a key agency that works with people who have disabilities. The agency has some very good resources for potential employers which include:

- Job Site Assessments and Evaluations
- Disability Awareness and Etiquette Training
- Job Development and Placement Services
- On the Job Training
- Employment Support Services
- Assistive Technology Evaluations and Equipment

Contact Division of Rehabilitation Services at 605-626-2398 to get started.

The SD Department of Labor offers a couple of videos discussing ways to remove barriers to employment and the issues involved in disability disclosure. A publication called *Disability Etiquette Best Practices* is also available. The Department administers the Work Opportunity Tax Credit which is a tax incentive that can help reduce hiring costs for qualified hires. Find these resources at: dlr.sd.gov/employmentprograms/disability_resources.aspx

Lastly, the South Dakota Retailers Association (SDRA) was awarded one of three federal pilot projects aimed at increasing the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. As part of SDRA's 'Getting Down to Business' project, there will be a series of workshops held throughout the state during October about disability em-

ployment issues. The workshop dates, locations and topics can be found at ftw.sd-ccd.org/ndeam. (Also look on Page 4 of this newsletter.)

With all this assistance at your fingertips, there is no better time to consider diversifying your workforce with this untapped source of future employees.

Kelly Weaver is the Regional Director of the Small Business Development Center in Aberdeen which offers free, confidential business consulting to start up and existing businesses. She can be reached at (605) 626-2565 or kelly@growsd.org.

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way to having employees speak highly about your business and being a great advocate for your hard work.

Providing wellness benefits can help attract and engage employees. This doesn't have to be a paid gym membership, which could get expensive, but it can include things such providing lunch once a month or a company-wide volunteer trip to a local animal shelter or other charity.

Becoming a member of a local chamber of commerce or retailers association might provide benefits to your business and/or employees such as discounts on insurance premiums; vision and dental insurance; and education and training opportunities for your employees.

By taking a look at your business, you may find there are small things you can do to make your employees happier, more engaged and more likely to stay with you for the long haul.

Information for this article was taken from a presentation by Andrew Leintz, from DAYTA Marketing, a social marketing company based in St. Cloud, MN. Find them online at daytamarkeing.com

I'll be continuing this series of workforce related articles in the coming months including articles on Training Employees and Building Trust.

BIG Idea Competition

The BIG Idea Competition is a business idea competition for high school students. Students come up with a 1,075 word description of their business idea (like a mini business plan). There is also an optional Marketing Design competition which includes a logo and advertisement for their idea. This is a great opportunity for students to learn about business concepts and entrepreneurship. They also have the opportunity to win cash prizes.

Completed online business ideas are due by **October 31, 2016**. Students who are selected as finalists will be invited to present their ideas to entrepreneurs and the awards ceremony will take place that same day. The final competition will be **Thursday, December 8, 2016**.

The full rules and an entry form are available online at bigideasd.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Build Dakota Scholarship Roadshow | October 18 | 10:30 am—12:00 pm | The Training Place—Aberdeen | RSVP to Kati Bachmayer 229-5335 or katibachmayer@adcsd.com

National Disability Employment Awareness Event | November 15 | 5:30—7:00 pm | Grand River Casino—Mobridge | Call Corinna at 626-2398 for more information.

Small Business Saturday | November 26 | www.smallbusinesssaturday.com

QuickBooks—Hands-on Class | December 7-8 | The Training Place—Aberdeen | \$499 | Call Jill at 725-1833 for more information or to register.

BIG Idea Final Competition | December 8 | Northern State University—Aberdeen

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