

TIPS FOR BOOSTING APPLICATIONS AND HIRING IN 2021



INTRODUCTION

“70% of the game is finding the right people, putting them in the right position, listening to them, and alleviating what gets in their way” -Robert Gillette, CEO, Honeywell

Attracting qualified applicants and hiring the best-of-the-best is the goal of every provider HR department. But as everyone knows, it is not easy. As we emerge from Covid-19, agencies have unique opportunities to continue to retool their workforce.

Attracting and hiring qualified applicants is a competitive process. Many providers don't always keep this front and foremost in their thinking and get beaten to the best candidates by other providers or larger retail orientated competitors like Amazon, Costco, Walmart and others.

This publication provides a road map of competitive recruiting and hiring options for providers to consider.

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1. 2021 - JOB SECURITY

It might not feel like it, but current market conditions present a real opportunity for providers.

Judging by the influx of interest in and orders for hiring and onboarding software at MITC, many agencies have already found success by broadening their recruiting and hiring efforts to those displaced from work. This influx of talent has the potential to help reshape and stabilize the provider workforce. The ability to provide exceptional care and service, control costs, and foster a culture that enables future growth all starts by having the right people.

Many prospective employees have been scared by 2020 job losses. Emphasize the security of a job with your agency and the hours.

- » Highlight your funding is mainly from the government
- » Emphasize the job security of the positions. When did your agency last lay employees off apart from during Covid-19? (Maybe not even then)
- » Full time guarantee is huge for many

Often positions in retail are part-time (less than 30 hours). If your agency is filling full-time positions, make sure they are advertised as full-time. This will attract employees who want to work more hours per week than Walmart offers.



2. TALENT ACQUISITION SOFTWARE

HR must find candidates faster than the competition. Agencies using online forms, telephone calls and walk-ins will not be as successful as organizations armed with effective talent acquisition software. To be most effective, job openings should be promoted with a mix of grassroots efforts, social postings, and job boards. Talent acquisition software helps automate job postings to hundreds of job boards including Facebook, Indeed and local and specialty job boards. Openings should be easily viewable and shareable on social media sites.



The applicant pool will be smaller in 2021 than 2020 as the economy recovers, however it will still be bigger than before Covid-19. Many positions in retail and commercial property will be lost permanently. Positions in hospitality and tourism may not recover until 2022. HR will have more hiring opportunities. HR needs software tools to automatically sort through a larger number of candidates so HR can focus on the best fit candidates.

This is truly a unique time for providers that are looking to hire a specific kind of caregiver. There's a new opportunity to be focused on really finding people that have a connection to the vocation of caregiving, people that are empathetic, that are compassionate, that have life experiences in providing care and service to others. There's been no time like this in recent history for this.

3. COMPETING WITH AMAZON, COSTCO, WALMART AND OTHERS

Avoid competing on base pay. Big retail businesses have more flexibility in that area than your agency probably has. Instead, if overtime is available at your agency, make that clear. If you pay extra for working on holidays, make that clear. Retail has very strict policies about overtime: managers authorizing overtime are quickly followed up with, and employees in danger of going into overtime are often told to take long lunch breaks. If your employees can receive overtime, their average weekly take home pay will be more competitive. Retail does not pay time and a half for working on a holiday.

If your agency can guarantee 40 hours per week, that's an advantage. Walmart and other retailers often use aggressive scheduling systems that rely on seniority, availability and points (penalties for poor attendance). When these scheduling systems are in place, many employees complain about not knowing how many hours they will get or when. If your agency offers set schedules, that's an advantage. Getting a set schedule can be hard for many employees at retail outlets.



You have an advantage if your shifts do not conflict with Walmart and other retailer prime times. Most retail shifts are concentrated in the late afternoon and early evening. Your agency should have less competition filling day and night shifts.

Leading retailers restrict overtime for new hires and incentivize their longer term employees with extra hours or overtime. Make sure your agency makes any early overtime opportunities known.

Share the overtime around. Make sure your scheduling isn't always giving overtime to the same employees. Implement a system where all employees can see open shifts and apply for them.

Make it easy for employees to request extra hours. Other employers may make this difficult. Your scheduling system should allow all employees to see open shifts and request extra hours. You need the positions filled! Agencies don't have the option that retailers have to simply not cover a shift with enough employees. Make it easy for managers and employees to cover open shifts.

4. HIGHLIGHT YOUR BENEFITS

Quantifying the value of your agency's benefit package can be a huge asset. If your agency has a benefit package, detail exactly what is included in the job ad. Provide an annual dollar value to create visibility and transparency right off the bat. Ex: "Position includes a \$3,000 annual benefit package including paid time off, extra pay for working on holidays, medical insurance...."

If advertising positions that are partially or 100% work-from-home, make that very clear. It is especially important to push these positions right now, as most people have been working from home during the pandemic.

If the position includes any equipment, such as an agency providing smartphones or tablets, include that information as well. Some employers require their employees to provide their own. If your agency has a BYOD reimbursement plan for smartphones used for EVV, include the dollar amount for those reimbursements as well. Mileage reimbursement is the same - knowing that there is a reimbursement policy for mileage can be very enticing for those looking to fill an HCBS role.

5. SCHEDULES

Schedules can be a competitive hiring advantage and a retention winner. One of the biggest complaints lower-paid employees have is lack of advance notification for schedules. This complaint is particularly common among employees working for large retailers and fast food outlets. Poor scheduling or last minute schedule changes cause conflicts with employee's home lives and cause them to seek alternative employment, even at a lower pay rate. Frequent rescheduling leads to a culture of frustration and uncertainty in your workforce and encourages absenteeism and turnover. A DSP will be much less motivated to show up if they are constantly being rescheduled, especially at short notice, even if they get overtime.



Share the hours around! Paper and excel scheduling systems often result in scheduling silos with a few employees getting the vast majority of extra hours and overtime pay without reference to their performance. Open scheduling systems allow employees and managers to collaborate and distribute the extra hours among the best employees, not the same employees.

Track employee preferences and restrictions to maximize employee satisfaction with their shifts and to avoid calling employees to fill an open position they can't take. Make sure you capture schedule preferences and restrictions during the hiring process and integrate them into your scheduling system. Allow sufficient time between shifts for employees to go home and rest, and try to avoid calling employees back in if they have just finished a shift.

6. HIGH VELOCITY HIRING

Hiring is a competitive process. If you don't compete, you can't win.

Hiring strategies need to extend beyond recruitment efforts, and include a focus on streamlining processes while prioritizing the candidate experience for best results.

Every interaction a candidate has influences their job selection. Providers cannot over communicate or follow up too quickly. If you're not consistently in touch with candidates, they will simply move on. Implementing a systematic, well defined process, creates accountability for follow-ups. It also ensures quality candidates don't slip through the cracks, enables hiring managers to provide candidates clear next steps, and helps ensure hiring processes are compliant.

Many job seekers have had poor candidate experiences. To prevent this, HR should evaluate their current application processes, and prioritize a mobile-friendly experience. This includes examining the steps candidates go through to complete an application, and simplifying where possible. Consider video and automated telephone interviewing software. If candidate flow is not an issue, adding qualifying questions can help hiring managers quickly prioritize candidate follow-ups.



Connecting with applicants as quickly as possible is critical. Many HR

leaders are finding success by text messaging their candidates. Once connected with a candidate, explain the hiring process, and lay out the typical hiring timeline to set proper expectations. Job seekers want companies to communicate more clearly during the hiring process. Don't be afraid to over-communicate throughout the process. To scale these efforts and provide a consistent candidate experience, talent acquisition systems can automate these communications to help keep candidates engaged throughout the process.



Hiring processes often differ from organization to organization. HR leaders should provide a core hiring structure that can be modified if needed. Once established, look to automate repeatable tasks, such as forms, background checks, offer letters, and reminders. Doing so will provide an effective, scalable, and seamless process. Once implemented, HR should routinely analyze time-to-hire and referral sources to optimize results.

7. RETENTION PLANS

Retention rates improved in 2020. These steps are used by many providers. Check them out!

1. Better applicant screening to concentrate resources on those most likely to stay
2. Emphasizing total compensation value rather than hourly rate
3. Improved, more organized on-board training
4. Referral hiring bonuses
5. New hire bonus on completion of training
6. Mentoring program
7. Buddy program
8. Annual review of retention and on-boarding process
9. Awards, award trips
10. Employee appreciation days and events
11. Contests and gift cards
12. Monthly staff newsletter
13. Graduated pay scales with incremental increases
14. Shift differentials
15. Early access to benefits
16. Created new position to focus on hiring direct support staff
17. Working with local colleges such as nursing schools
18. Hiring under-18-year-olds
19. Developing career ladders and career paths
20. Incentive pay

8. ATTRACTING MILLENNIALS

Data suggests millennials are driving a shift towards the public service sector. This makes agencies a perfect fit for millennials. There are a number of key steps employers can take to address the

needs and preferences of millennials in order to attract and retain this workforce.

64% of millennials want to make the world a better place. This is a great opportunity for agencies who communicate their mission. A purpose-driven organization should be more attractive to purpose-driven people like millennials. This should give agencies a hiring and retention advantage with millennials over retail and other competing employers.

Get these employees connected to your agency's higher purpose and prove you're ready to help them achieve their bigger picture ambitions, too. Most millennials would rather make a difference than make a ton of money. Encourage them to see the agency as an opportunity to give back to the community. Invite millennials to fundraisers and offer volunteering opportunities. Show them that they can have a positive impact on the world at your agency.

Millennials are particularly keen on societal mission and contribution to the global good, so putting their work in this context inspires them. Job postings should focus on the value of work and importance to the organization and society.



Keeping in touch with millennials is key, whether it's during the recruiting process or while they're employed with your organization. Be helpful and maintain open communication. Millennials enjoy using texts, communication systems, media, and technology. Avoid using paper forms. Instead use email and texts to follow up with applicants. Provide post-interview feedback opportunities. According to LinkedIn's Talent Trends Report, 95% of millennials want to hear what you thought about them after the interview.

Offering help and guidance is a way to create trust and loyalty with millennials. Send updates every three days from the hiring manager to applicants in the application process to court millennial workers. If your agency has a mentorship program, call attention to that during the interview process.

Avoid an excessively rigorous hiring process. Millennials are informal. Your agency may be weeding out high potential millennials on a regular basis. It might be a good idea to loosen things up a bit. In place of the usual two- or three-round interviews, hold informal professional development classes, conduct informational sessions, or show potential candidates around the facilities. Host open days post Covid-19. Through these, you can let the candidates decide for themselves whether they fit your company's culture or not.

9. TRAINING

There is no point in implementing the best talent acquisition system in the world if the whole process falls apart with a messy training program. Ensure your training classes are accessible to new hires, all the relevant training is provided, and an automated renewal system is in place.



10. AUTOMATED TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews are worth considering if your agency gets lots of weak applicants. Weak candidates can be quickly eliminated with no interaction. More applications can be processed faster using the telephone. This drastically reduces the amount of time it takes to invite, schedule, and complete a phone interview.



- » Customize the telephone interview to fit your needs by
- » Create as many interviews as needed with an unlimited amount of questions
- » Invite your applicants to complete an interview right within your application process.
- » After the interview is completed by an applicant, the results are made available within the applicant profile making the review process much easier.

11. PAY-ON-DEMAND

Pay-On-Demand is a competitive hiring and retention advantage. Many providers either don't know about it or don't understand it fully which makes little sense as it is free to the employer. The 2019 Wall Street Journal Tuesday September 3rd reports Walmart and other employers are helping employees gain access to payroll advances, reflecting concern over the impact money problems are having on productivity and retention. 380,000 out of 1.4 million employees at Walmart were now using the new system in 2019. Only 50% of pay is available. Employees report that they are able to save money by avoiding late and overdraft fees.

Providers using Agency Workforce Management also started using Pay-On-Demand in 2019.

Pay-On-Demand lets your employees control when they get paid. Agencies can empower employees to meet financial goals and pay bills on time. Employees who reach financial security stay longer, reducing turnover and costs.

- » No employer fees
- » No more funding or managing advances
- » Instantly boost job satisfaction and employee retention
- » Help your agency stand-out in the crowd
- » Stop employees moving to other employers who don't offer this benefit
- » Improve time and attendance compliance

Louisville, Kentucky-based BrightSpring, which was formerly known as Rescare, is one of the largest providers of home and community-based health services in the United States. Its home care services line employs about 20,000 caregivers. BrightSpring started offering daily pay recently at their organization.

The program, which is called "Pay Out," went live at the end of 2018. It allows employees across the organization — not just caregivers — to access pay as it's earned. Already, about 9,000 employees are using Pay Out, Domico said, and the program is achieving what it's meant to: attracting employees and improving retention.

“We are seeing a lot of interest when we’re talking with our applicants about Pay Out,” Domico said. “We see caregivers saying they’re picking up additional hours because they can get paid for those hours quicker than working somewhere else. We also see some early impact on retention with the people who are engaging in daily pay.”

“Traditionally, we’ve paid people in a semi-monthly cycle, and that’s the way we’ve always done it,” Rexanne Domico, president of home health care services and neuro rehabilitation at BrightSpring, told Home Health Care News. “The idea really came up when we started talking about how do we pay more frequently? How can we crack that code?”

“The problem sometimes for this workforce is the ability to access pay when they need it,” she said. “We fully believe that the companies that are able to attract and retain caregivers are the companies that are going to see the growth in the coming months and years in the space,” Domico said. “The ability to solve [for pay challenges] for this workforce is ... a huge answer to this problem.”

12. MAKING YOUR WEBSITE VISIBLE AND EASY-TO-USE FOR NEW HIRES



- » When did you last do a web search test?
- » Are you visible to potential new hires?
- » When did you last update your website?
- » Do you have an email marketing program that drives interest in your website and follows up with new hires, donors and other sources for candidates?
- » Can potential new hires apply easily directly from your website?

If not, your team needs to focus some time on search engine optimization (SEO). SEO simply means optimizing the content and design of your website to make it attractive to search engines, so that when people search for relevant keywords and phrases, your site will appear in the search results, at or near the top.

Providers are always hiring! Build a database of “good fit” applicants. Don’t continually re-invent the wheel. Contact these candidates by text or email when new opportunities arise.

13. JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Some job descriptions are too detailed, too wordy and too long for the potential Direct Support Professional. An effective job description provides an applicant with only enough information to help them determine if they qualify for the position. Additional information can be provided later in the application process.

Emphasize your competitive advantages over obvious alternatives. For some candidates these advantages will be decisive.



Key advantages in 2021 to stress (if appropriate):

- » Caring profession
- » Paid training provided
- » Stable employment (Medicaid funded)
- » Regular schedules (with option to request extra shifts)
- » 40 hours a week
- » Paid overtime
- » Time and half for working on a holiday
- » Weekend, evening and overnight shifts



An effective hiring system aims to engage a wide number of applicants initially but quickly filter the best candidates to the top. Don't try and exclude weaker candidates in the initial posting. You might be deterring some very good candidates!

Example:

Direct Support Professionals support individuals with disabilities by implementing behavior plans, teaching self-care skills, cooking meals and doing household tasks.

- » Full and part time positions available
- » 30-40 hours a week guaranteed if full time
 - » Options to pick up extra hours
 - » Paid overtime
 - » Time-and-a-half for working on a holiday
- » Regular schedules including weekends, evenings and overnight
- » Stable employment! ABC is a Medicaid government funded agency
- » Paid training

Additional duties may include:

- » Assist individuals with daily personal tasks, including bathing and dressing
- » Tasks such as vacuuming, washing dishes and tidying
- » Help plan individual appointments and organize their schedule
- » Organize transportation arrangements for appointments
- » Shop for groceries and prepare meals to meet specific dietary needs
- » Encourage engagement in social networks and communities

Direct Support Professionals (DSP) assist adults and children in day programs, group homes or community and residential settings. Among those cared for are people with cognitive impairments, chronic illnesses and other disabilities needing assistance with daily living activities. The ideal candidate has a strong desire to create positive impacts on their individuals' lives and enjoy encouraging, mentoring and coaching others to achieve their goals. A Direct Support Professional earns an average of \$14.29 per hour based on education, experience level or shift plus overtime, holiday pay uplift and benefits. The average biweekly pay for a full time DSP working these positions in 2020 was \$1,314.68.

CONCLUSION

Attracting the best, recruiting the best and retaining the best is a competitive process. Providers need to think of it that way. Employee turnover is inevitable. The only question is “how can we be better than average or maybe in the top 10%?” Winning requires closing the gaps in the talent acquisition and retention process

Other related publications:

- » [**Should Agencies Offer Incentive Pay eBook**](#)
- » [**myApplicants Fact Sheet**](#)
- » [**Hire Forms Fact Sheet**](#)

ABOUT AGENCY WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

Agency Workforce Management supports all the needs of I/DD and behavioral health service providers — time & attendance, EVV, scheduling, hiring, training, HR, payroll and billing integration, documentation, electronic health records and more.

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