

Attracting a Non-English-Speaking Hispanic Workforce

By: Maureen E. Harrop

The search for employees can often seem endless to a recruiter, especially for the less attractive positions. Jobs in housekeeping, laundry, and other less desirable jobs are generally filled by non-English-speaking Hispanic employees. Attracting this vital workforce requires creative strategies. Traditional methods such as newspaper and website advertising are less effective because many monolingual applicants do not read or write and do not own a computer. However, successful recruitment methods do exist.

- ***Respect for Language:*** From the moment the monolingual applicant enters your organization's door, he/she must feel welcome and respected. One way to do this is to ensure at least one staff member in Human Resources speaks Spanish. Another is to have an employment application in Spanish for those applicants who can read and write; and, interviews must be conducted in Spanish.
- ***Referral Program:*** Employee referrals provide a significant and cost-effective solution to recruitment challenges. Since this workforce lives with or near relatives, referrals are a simple process. When compared to the high cost of recruitment, a referral fee is minimal to the company, yet substantial to these employees making low wages.
- ***Free Van Service:*** "Reliable transportation can be a serious challenge for these employees. This in turn becomes a problem for us, so we provide free van service to and from work. It's a win-win situation," states Linda Heyman, Director of Housekeeping at The Boulders Resort and Golden Door Spa in Scottsdale, Arizona.
- ***Benefits:*** Medical coverage, sick pay, free meals, and vacation benefits are very important to this workforce, yet benefit programs are a foreign concept to many of them. Explain the benefit package thoroughly during the interview.

- ***Refugee Agencies:*** "Most monolingual Hispanics live with their families, yet other immigrant groups tend to be guided to refugee agencies. Cultivating strong relationships with local refugee agencies will benefit your organization significantly, as it has ours," recommended Ms. Heyman.
- ***Wages:*** Supporting their immediate family, as well as their extended family is not uncommon in this culture. Therefore, money is a very important factor for these workers.

Attracting this loyal and dedicated labor force is only half the battle, however. Retaining them requires additional creative strategies, and will be the topic of our next article on this topic.

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Headshot available upon request.