

**LABOUR
TALENT SHOWS**

Companies looking for new staff might as well take down the Help Wanted signs in their windows—they just won't do the trick anymore. Launching a mass-media marketing campaign, however, might draw some candidates, as Canadian companies try to adjust to a labour-strapped market. For example, new television commercials for Tim Hortons promote the company as a good place to work, rather than a good place to get coffee and doughnuts.

Such aggressive, creative hiring strategies are especially necessary since baby boomers will begin to retire in huge numbers over the next five years, and there are barely enough young people entering their working years to replace them, reports Statistics Canada. "You can't wait until 2011. You have to be working on it today," says Bill Greenhalgh, CEO of the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario, the Toronto-based organization that has 16,000 members. "You have to make sure you have succession plans for people that might leave."

Marketing is one way companies build brands for themselves as employers in much the same way it builds product brands. "That's a totally new phenomenon," says Gabriel Bouchard, vice-president and general manager of Monster Canada, an online career and recruitment company based in Montreal. "It speaks volumes about how much of an issue staffing is becoming." Other companies are filling seats by poaching workers from other companies. Some might think that's a little unethical, but such concern is being trumped by the need for talent. "Companies are looking at becoming much more aggressive to raid their competitors' best employees," Bouchard says.

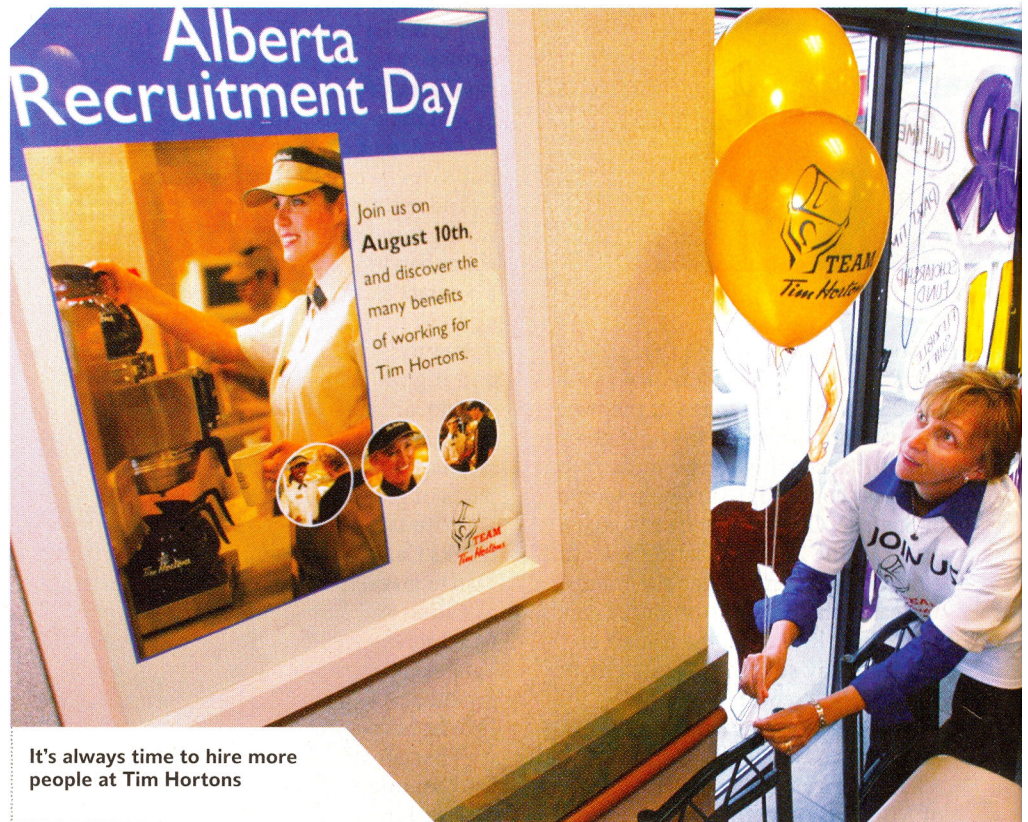
But Canada's skills shortage could be a boon for immigrants, people with disabilities and those lacking higher education. "Traditionally, employers don't think of going to those forces, because of preconceived notions that the talent isn't there," says Bill Young, president of Social Capital Partners, a non-profit organization in Toronto that helps individuals outside the economic mainstream find employment. Often, these people have valuable skills and are motivated, so hiring managers have to embrace that idea. "If companies are really going to do what's right for their organization and for the Canadian economy, then they have to be more creative and open-minded to looking at different candidates," says Anne Lamont, CEO and president of Career Edge, a Toronto-based not-for-profit organization that arranges internships.

Internationally trained professionals, for example, can offer companies important global insight. "It's getting more important to realize that global experience is also an important part of the qualification," says Howard Shen, president of the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada, a Toronto-based organization that helps its 23,000 members find jobs and overcome immigration-related obstacles. Indeed, immigrants are vitally important to the workforce, with newcomers likely to be the only source of growth for Canada's labour force by 2011, according to Statistics Canada. In such a multicultural workforce, favouring candidates with only Canadian experience may put companies at a competitive disadvantage.

Fierce competition also means retaining staff can be as difficult as attracting them. Companies must be more aware of employee needs and values in order to keep them engaged, but the vast diversity of Canada's workforce is making that harder than ever. "Companies have to realize that what motivates and retains someone in their 20s or 30s can be quite a lot different from something that motivates and retains someone in their 50s," says Greenhalgh. For many younger employees, compensation is not the most important factor in their job. Training, opportunities for promotion, job challenge, flexibility and workplace culture, among other factors, all contribute to job satisfaction. Providing the whole package means workers are more likely to stay.

"There should be a lot more attention paid to retention and engagement," Bouchard says. After all, happy staff members reduce the need to recruit. But just in case, it might be time to trade in that Help Wanted sign for something a little bit flashier.

MEGAN HARMAN



It's always time to hire more people at Tim Hortons

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