

Funeral Home Staffing-Recruitment Employee Relations

A person wearing a dark blue button-down shirt and a black belt is holding a red rectangular sign with white text. The sign says "HELP WANTED" in large, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below the main text, in smaller white text, it says "By: Jake Johnson, Johnson Consulting". In the bottom right corner of the sign, there is a small white logo that says "ITEM 0001".

**HELP
WANTED**

By: Jake Johnson, Johnson Consulting

HR Issues and Pitfalls



“Finding the right person for the job and then retaining them has become much more difficult.”

As our profession continues to evolve one of the most critical areas to address is funeral home staffing. It seems as though in the past there was a somewhat steady flow of qualified people to choose from. However, it is currently apparent that finding the right person for the job and then retaining them has become much more difficult. There are some ways to mitigate this which I will get into later but the biggest issue is the small pool of players from which we have to choose. On a national level there has not been a real cohesive effort to attract people into our profession. That is an issue and can be debated. However, there are some things that can be done on a local level that can deepen the pool for individual funeral homes owners. Such as; have a day where you bring in your local high school students to tour the funeral home and explain just what goes on and how you assist people in need. Who knows, some attendees might just get the bug to learn more and entertain the possibility of joining the profession. There are quite a few retired or semi-retired people in most communities. In many cases these are seasoned individuals who would like something to do and would be very good at it. Hire some of these folks and see how they work. You might be surprised at just how well they do. Don't miss job fairs and other functions that you can do some recruiting. You can create your own pool. That is the point.

When you are in the process of recruiting there are several things you should do;

- ✓ **PLAN-** Prepare a job posting announcement along with a job description.
- ✓ **POST-** See if your current staff has interest or if they know someone that might be interested. In fact you might incent your people for finding a good placement for your firm
- ✓ **Recruit-** Besides what discussed earlier, use industry posting sites. Make a contact list of talented individuals you know and network with them periodically
- ✓ **Screen-** Screen resumes and application forms
- ✓ **Select-** Telephone interviewing can be the first stage. You can also do some behavioral based interviews. Another technique is to do some personality profiling possibly using the DISC Profile program (<http://thediscpersonalitytest.com>).
- ✓ **Make sure you check references and do a background check.**
- ✓ **Make the offer.**



With regard to employee relations the following outline may be helpful;

- Again the DISC Profile is a good tool to understand what motivates an employee as well as how to communicate with them effectively
- Make clear what your expectations are for the particular position
- Seek their input
- Communicate regularly about company performance
- Express appreciation openly
- Do corrective measures behind closed doors.

Retaining good employees is extremely critical. You do not want to lose the time, effort and training you have completed because of an employee leaving you. Things you can do;

- Keep communication at a high level. These are service people. A pat on the back goes a long way.
- Provide good training for your people so they can continuously improve.
- Make sure they are aware of opportunities for advancement.
- Do not be afraid to pay them more than the normal scale. Especially if they are your prized employees.
- Incent them for jobs well done.

Weed out the bad. This is a common area which is neglected by many owners around the country

- Use an Employee Satisfaction Survey to identify employee issues. A disruptive employee in the workplace is usually identified in this process



- Again, the weakness our consulting company has seen over the years is that most owners choose not to address the problem employee in the manner that they should

Some general rules of thumb, some of which have been mentioned prior;

- Make your expectations clear
- Train how to achieve those expectations
- Make sure your compensation, incentive, etc. is adequate, competitive
- Monitor performance
- Provide feedback: recognize star performers, provide coaching to underperformers
- Hold employees accountable
- Hold yourself accountable

HR Issues- If you do not have an HR department, most do not, use a payroll company such as Paychex or ADP. They can help you with most relevant issues. You should also enlist the help of an industry consultant when you have issues that you are just not sure what to do. With regard to legal considerations you can once again enlist the services of an industry consultant. However, in severe cases be sure to use an employment law attorney who specializes in the field.



General summary: In our job as consultants in this industry we have seen the dynamics of firms that have a good, positive workplace environment. Let me share those with you:

- A well-defined organizational chart with a clear chain of command
- Create and use detailed job descriptions
- Make sure training is part of the process
- Have structured communication including daily operation huddle meetings, weekly management team meetings and regular all staff meetings.
- Conduct annual individual performance reviews and compensation adjustments
- Provide competitive compensation and have a structured system. Do not be afraid to “pay up” for key individuals especially with incentive programs
- Practice genuine and frequent employee recognition.

I hope this article provides assistance to its readers. Even if only one or two items hits home it will have been worthwhile. If anyone would like assistance in any of the areas discussed, Johnson Consulting would be glad to provide some guidance. 🙏