



Contented  
Cow  
Partners  
People...Profit

# How to be the Employer of Choice

*In the New World of Work*

presented for



National Association of  
Chemical Distributors

  
Richard Hadden  
SPEAKER, AUTHOR, CONSULTANT

By  
Richard Hadden, CSP

For resources related to this presentation, visit [contentedcows.com/nacd](http://contentedcows.com/nacd)

## PREMISE

**Creating a focused, engaged, and capably led workforce is one of the best things you can do for your bottom line.**

### Starting with the basics

- Compensation can be an OK recruiter. Rarely a great retainer.
- The more attention you pay to the *intangibles* of the job, the less pressure there will be on the *tangibles*.

**Leadership** – the earned consent of followers.

**Assignment** – make leadership a primary qualification for every person in a management role.

**Assignment** – conduct employee surveys. For a report on what to keep in mind when doing employee surveys, go to [contentedcows.com/nacd](http://contentedcows.com/nacd)

## RECRUITING

- Recruiting = Marketing
- The best recruiting tool is your reputation as an employer.
- Be able to answer the question, “What’s so great about working here?”

## **SOURCING**

### **Have you tried these?**

- The stuff everybody already knows... online recruiting sites, advertising, signs in your window, word of mouth, your customers, your friends, your friends' kids, etc.
- Boomerang hires – people who used to work for you, and may be interested in returning if what you offer is better than where they went.
- Runners up – they were good candidates for an earlier position, but didn't make the cut. Maybe they would now.
- Those who turned you down for an earlier position. Give them another try. Things are different now. If they still say no thank you, ask them for a referral to someone they know.
- Recent retirees.
- Members of the autism community, including those with Asperger's.
- Members of other groups you might not have considered – veterans, disabled workers, workers with a criminal record.
- Food service workers make good direct care staff.

## **ATTRACTING**

- Know the difference between requirements and preferences.
- Simplify your application process.
- Streamline the hiring process.
- Hire for FIT first, then for qualifications, skills, and experience. Not the other way around.
- You may be looking for a candidate who doesn't exist. Make your requirements more realistic, and be willing to invest in training and development to create that candidate. You may not have the luxury of insisting on a ready-made candidate.
- Identify the non-technical fit requirements for your company.
- Download and use the interview guide "Finding Great People", at [contentedcows.com/nacd](http://contentedcows.com/nacd).
- Reward managers for hiring well.
- Build relationships with universities.
- Develop an Employer Brand.
- Strive to be a "Destination Employer" – where people have their sites set on you – working at your company is their GOAL, their DREAM.
- Whether you have jobs that can be done from home or not, remember that you're competing in a world where that is now a mainstream option. Offer it for all positions that CAN be done from home. The abiding principle is FLEXIBILITY. Provide flexibility for ALL jobs possible, or you'll be at a distinct disadvantage.
- Use your website to market your company as a great place to work! Most small and medium sized employer's websites are AWFUL at this. Improve yours, and you'll stand out.
  - Your website should:
    - Communicate your employer brand.
    - Sell your culture.
    - Give people a look inside to see what it might be like to work there.

- Know how you look on Glassdoor and Indeed. And if (but only if) you have a rating of 4 stars or more, post those reviews on your site.
  - Make your job postings FUN! Nobody's looking for a boring job, but most postings are deadly!
  - Make it SUPER easy to apply and get an interview. \*\*\* Put a button on your site that says "CALL ME NOW". When someone hits it and fills out the form, be prepared to call them immediately during business hours, or the next day otherwise. Connect this to push alerts to those responsible for managing this process.\*\*\*
- Make use of Social Media. Have it managed by a pro, on your staff, or outsourced. That's where many of your prospects are hanging out.
- Put videos on YouTube, and get somebody who knows what they're doing to manage them, to optimize their findability.
- Pay employees for employee referrals. Make it worth it.
- Get referrals from new hires during their first week, when they're really excited!
- NEVER stop recruiting!

## ONBOARDING

- The Anatomy of Great Onboarding:
  - Welcome them before they start.
  - Welcome them on their first day.
  - Get mutually well-acquainted.
  - Educate, educate, educate.
  - Do regular, frequent check-ins.
  - Celebrate!
- Article on “Re-Recruiting” by Richard Hadden and Bill Catlette. Download at [contentedcows.com/nacd](http://contentedcows.com/nacd).
- Have your CEO send the new hire a personalized letter, before their first day, for every position.
- Have someone make a welcome phone call a day or two before their first day – someone in the part of the company they'll be working in, perhaps someone they did not meet during the interview process.
- Create a team of Onboarding Buddies, who will buddy up individually with the new hire, to help them with all “new employee” kinds of things for the first few days or weeks. Have that person meet them on their first day, at the front door, to welcome them and take them to their workplace or manager.
  - One team member take them to lunch each day for the first week.
  - Various team members stop by for seemingly random, impromptu check-ins from time to time.
  - Make a competition out of it! Gamify it!
- Get all the paperwork done before their first day at work. There's nothing like a feeling of having actually accomplished something and made an impact on day one.
- Hold a Welcome Celebration, with co-workers, and others from other departments, as appropriate for the position.

- Check in with the new employee, asking specific questions, at the end of:
  - Day One – ask these questions:
    - Was today, or the job, what you expected?
    - Did anything surprise you?
    - Is there someone who was particularly helpful to you? I'd like to thank them.
    - What questions do you have?
    - What can I do to help you before your second day?
  - Week One
  - Week Two
  - Month One
  - Month Three
  - Month Six
  - First anniversary

## RETENTION

- Remember that good people want to work with equally good, committed, and talented co-workers. Keep the standards high. I know, that's hard. All of this is hard. Especially now. Do it anyway.
- You may need to “detox” your workforce, by releasing employees who are creating a toxic environment and making it difficult for you to recruit and retain the good ones. Lose a few to gain a lot.
- Discretionary Effort – that increment of human effort, the expenditure of which is exclusively at the discretion of the worker. The difference between what we CAN do and what we HAVE TO do. Going above and beyond, the extra mile. The opposite of “Quiet Quitting”.
- Engagement and Discretionary Effort are conscious decisions we all make every day.
- While work is contractual... engagement is deeply personal.
- Stop wishing all your employees would act like they did “in your day”. Instead, adapt your organization to burn the available fuel.
- Define your organization’s mission in clear and compelling terms.
- Ask 5-6 employees “What are our top three priorities? Compare their answers with yours, and among themselves. You’re looking for consistency.
- Make sure everyone understands – truly understands – how their work impacts customers, both external and internal.
- Pay more attention to Work-Life Balance. When you get some relief on the staffing front, begin to introduce more flexibility and balance, as you can.
- Pay more attention to employee development. Not just for the purposes of advancement on the organizational chart.
- Get creative and flexible with your benefits. One size fits one. Some employees won’t need everything you offer, because their spouse has them covered, or they just don’t value it. Curate a package of benefits they DO value, and compensate them for things they don’t use. Yes, this will mean HR has to do things differently. And certain states legislate this more tightly than others.
- Provide flexibility and autonomy in work scheduling.
- **You’ve got to do something about child care. Help with the cost, and finding providers. This is one of the biggest barriers some parents (mainly mothers) face in maintaining stable, full time employment.**

- Provide substantial retention bonuses, with a small payout at the end of each year, and then a large one at the end of five years. Put the funds in an escrow account so you don't get caught short.
- Provide tuition reimbursement.
- Provide student loan assistance.
- Conduct "Stay Interviews", to find out why people stay with your organization. It will also give you clues as to why they might leave.
- Consider paying employees weekly, if you're not already.
- Modernize your antiquated sick leave, vacation, and other paid time off policies. This is becoming a major bargaining chip in the talent game.
- Say thank you a lot!
- My unscientific poll of employees in recent presentations shows that people value a verbal thank you from their co-workers and manager over time off with pay, and a handwritten thank you over monetary awards or gift cards.
- Send handwritten thank you notes. Deliver in person, or by mail to their home.
- Include families in your expressions of appreciation.
- Have dinner delivered to an employee's home.

### **Feed the troops first!**



*Richard Hadden, CSP is a speaker, author, and consultant with a focus on the connection between people practices and profit performance. He is co-author of the Contented Cows leadership book series, including his latest book, Contented Cows STILL Give Better Milk. He can be contacted through Blanche Powell or Sadie Powell at Powell Kohne Associates, (703) 593-0669 powellkohneassociates.com.*

# Organizational Self-Assessment

1. Do we go around saying that our people are our most valuable asset? If so, what are we actually doing to prove that that's true. What are we inadvertently doing that brings that claim into doubt?
2. Is it required that every manager in our company also be a good leader? Do we select managers for their leadership abilities, or only for their technical or operational skills? Do we promote people into management based on their leadership abilities? Do we train people to be better leaders? Do we coach managers around leadership skills and behaviors? Do we reward people for their leadership behaviors and effectiveness?
3. Do we tolerate managers who are not capable leaders? If so, how do we justify that?
4. What are we doing to actively create and promote a well-known and positive reputation as an employer?
5. Have we built an “Employer Brand”?
6. What are we doing to make ourselves a “Destination Employer” – a place that is actively sought out by people in the top end of the talent scale?
7. Are we capitalizing on our website – an asset we already have – to make sure it attracts the best candidates?
  - Is there a prominent “Careers” tab on our site? What do visitors see when they get there?
  - Does the site help establish and develop a clear Employer Brand? (See zappos.com, rackertalent.com)
  - Does it give visitors a taste of what it’s like to work here?
    - Videos of the worksite
    - Video testimonials from current employees
    - Videos of the work they’d be doing
    - Videos of the impact they’d be having
    - Text descriptions and/or images of any of the above
  - Does it indicate the kinds of opportunities you have in general – not just right now?
  - Is it easy to apply?
  - Is the site mobile-adaptive for all devices?
8. What are we doing to attract the available workforce, which in large part, are younger workers?
  - Social media presence
  - Are we educating the public about our company, our industry, the opportunities available?
  - Are we present in schools, at early enough ages, to spark interest for the future?
  - What do we look like to our customers, our suppliers, others who see our workplace during the course of doing business with us?
9. How does our culture respond to the multigenerational nature of our workforce?
  - Do members of the various generations support and complement each other? Or do they resent and stay annoyed with each other?

- Do we wish, futilely, that younger workers behaved like our older workers do, and how we think we remember they worked when they, too, were younger workers?
- What are we doing to keep our work environment attractive and engaging to everyone in the workforce, recognizing that younger workers are joining in higher proportions than older workers?
  - (a) Do our benefits offerings reflect the reality of today's workforce?
  - (b) Do we have a flexible, cafeteria-style benefits menu that allows workers to optimize the value of their benefits and the expense to the company and to themselves? Or are we still offering the traditional benefits package, which has elements that some workers don't need or want, while missing others that they wish they had?
  - (c) Do we do anything to make it easier for working parents, especially single parents to work with us, while still being able to provide care for their kids?
  - (d) What are we doing to make sure our work schedules are attractive, and promote maximum productivity?
  - (e) Have we considered the questions – “Are we looking for attendance? Or results? Endurance? Or Output?”
- How are we using the assets represented by our older workers to ensure that they don't feel “past their prime” or “put out to pasture”?
- What are we actively doing to encourage intergenerational cooperation and learning?
  1. Occasional forums, town hall meetings?
  2. Mentoring programs?
  3. Internal communication channels? (Publications, intranets, etc.)

10. What are we actively doing to demonstrate to workers how their work matters – what impact their daily activities have on the value we provide to our customers and our community?
11. What are we looking for first, when we hire? Do we first consider cultural fit? Fit by virtue of temperament, values, work style, etc, BEFORE we consider skills, experience, and technical qualifications?
12. Can our leadership team articulate a small number of “fit absolutes” – non-technical personal attributes that predict success in our organization? (Examples: helpfulness, cooperation, willingness to yield personal preferences to team preferences, ability to manage multiple priorities, tolerance for repetitive work...)
13. Are we constantly on the lookout for talent that might be a good fit for our organization – whether or not we have any current openings?
14. Do we know how our company looks on Glassdoor.com and other employee rating sites?
15. How would most of our employees answer if they were asked to describe our organization's mission?
16. Have I polled a few employees to ask “What are our top 3 business priorities?” and also written down what I think are our top 3 priorities? Have I evaluated these responses for consistency?
17. What do we do to welcome and onboard new employees? Is that first day a real celebration? What are we doing to make sure, in the first 2-3 months of the employee's tenure with us, that they are convinced that they have made the best career decision of their lives by coming to work with us?

18. Are we sensitive to, and concerned about our employees having the supplies, equipment, and tools necessary to do their best work? How do we respond when we learn that they don't?
19. Do we maintain a mindset of questioning processes, systems, rules, and policies for their effectiveness and potential to accomplish their objectives? Do we constantly look for ways to remove systemic irritants from our environment? Are we open to input from employees about what systems and policies are helpful to the business, and which ones are a hindrance?
20. Do we care about our employees as people, not just as factors of production?
21. If we care, how do we show it?
22. How often do we say thank you, and really mean it (not just as a reflex), to someone at work, for something they did?
23. How well do we know our employees? Do all of our leaders know the answers to most of these eleven questions, for everyone they work with?
  1. What is your name? (I'm not kidding.)
  2. What are you really good at, at work? Outside of work?
  3. What do you do for fun, at work? Outside of work? (Be careful ☺)
  4. What are you lousy at?
  5. What would you like to do better at work?
  6. What are a couple of your strongest passions?
  7. How do you get to work each day? Do you drive? Alone, or with others? Some other form of transportation? How long does it take?
  8. Has there been some powerful life experience, good or bad, which impacts your approach to your work? (No need to go into detail, and if there isn't one, that's OK).
  9. Who and what is most important to you, outside of work? (No need to pry.)
  10. Is there something in particular about you, or your life experience, that especially suits you to serve some need in your work?
  11. What are you having trouble with at work, that you could use someone's help with?
24. Other than saying thank you, how else do we express appreciation, reward, and recognition to our workforce?
25. What are we doing to build a sense of community in our workplace?
26. As individual leaders, whom are we looking out for first? Ourselves, or our employees?