



EPISODE 5

Gaining More Control: Tips to Manage Recruiting, Culture, and Productivity During a Pandemic

Introduction: Welcome to Strategic Insights brought to you by PrideStaff. On each episode, we bring you interviews with leading management and employment experts from across the country. Your host for Strategic Insights is Brad Smith. And now here's Brad.

Brad Smith: Hello and thank you so much for joining us for Strategic Insights from PrideStaff. I'm your host, Brad Smith and today I am super excited to have Laney Nott, Strategic-Partner of the San Jose PrideStaff in PrideStaff financial offices. Laney, thank you so much for taking your time to talk to us today.

Laney Nott: Thank you, Brad. It is my pleasure and I'm very excited to be a part of this podcast with you and to be able to share some insights with clients and those out in the market today.

Brad Smith: Yeah. And what we're really going to focus on today is what's happening today. So there's a lot of moving parts, there's a lot of changing legislations, a lot of different information that we're hearing in the media. There's political conversations. There's a lot impacting the market right now. And what we're going to talk about are some of those challenges and Laney is going to share her expertise and what she's seeing and hearing in the market that many of those listening today are dealing with.

Brad Smith: So hopefully you'll leave today's episode with some great information that you can enact in your company and overcome some of these challenges. So Laney, let's start off by talking about what you're seeing in the market. What are you hearing from hiring managers, companies? What are their biggest challenges right now?

Laney Nott: The biggest challenges that I'm hearing from hiring managers currently is still finding the qualified talent for the positions that they do need filled. As things have been opening back up and people are returning to work and businesses are getting back to normal, if you will, there's still that employment shortage that we were actually going through. And we're in the middle of prior to what's been going on most recently in the pandemic and that still hasn't changed.

Laney Nott: It's still you have to screen a lot of candidates, you have to triple your recruiting efforts if you will, in order to find the right talent to be able to fill the positions that are currently open. It's been a surprise to the clients, they figured that with everything that has gone on, especially here in California, in Santa Clara County, that things kind of shut down so tightly that there would just be this plethora of people just and ready to go. And that is not necessarily been the case. It's still been a lot of effort, a lot of posting, a lot of conversations, et cetera, again in order to attract that talent even have conversations.

Brad Smith: Yeah, that's interesting. We hear across the board how high unemployment is, but what we're finding is that oftentimes that really high unemployment is focused on a few specific industries. We've seen hospitality hit hard, we've seen retail hit hard, but in sectors like manufacturing, business services, other industries like that, the unemployment numbers really aren't that high and aren't that high compared to where they were pre COVID and pre pandemic. So you're dead on. If you have openings, if you need people, you need to up your recruiting efforts and really make sure that they're focused because there is still a war on talent. We haven't overcome that.

Brad Smith: Building on that, a lot of employees are concerned. Some are, some are concerned about health concerns that seems to have waned just a little bit and companies are doing well there, but some are concerned with just moving remote or communicating in different ways or many companies maybe are short-staffed because hiring is still a challenge and their existing staff might feel a little overwhelmed or overworked. So we found and heard that communication is extremely important with your employee base. What are you seeing? Are there companies that are doing a really good job with communicating and how should they do that with their workforce?

Laney Nott: Oh, absolutely. Communication right now is key. I've even found with my team because some are still working remote as well as some of us are back in the office and touching base, knowing where each team member is, what they have on their plate, what they're tackling, what challenges are coming up, what we can celebrate, what they're doing well and helping to keep them accountable, to a schedule to a task list just as if they were kind of in the office and they were going to have a desk check almost if you will with their manager supervisor or one-on-one, none of that can stop it. It actually I think needs to be more today because people are feeling isolated and not as connected and with Zoom, with a lot of the technology that we have today what's really nice is we can close that gap quite a bit.

Laney Nott: But still as managers and as hiring authorities, you have to make that extra effort to continue to reach out and to continue to check on your team members and really see how they're doing. How are they feeling mentally? And are they still engaged because they can kind of go up and down. I've seen

a lot. They have great weeks and then maybe something will change in the market a little bit and so they'll kind of take a little bit of a dip. And what I've noticed is good teams rally together. If they notice that one of their team members is just maybe having a rough day or a rough week and somebody else will take over for them and say, "Hey, let me handle that. Why don't you take over this task?"

Laney Nott: And they're really banding together to support one another. And that's been really exciting to see. A lot of my clients have shared that they did not realize that some of this has really brought their teams closer together. And that the connections that they've had by having group lunches, if you will over Zoom and it's nothing office and work-related. Everybody's just catching up on life and doing those types of things, again, just staying connected to one another.

Laney Nott: And some other accountability measures that we've seen that have been working have been utilizing the technology like Google Docs, Google Drive lots of collaborative efforts so that you can kind of work on things together at the same time has been a huge help. And yeah, we have to communicate with our candidates and who we have out on assignments every single week. Otherwise there will definitely be surprises that come up and we want to minimize our surprises as much as possible. But if you're not talking with them, they're not going to just arbitrarily tell you.

Brad Smith: For sure yeah. No. No. That's a great segue. You mentioned communication and communicating with your staff. With more companies going remote, some hybrid models using various different communication channels, we've heard from some HR managers from some company leaders, but they almost feel like there's a lack of control. So you're no longer oftentimes face to face. You're no longer hearing the side conversations and things like that. So sometimes control can feel like it's waning. During these uncertain times what can HR managers, what can company leaders do to gain more control over their workforce?

Laney Nott: That's an excellent question. What I've advised my clients is to hold more updates with their teams. For example, in my office and this is just an internal thing we do, we have an AM Google Meet, we do a midday check-in, if anything has changed, if there's something hot or if there's a challenge or a struggle, and then we do a PM Google Meet to celebrate the day and just again kind of regroup before we finish up for the evening. And then we are in constant communication all day through Chats, as far as what's going on and updating one another because that is lacking and that is missing. Being able to just turn over and go, "Hey, what do you think about this?" And having that quick little brainstorm and handling a situation. Now, instead it's making a call. It's doing that chat and having that reach out.

Laney Nott: And so I think it's actually taking us back to, and I don't want to use the word old school but old school communication where you pick up the phone, have that conversation. You can hear the tone of voice, you can hear how somebody's feeling and get back to that type of communication that I think has been lost a little bit recently with email and texting, et cetera. And I think we're longing for that social interaction. So right now I'm finding more people are picking up the phone than ever especially on the client side. Even we're able to get a hold of people that I haven't been able to get a hold of in years. And it's been wonderful to get to have those conversations.

Brad Smith: Yeah. It's nice to hear you say that. And I'm seeing the same thing too. While we're separate I think people are longing for that more personal connection with people that they haven't been able to communicate recently with their coworkers, their superiors, their bosses, leadership. And as managers, I think we have a unique opportunity here to really strengthen our bond with our internal staff. If you can do the things that Laney just mentioned, that's going to set you above and beyond other organizations.

Brad Smith: That's going to help you with retention. That's going to help improve your internal culture and in the long run, that's going to help you improve your employment brand because those stories travel, employees are going to share that information on sites like Glassdoor and reviews and other things. So I think you have an amazing opportunity right now to really position yourself as an employer of choice. Somebody that cares about their internal teams, somebody that's taking those extra steps to make that personal connection, to build and strengthen that bond and to set yourself up for recruitment and workforce success moving forward.

Laney Nott: Absolutely.

Brad Smith: Laney, we have a mix of people that are listening to this webinar. PrideStaff as a whole we work with large organizations and we work with smaller and medium sized companies. And what we've seen is that oftentimes those large organizations have access to vast resources. So they have large HR departments, they have procurement, they have resources that the small and medium-sized organizations just don't have. So what can those small and medium sized organizations do to get a handle on operations, changing regulations in a market that's moving so quick?

Laney Nott: Well, hopefully they decide to call PrideStaff to get a little bit of help with any staffing needs that they may have internally or as things are changing because we're trying to stay on top of that as well, since we're putting people to work. And our number one concern is health and safety of all of our employees as well as our clients at all times. But calling us and asking if we have resources or we know where to go or if there's websites we could refer them to and letting them know that we can ask and see if some of the resources that we

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have have knowledge or white papers, et cetera, that we might be able to send to them to keep them current with the things that are changing, because we just had to do a whole new evaluation, for example, here in Santa Clara County and do a whole new write up.

Laney Nott: And we have a new check mark. It's a different color now that we have to have on our door because of the different phases that that we're in. And so I would suggest staying just on top of every update that's coming out from your mayor or governor and in our area, for example, the head of the health department definitely seems to be the one that's dictating how things are going to go. And then from there the resources that I've seen people pull together with have been incredible recently. Companies who had no idea how they were going to do this and who work remotely still gets the job done, and we're not set up for this. And, Oh my gosh, have come through with flying colors and finding the community has really banded together to help support.

Laney Nott: If an organization is struggling, they're promoting them on social media, "Hey, go help these out. So they don't close." And that's been something that's just been incredible that I haven't seen in a really long time through different social media outlets. And people are really doing everything they can from that standpoint of what can we do to make sure that everybody is going to thrive. But I don't think we're worried about if we're going to get through this now, we're not sure exactly what's going to happen and how it's all going to play out. But I think we're getting a good handle on how business is going to go for a little while especially around here. The big high-tech firms and we got a lot of the big guys, they did work from home and they are planning on doing that for quite a while and they can.

Laney Nott: And the small to mid-sized companies have the employees returning internally and they're making everybody feel it seems very safe, very comfortable. And if people have concerns they're being listened to, they're not being minimized, they're not being dismissed. And I think that's really, really important if somebody is expressing any type of even anxiety about anything, it's not being overlooked. They're saying, "Hey, let's go talk about that. Share with me what's going on." See if I see if I can help you or if you just need the ear.

Brad Smith: That would encourage everyone to use and leverage PrideStaff as a resource. If you go to pridestaff.com, you'll see a collection of hundreds of amazing articles, white papers, like Laney mentioned, resources, webinars from some amazing consultants in several different key areas. So if you have a question or concern, chances are that there's a resource available at pridestaff.com that can help you overcome that. Or if not, as Laney mentioned, we work with thousands of companies across the country, have partnered and have relationships with some amazing industry insiders, some amazing consultants, and can help point you in the right direction to find the answer

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that you need. So visit one of your local offices, go to pridestaff.com and look for those resources and take advantage of those. And Laney I know you've had some amazing feedback and results from people that are going there that have seen our webinars series or write a white paper or other articles. So everyone listening take advantage of it.

Laney Nott: Excellent and I've gotten nothing but wonderful feedback and about how helpful they've been. So that's been very exciting to hear that we're able to provide that to our clients and to just the companies in general. To help them do what they need to do again to stay afloat and keep business going.

Brad Smith: Well, Laney you mentioned earlier how, even though unemployment is high and we talked about that a little bit, there is still a huge talent crunch and a huge talent demand. And what industries specifically have you seen that affected the most?

Laney Nott: So the talent shortage has been affected the most in the area that we're in really in anything manufacturing kind of production, distribution, anything along those lines. Those workers are getting jobs and job offers left and right. We have some of the really, really big guys in our market that are opening up new facilities and kind of gobbling up that talent. And that's not necessarily something that's unusual going into the holiday season because a lot of times that happens anyway.

Laney Nott: But now since that's a lot of the ways that people are getting things, that's how people are making purchases online, et cetera, that has become a huge revenue generator for those organizations. So you have to stay really, really, really competitive, especially with pay, with hours benefits, being flexible with the employees in order to attract and to retain that talent because otherwise they're going to get a call from somebody very similar and 50 cents, a dollar, \$2 more an hour they could get wooed away instantaneously. And that's probably the biggest challenge has been in those areas.

Brad Smith: For sure. So for companies listening, what do they do to make sure that their pay, benefits and things like that are on par? How do you consult with companies to help them there?

Laney Nott: Well, we have resources that we actually can provide to our clients. We have a supply and demand portal, and we have compensation surveys that we can run that are very current with what's going on in the market today, as well as just the fact that we're talking to people who are looking for work or who are potentially interested in making a change right now. And so they're letting us know what they're looking for to make that change, what it is that's most important to them.

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Laney Nott: And if it's kind of the entry level positions, it's definitely salary because they've got to pay for and provide for their families. And the mid-level positions, it's more along the lines of the environment, the culture and how they're going to be treated and the branding. What the company is known for on Glassdoor, what the reviews are like, that type of thing. So it almost even varies as you continue kind of up the food chain, if you will, with the types of positions and the individuals and their backgrounds.

Brad Smith: One thing that I loved that you said is that you're constantly talking with candidates day in and day out and not just talking with active candidates, you're actually going out there and talking with people that are gainfully employed, and you're finding out directly from them, what it would take for people with strong skills to leave their position and go to another opportunity. And that information is invaluable for companies that have openings. You're doing the work that they can't and won't do on their own. So as a hiring manager, as a department head having a strong relationship with a workforce provider like PrideStaff can be invaluable. It can help you benchmark where you're currently at and help you strategically plan as you move forward so that job openings don't stay open for a long time. And you have that huge opportunity cost and productivity loss with those openings.

Brad Smith: So partner with a provider, make sure that you have a great relationship, open those lines of communication and build that relationship over time. Now, speaking of building relationships, Laney PrideStaff, I know does a great job on building referrals from their existing top performing staff. And we found and data supports this, that oftentimes a referral from a successful employee will produce amazing employees. So what are you doing to help drive more referrals from your existing staff?

Laney Nott: Ask! It is basically embedded and every single thing that we do, and we ask everybody candidates, anybody that's applying, clients, every conversation that we have, emails, if we send out text messages to people, anything as far as that goes, we always follow it up with, and don't forget if you know anybody who's looking, a new buddy that's like you, we have a referral program. And get into that a little bit. But basically ask it's constantly asking and it is our number one resource for the talent that we're placing today because that's access to people that aren't necessarily have their resume posted anywhere, they haven't been actively interviewing and so a lot of times we end up having access to talent that wasn't even out there in the market, they're just brand new and we're able to kind of match them up and get them placed somewhere. And that we don't have as much competition, which is always kind of nice.

Brad Smith: Yeah, that's terrific. And if you can get in front of those, we call them passive job seekers. So people that aren't out there actively looking, they are somebody that's open to a new opportunity if it was presented to them and if

it's the right opportunity, but asking for those referrals is a great way to get in front of those people that oftentimes are those star top performers. And like Laney mentioned, start by having conversations with your existing star performers. Start by building a relationship with a recruiting partner that's doing this on your behalf and doing it proactively and consistently.

Brad Smith: Laney one objection or one challenge that we've heard in the market is that no calls and no shows have skyrocketed since many companies have gone remote, since many companies are dealing with challenges with shutdowns and COVID. You mentioned technology a minute ago. What type of technology is PrideStaff using and are you using to help encourage more candidate communication and help to limit and reduce the number of no calls no shows that you see?

Laney Nott: We're utilizing every mode of communications possible and emails, again, phone calls, voicemails. We utilize a thing called PrideStaff Connect as another way to keep team members engaged. We send out messages also checking on how everybody's doing, has anything changed with them? So we're making calls, we're doing emails and we're doing all of these touch points three or four different ways every single week to stay in front of and top of minds to try to minimize that as much as possible, because it does seem that sadly, without having as much one-on-one interaction, which as we all know a lot of the times is the best way to build the relationship is that kind of person to person face to face that we're just not able to do as much as today as we normally would. It is easier for people to kind of just duck and hide and disappear.

Laney Nott: And so what we have found is if you hit them with every single mode of communication, you're going to get a response somehow some way from one of them somewhere. And it hasn't necessarily minimized people not showing up maybe for a job but at least for getting a call. We're knowing that they're not going. We know that something has happened they're not going to make their interview versus it just being a total blatant, just no call, no show, complete disappearance.

Laney Nott: That's been exciting that we've been able to touch them enough and to just let them know and we emphasize all the time communication. No matter what's going on, just communicate. Tell us where you're at, we're on your side, we're a part of your team, our clients and our candidates are both our clients really in what we do. And without one, we don't have the other. And so that constant communication, and just letting us know what is going on, we can fix more problems and we can solve things that people think may be impossible if we just know what's going on.

Brad Smith: I love that. And we've talked a lot about communication today. And with more companies being remote with more confusion and changes in the market,

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communication is key. And I love that you're doing everything possible to communicate in different channels too. People are going to respond on different channels. It's going to resonate with them in different ways.

Brad Smith: And I know that you're able to identify employment issues or concerns oftentimes before they even impact your customers. So you're proactively already putting a plan in place to get people and companies the staff that they need to be productive that day. And I absolutely love the use of communication tools and channels and coupling that with technology to make sure that it's fast, efficient, and effective. So thank you so much, Laney for your insight today. To close any words of wisdom, any tips or advice that you've seen in the market that you'd like to share with our listeners today.

Laney Nott: The biggest thing really is stay positive. There are great things happening out there. The economy is bouncing back. Companies are hiring. Employees are accepting positions and things are moving forward. We're not stagnant. We're not stale. And there are so many wonderful kind hearted people out there that are doing things for others that if you just look and start to try to notice some of that, you'll see that this country has band together in a way that has been incredible, that I haven't seen since 911 to be quite honest.

Laney Nott: And watching people be kind and do things for others and seeing how people are willing to help again it's so encouraging. And I know that that's one of the reasons why I love what we do is because we get to make a difference in people's lives in such a huge way. But I also get to see others helping others along the way and making a difference and seeing what they can do. And the gratitude that people have today it's absolutely wonderful to get those just thank you's again and, I know you're trying, I know you're working hard for me and just continuing to stay positive, it's going to turn around if you're struggling and if you're doing well, keep doing what you're doing, because it's just going to get better.

Brad Smith: I love that. And if you are struggling or you're doing well, but want to take it to the next level, be sure to reach out to PrideStaff, we're here to help you overcome your biggest workforce challenges, your biggest hiring challenges and help you get the people in place that you need to be successful short-term and long-term. And as we head into the new year as you're developing your strategic workforce models, reach out to your local PrideStaff Strategic-Partner. They're here to help. Visit pridestaff.com. Look at all the amazing resources there to help with your planning. As Laney mentioned reach out and get vital market data that you can use to make strategic decisions when you're hiring, planning, forecasting. Laney, thank you again so much. Absolutely great insight. And for those listening, thank you. Take care.

Laney Nott: Thank you Brad it's been a pleasure.

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Closing:

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