



## EPISODE 19

### Recruiting the Unrecruited: A Look at Potential Employee Audiences

**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 listening in to Strategic Insights from PrideStaff. I'm your host Brad, and we have a great episode lined up today. Joining me is Debbie Zurinski, Vice President with PrideStaff. Debbie's going to talk to us a little bit about recruiting the unrecruited with the massive talent shortage that we're all faced with right now. We're going to look at potential audiences to get in front of and how we go about doing that. Getting those people that are sitting on the sidelines back into the workforce. Debbie, thank you so much for joining us today.

**Debbie Zurinski:** Brad, thanks for having me. It's great to be here.

**Brad Smith:** All right. So, to set the stage for this episode, I want to look at some data. A lot of people when they think about the talent shortage right now think that the pandemic was the root cause. So COVID hit and everybody stopped working and this was the cause of the employee shortage. But recently we had a leading labor economist, Ron Hetrick on from Emsi, E-M-S-I. He did a live webinar with us and presented some really interesting statistics that were really astounding to me. I want to start off with some of those.

**Brad Smith:** In 2020, we saw the most people retire and leave the workforce in U.S. history, imagine that. The most people retiring in the history of the U.S. We now have more Gen X than Baby Boomers in the workforce. And both of those are outpaced by millennials who now make up 56 million workers that hard charging, hardworking baby boomer generation is now exiting the workforce and they're doing it at record numbers. For the last two decades our birth rate has been declining and we haven't replaced the people that are leaving the workforce.

**Brad Smith:** And in fact, 2020 saw the lowest birth rate in our history. And on top of all this, the pandemic did drive down labor participation rates. We're missing five million people from the labor pool. So those are some scary statistics, especially if you're trying to lead a high growth organization, or you're trying to maintain a

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competitive advantage in your market, or you're an HR professional that is looking to fill a bunch of positions across the entire organization. Really, really scary. Debbie, you work with so many companies all across the United States. What are you hearing?

Debbie Zurinski: You know Brad even before COVID we were starting to see this decline in good talent available in the workplace. Now along came COVID and just magnified the situation. So, people are running around in that panic of, "Oh my gosh, I can't find people." So, some of the first things that companies have started doing is throwing money at it.

Debbie Zurinski: Meaning, let me just hurry up and be the highest bidder for pricing but really, we've got to look at the root of where do you actually find people? Because what we're all forgetting is there's a labor pool out their people working, in the last two years, they're now starting to suffer a lot of burnout. They're stressed out, they're looking at their managers saying, "Hey, I don't think this is the company I want to be at for long term." So, company and they're also stretched them because they are shorthanded at the company.

Debbie Zurinski: So, their turnovers starting to increase. They're starting to look around, the companies need to take a good look internally and say, "Hey, recruiting is going to be part of this. I'm probably not doing a great job at retention, but I do need to go find folks." So, there's a whole, it's like the perfect storm just brewing out, they're like crazy.

Brad Smith: It really is. Yeah.

Debbie Zurinski: Is important.

Brad Smith: It is. And it is that perfect storm because yes, you have the pandemic which obviously impacted things, but you brought up so many other points. Turnover is amazing right now. We have this declining birth rate. We have lower levels of immigration. So, there's less people coming into the country. We have massive retirements and as we discuss, so there's a whole convergence of issues that are driving this labor shortage that is probably going to, and that probably will be something that we deal with for years to come. So, with that in mind, Debbie, what are you doing right now? I know that you work with a lot of PrideStaff offices across the country. What are you doing to successfully find people to uncover this talent and help with retention and recruiting?

Debbie Zurinski: Brad, I'm kind of smiling because when you're in the recruiting industry, there's a lot of what we would call non-traditional meaning we don't just put an ad out there, we don't just put a sign on the front lawn that says we're hiring. Saturday night for example, I was out to dinner with our PrideStaff team here in the Tampa area. And we were at Maggiano's, a pretty well-known Italian restaurant jam-packed restaurant, and the server wasn't probably on the ball 100%, but

there was a moment we were able to stop and ask her for a second, "Hey, do you know of anyone looking for work?"

Debbie Zurinski: Men, she stopped everything and leaned over and said, "Oh my gosh, my girlfriend just moved the area. She's a customer service rep and she's bilingual. And she would love to get in a job. And she doesn't even know where to start." Amanda, couldn't get in her purse fast enough to pull her business card out. And then we asked the name of the person and said, have her call us on Monday. We will take great care of that. So, we all have to remember if we're in any capacity for hiring, are we talking to all the people we engage with?

Debbie Zurinski: Not just at work time, but if I'm going grocery shopping, if I'm going out to pick up some food for lunch, if I am sitting in a restaurant, if I'm in a store shopping, am I talking to the clerk, the retail clerk, am I letting people know what kinds of jobs I have available? And don't always be thinking, "Hey, I want to talk to you, Brad. And I want you..." But I have to remember Brad's got family, friends, neighbors, relatives. I don't know who Brad knows so by getting the message out to as many people as I can and put the word on the street, that this is what we do for a living.

Debbie Zurinski: We're in a position to hire people. That's what helps to network out there and get people who are looking for work or looking for that job change. Because I just don't know when I hit somebody on a day where they're like, "That's it. I can't stand in anymore. I want to quit my job." And they happen to have a business card of, "Hey, you need to know this company is hiring." That is a key piece to anyone that needs to recruit folks for their business.

Brad Smith: So, it's networking, it's repetition, it's being in the right place at the right time when somebody has a pain or a challenge?

Debbie Zurinski: Exactly. And for women, men too, who go get a manicure, pedicure, I got to tell you the nail salons, another great source you're sitting there and you're thinking, "Hey, what harm is it?" You just mentioned, "Hey, by the way, my company's always looking to hire X, Y or Z. Can I leave a card with you?" And that's how you'll get the word out there sooner than later and how you can have the direct connection with people. People love to talk about it, because they'll start asking you.

Debbie Zurinski: And that's what the one woman Saturday night said, "Can you tell me where the jobs are? What part of town?" Well sure we can answer those questions. We're not going to hide it. You know they're over in the Westchester area. If they ask what's the salary, give them the range and help answer the questions because they want to be comfortable that you have a real job and you're looking for real people.

Brad Smith: I think that's important too, that concept of a real job and real people and sharing those details and being open and being transparent. Debbie, it's

interesting that you brought up your server because we've seen over the last few years this shift in the workforce and shift in skills. So, what we've seen is a few years back, a lot of people shifted from that light industrial warehouse manufacturing sector over to hospitality, to retail, then the pandemic hit and hospitality and retail were decimated. A lot of people don't want to work in those settings for fear of health or wage issues, or a whole host of other reasons. How do we get as employers, people to shift back to other positions, whether it's office clerical, whether it's manufacturing light industrial, how can we leverage those people in retail, in hospitality that maybe want to shift into other areas and change their careers? How do we approach them?

Debbie Zurinski: Well, first of all as employers when we look at the jobs that we need to fill, a lot of times these jobs can be trained for the skill set they need. What they need to bring to the table is will they show up on time? Will they get along with others? Can they follow direction? Are they willing to work when they show up at work? All those types of things. And so, what we can be looking at is we're talking to potential recruits are, "Okay tell me what skills you do have? Can you use a computer? Are you using an RF scanner gun? Did you have to do inventory in retail? Tell me..." So, pulling out some of the skill set they have, but then really diving into those soft skills of the person and then looking to work with employers on what are transferable. Hey, if I can get you someone that's going to show up every single day, they know how to read certain documents. They know how to do some like data entry. Can you not show them how to do inventory management in your warehouse?

Debbie Zurinski: Can you not teach them how to... They're used to interacting with customers face to face. Can you not show them how to use the telephone and do the same thing over the telephone? Being a little bit more flexible with people to know that they've got certain skills that they can bridge and come over. That's where as employers, we need to have to be thinking a little bit more as opposed to, "Nope, if they haven't worked in a warehouse, I don't want them before."

Debbie Zurinski: Well, you know, everybody at some point had to start somewhere. So, if we've got some of those starting skills, let's work off of that and see what we can make happen.

Brad Smith: I love that. In a talent starved market, we need to get a little bit creative. We need to think outside the box, we need to not be so tied to very specific skills. And that brings up a related topic, which is job descriptions. There was a study done recently that showed that women in particular, if they don't match all of the required skills in a job description, they just won't apply. Whereas in some cases, men will apply if they have one or two of those required skills, but maybe don't have six or seven of them. By including all of those required skills and not thinking about those transferable skills, we're really limiting our talent pool. Aren't we?

Debbie Zurinski: We sure are because and the conscientious employee is going to read that ad and say, "Oh, I don't type 50 words a minute." Maybe they're typing 45 words a

minute, but they're not going to respond because they read the instructions and they're just doing what the instructions say. When they've eliminated themselves, when really, we don't, we wish that they would've called because we might be able to work around that.

Brad Smith: Now Debbie, beyond just required skills. So, employers need to be a little bit more loose would that be open to those transferables? What are some other things that you are seeing employers loosen up on? Are they doing less screening or anything else?

Debbie Zurinski: Well, there were many companies when it came to background checks. And I think Ban the Box that started a couple years ago and has been coming across the country. Not that we want to relax ourselves so far that we don't have any policies in place per se but there was a point where if anyone had something on their background, regardless of what it was or how long ago that was a no go. Many companies we're seeing now are saying, "You know what? If it was a drug charge and it was more than 10 years ago, I don't care. If it was a DUI and it was five years ago and they're not going to be driving anything, I don't care."

Debbie Zurinski: And it's not that we're saying we don't care that there was something on the background. We're saying, you know what? Does that really matter as it relates to the job itself? So, they still may have some... Years ago they would've said, "Nope, I don't care. I just want someone 100% clean."

Debbie Zurinski: And now they're starting to say, "You know what? Let's kind of do a cutoff here. There's certain things that I'm willing to accept that I may not have in the past." The same thing with the drug testing. We're seeing a little bit of that too where, because my marijuana, quite frankly, is becoming legal in many states. And there are ways that you have to look at it because it's just like alcohol is legal, but you can't go to work drunk. Well, you can't go to work higher than a kit either, but many employers are saying, "Hey, I'm not worried about you checking for marijuana, these are drugs yeah because they are illegal drugs."

Debbie Zurinski: So, I don't want to know that they're illegal, but I'm not as concerned with marijuana, especially if we're in a state where it's a legal thing or because then they're going to go to a review officer and be told, anyway, it is medical and it's fine. So, some employers are just saying, "You know what? Let's back up on that." And that's where we're going to focus more on the person as to what have they recently been doing for their work experience, because that'll speak a lot more volumes than the background check or the drug test.

Brad Smith: Yeah. And with a five million worker shortage, we're going to have to get and be open to second chances. And I love your point of looking at recent history. Maybe something that happened 10-years-ago, doesn't matter as much as their performance over the last year or two Now-

Debbie Zurinski: Well, and people are also looking for a little bit more flexibility at work, because everyone has families, issues or whatever is coming up personally. So they're looking for the employer to be a little bit more flexible on the hours. And I see that a lot too with companies, they'll say, "You know what? As long as the job gets done, if they can't get here 9:00, I think I'm willing to work with them from 9:00 to 3:00 or they'll make up this. Or they want to come in at 10:00, and stay 10 to 6:00." And some of the positions they'll say, "You know what? We really don't need eight hours a day. If they only want to work five hours a day, we're good with that too." So, anything that we might consider traditional, is almost like there's no such thing as traditional anymore in some cases.

Brad Smith: Yeah. In some cases, I think you're dead on. We need to be a little bit more flexible in our required skills in loosening up our overall requirements, and background in looking at other opportunities to change from maybe a traditional eight or ten hour workday. And split that up a little bit more, be more flexible. Debbie, I want to get back to something you mentioned earlier. So, you shared that whenever you're out in the public, you're asking for referrals, you asked your server at a restaurant, you asked at the nail in hair salon. What are some other unique places where you found success in asking for referrals or just networking?

Debbie Zurinski: Well, Brad again, once this gets in your blood you just do it all the time and don't think about it. And not everyone goes to church, but there's a lot of churches out there that have support groups. They're looking for speakers to come in and work with the special groups that they have. They get together to talk about career advancements. A lot of them have job boards that are online.

Debbie Zurinski: All you have to do is call a church and just say, "Hey, do you have a way to... If I send you like an ad or something that tells you about what kind of people I'm looking for, is there any way for you to post it for your membership to see?" The high schools, oh my goodness. Everyone this time of year, it's not that many more months to go. If you have a high school senior, and you're already as the parent worrying about what are they going to do after school besides college or a summer job?

Debbie Zurinski: If you were to call the schools now to line up and say, "Hey, can I come in and talk to your students, the seniors about entering the workforce and just kind of dos and don'ts when they're on an interview." Because who else is really teaching them how to go do this? We all think that maybe they're parents are showing them, or maybe there is one teacher at school showing them, but that's not always the case. They don't know how to go about finding a job.

Debbie Zurinski: And these don't have to be long presentations. They don't have to go on for half a day. You can go into high school and for 20 minutes, talk about just what to do, what to wear and how to prep yourself and how to give information to a potential employer in order to land a job. Some of those folks... May not have the kids in high school, some are going to go on college, but when they go home

at night and they're telling their parents, "Hey, I heard the speaker school that talked about jobs."

Debbie Zurinski: Again, Brad, I don't know who their aunts, uncles, nephews, brothers, sisters, relatives, they'll spread the word for you, that you've got jobs and you're recruiting. Apartment complexes another one of my favorite places. As apartment managers want to always help their residents in all kinds of stuff. So when you've got jobs that are near those apartment complexes, and you can tell that to the apartment manager, and can you hang something up to let their residents know, have we've even had apartment complexes, invite us to come over and set up a little job fair in your lobby or when the weather is nice outside in the parking lot and we've gotten great candidates that live right there that walked up, and we were able to hire and get out to work right away.

Debbie Zurinski: Grocery stores, we all probably do some form of grocery shopping. If you're one of the folks that say, "No, I have them bring it to the car." They're still coming to the car. There's a person, always have a business card on you or some sort of card that you can hand a person that's got your contact information with the website, the telephone number, a name. It's a quick little transaction to be able to say, "Here's my card."

Debbie Zurinski: And if you're not that outgoing and you're a little shy, you know what? I've seen people in Wendy's where they just even leave the card on the table, because you know what? One of the employees is coming by to wipe it up and they look down and see this card, and I watched them shove that card in their pocket. Who doesn't want to know a good recruiter? Who doesn't want to know someone that does hiring? That's a name they want to hang onto. There's, an oil change. Sitting at the oil change place, I've had folks where girl next to me is telling her boyfriend how she hates her job. Well guess what happened? Couldn't help myself.

Debbie Zurinski: And my hand goes in my purse like automatic. Out comes my business card, and I just lean out and my go, "I'm sorry, I couldn't help. But hear what you're saying on Monday during work time, if you want to call for a confidential conversation, I may be able to help." And just leave it at that. It doesn't have to be a long conversation. She was all excited. She's like, "Oh my gosh, where are you located?" Again, that's how you'll get some really good referrals and people coming to your office. And it's okay to say the message too, of what kinds of positions you're looking for. Because there are cases where we can't help everybody. I could still be polite to them. I can give them resources if I can't help them, where else they might want to try, but I should at least know.

Debbie Zurinski: And how I'm going to know I'm doing great is when I walk into places repeatedly and they point and go, "Oh, there's the lady that has the jobs. That's who you want to know, go get her card." And you're going through business cards like crazy. And then you're sitting there going that's on my database is so robust with people, because I'm getting to know as many people as I can in this

community. So, I could be a source so that my clients have a good pull of people to pull from when they have openings.

Brad Smith: Debbie, so many good points there. I'm sitting here thinking to myself, personally, I would never go or I wouldn't have gone and spoke to a high school class because we don't hire people out of high school. We need people with a college degree. But your point is well taken in that those high schoolers know so many, so many people. Their parents might be a great fit for our company. Their cousins might be someone that I'm hiring. They might go and tell their teacher who has a bunch of friends. It could be an amazing, amazing referral source.

Brad Smith: And then the other one, I love his apartment complexes. I would never have thought to approach a apartment complex manager, but it makes sense for so many reasons. They want their people to pay rent. They need to be gainfully employed if they're going to pay rent. And also, people oftentimes are looking for shorter commutes. Let's look for apartments or housing complexes around our employers, physical locations, and reach out to those places and try to find some great, hidden talent there. Just great tips. Thank you so much for sharing those. What about local or government agencies? Are those a good source for you?

Debbie Zurinski: They are. And Brad, it's like anything else I'm looking at. I do have to go to the source, work it a little bit. And then I may decide that, "Hey, this may not be the best source." And I can give you an example. I was in a market once where I thought I was reaching out and getting some folks that may have some skills, but I found that they were all just recent parolees. So, I had to call the parole officer and thank him for thinking of me, but because the folks were so recently incarcerated, regardless of the crime, they didn't have recent work experience at all I wasn't going to be able to help.

Debbie Zurinski: So that's a case where all these sources may not be the best. And I said, I appreciate it, but then there are a lot of veteran's groups. Heck I know you been talking to, was Mike on our answer hub. And he's a veteran, he was telling me how he goes, the American Legion. I said, "Yeah, we think American Legion, old stuffy men, smoking and drinking beer in the middle of the day."

Debbie Zurinski: I said, but we forget that those are grandparents who have kids. We forget those are parents that have kids. We forget some of them just recently came out of the military and aren't sure how to go about civilian life to find a job. All you need to do is call the local VFW or American Legion, talk to the commander and say, "Can I put a poster up or something that says I've got jobs." If there's a military base in town, I know San Antonio, Roger down there and Frank have hooked up with their local military folks. And they're getting a lot of good candidates.

Debbie Zurinski: And you have to remember not just ex-military, but trailing spouses. When the military gets moved around a lot, you got spouses who keep going to different towns. They're usually good for about two or three years until they... If they

have to move again. But they're there for a while and they've got great skill sets. So, tapping into that. The welfare to work programs out there. There's a lot of folks on welfare.

Debbie Zurinski: And whether we realize it or not, there's a lot of programs to try to help those folks get off of welfare. You just have to reach in your local community. Usually, you can just go online and Google it, you'll find them and reach out to them and say, "Hey, how can I partner up with you?" So, if you've got a class that's getting ready to graduate with some skills because they'll teach folks typing, welding, how to work a forklift, data entry, tap into them.

Debbie Zurinski: The folks may not have actual work experience, but they've now been taught skills that are transferable to go into the workplace. The government agencies will help those folks with that transition also by giving them a lot of resources. So that could also be a good source for folks to find them. Catholic charities also does a lot with different refugees and they have all the path cleared of obstacles to get people to work. They just need to find employers who will take these folks and put them to work. So, you got to hook up with these groups.

Brad Smith: Yeah. And it's starts like you said by networking, by reaching out, by making a connection. I love the point too, that it may not pay dividends immediately. We need to work these relationships, work these connections, uncover the associations, the networks, the groups that do drive high quality talent, and look for those transferable skills. I love the idea of looking at military and military spouses, and thinking about ways that we can help them in the community. Oftentimes those people are extremely driven. They're extremely focused. Some of the strongest work ethics that you will find. And we just need to look at what military skills translate to civilian work skills. And you'll find an amazing employee there.

Brad Smith: Now, Debbie, with the pandemic women in the workforce were particularly hit hard. Many had to leave the workforce because of childcare issues. How do we get those women back into the workforce?

Debbie Zurinski: Reaching out to them is the first step. Again, through the churches, even going some of the daycares that are out there, because some of them are still dropping their kids off and putting a flyer up that says you have jobs. And then finding out, we mentioned a little bit before about the flexibility, talking to an employer and saying look, do you need somebody in your accounting department or payroll department? If I can get somebody there that I know you want a full time, but if they can work 30 hours a week. I know that when they work 30 hours, they're going to work like harder than 60 hours.

Debbie Zurinski: Working with the employers to help make those matches. But then also having conversations with those women to say here, let me talk to you about how I can be flexible with you to take the skills that you have to keep you out there and get you what you need. So, you can still do your home life balance along with some work to bring you all together.

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Debbie Zurinski: And those women out there, they all know each other too because it'll be... Again, if I'm talking to you, Brad, you have friends. Well, they have friends too. And if I get one mom, I'm probably going to get some other moms because at one, when they're at the playground, when they're at daycare, when they're at the sporting events with their kids, they're sitting next to the other moms in the same boat. So, they will also help with the recruiting, and helping me find people like them.

Brad Smith: So, Debbie there's been the is consistent theme of networking and building referral sources. Building on that does pride staff have like a formal referral program?

Debbie Zurinski: You know what Brad? Thanks for asking because we do. we have an employee referral program. Well, we'll pay a \$100 for our referrals. And we'll even pay it if you're not even an employee of ours. If you're just a friend of PrideStaff and you're helping us to recruit, and you send somebody to us that we actually put up to work, we will pay you the referral bonus. We've paid out hundreds of thousands of dollars this past year. We're planning on doing the same as we continue to look at our referral bonus, and our program with our people because they feel that good about referring us, because they know that we'll take good care of the referrals that they send us.

Brad Smith: There'd be so many great tips today. And as an employer listening to this, even myself I'm a hiring manager myself and even thinking about all of these different things. I'm wondering to myself, when the heck am I going to find time to do all this? So, you brought up just all these amazing sources and light bulbs are going off all over the place. We need to be doing this ourselves. I'm sure those listening are thinking the same thing. We need to do this, but don't necessarily have the time to do this. So, you are working with PrideStaff offices. You're doing this 24/7. You're recruiting around the clock. Without making this too self-promotional, I think that's why it's so important to partner with a quality staffing and recruiting agency. Isn't it? Because you can't do this all yourself.

Debbie Zurinski: Well sure. If I'm a company and I've got a limited budget, I'm going to be able to put that ad out there on one of the job boards. I could put a nice big sign outside my facility because as I'm hiring and I might be able to have my internal employees tell their friends. But that limits me if I look at the pie, the entire marketplace, that limits me only to a section of the pie. And when you come to PrideStaff, because our teams know how to recruit everywhere they go. We now have access to a 100% of the pie we can tap into. And we can even customize it based on the types of skill sets because we know where those skill sets usually hang out in the marketplace.

Debbie Zurinski: So, we can target that. And I'll go back to Amanda Becker who she needed a Cantonese speaking customer service rep. Well, guess what she did for dinner? She ordered it from a Cantonese restaurant. And while she went there to pick it up, she took her flyer and said, "Hey, if you know of anyone who speaks

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Cantonese, I was looking for a job at these weird hours and all this." And guess what? The next morning, she had three referrals from that restaurant. So being able to customize because we're always thinking, we're always looking, we do get access to much bigger pieces of pie in every marketplace.

Brad Smith: Terrific. Debbie, thank you so much for your time today. Great knowledge, great pieces of advice for those of our listeners here that are having a challenge recruiting that can't find people, any closing words of wisdom for them.

Debbie Zurinski: Don't be afraid to ask. And sometimes you may have ideas that we didn't think of for recruiting. We'd love to hear them because there's nothing too crazy for us. And if you don't want to try, we're willing to try it. If you just mean to give us a chance, give us a call.

Brad Smith: Love it. I do want to encourage everyone listening, if you do have a hiring need. If you have a challenge, reach out to your local PrideStaff office, visit [pridestaff.com](http://pridestaff.com). We have a full team all across the country that is recruiting 24/7. As Debbie mentioned, they're doing this in their personal lives. They're doing this in their social circles. They're networking. They're partnering with agencies, partnering with schools, with institutions.

Brad Smith: They are constantly, constantly recruiting and they're proactively recruiting. So in today's market, you can't wait until you have a job opening. You need to partner with somebody that is on the lookout for the types of people that you need constantly. Be proactive with your recruitment efforts, partner with an agency like PrideStaff and get a helping hand. Debbie, for all of those that are listening. I want to thank you again so much for your time. Great insights and thank you everyone for listening.

Closing: Thank you for listening to Strategic Insights brought to you by PrideStaff, whether you're looking for high level workforce consulting or staffing help to meet demands. PrideStaff is here to help.