



SERIES EPISODE 2

Proactive Workforce Planning: 6 Steps to Strengthen Your Workforce

Intro: 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 into this episode of Strategic Insights brought to you by PrideStaff. I'm your host, Brad Smith. This is part two of our three-part series on workforce planning. In part one, we talked about what a strategic workforce plan really is, and why it's so vitally important to your business. For part two of our series, I'm joined by Paul Shands, workforce expert and owner and strategic partner of the Knoxville, Tennessee PrideStaff Office. Paul, thank you so much for joining us.

Paul Shands: Thank you, Brad, for having me.

Brad Smith: I'm really excited. In this episode, we're going to break down workforce planning into six key steps. And Paul, I know you work with a variety of different organizations. I'm really excited to get your perspective on these steps, so let's jump right in. I know you use this process with your clients in businesses of all shapes, sizes, and in different industries. Part one really goes for every type of organization out there. We need to make sure that we align our workforce requirements with our company's strategic and annual business plans. Now, that just makes common sense, but how do you actually go about doing that? What are your steps when you're working with a new client to make sure that we have alignment in our recs and in our annual business plans?

Paul Shands: Sure. Well, the first thing we do is, we start by looking at issues and challenges with our clients or prospective clients to identify the need. Once these are identified, we typically start providing solutions to overcome these challenges. A lot of times these discussions go into what our candidate flow looks like. We talk about our average applicants per week, how many hires our recruiting team makes per week, and what our process is for recruitment, and interviews, and screening and onboarding. And one of the challenges that we're actually starting to hear more of, it's like the need behind the need, is bringing value and bringing time back to the hiring managers and what that value add looks like. This is a big deal for them. They just don't have time to dedicate to all of these steps. And at PrideStaff we vet all the candidates ahead of time through our

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screening process and they're ready for work. So, they can actually be more productive and proactive within their own jobs.

Brad Smith: That's terrific. So, you're going in looking at annual business plans, your hiring managers know that they need to hire. They don't have the resources, time, energy, wherewithal, maybe even budget to recruit on their own. So that's where you're really coming in and adding that value.

Paul Shands: Right, exactly.

Brad Smith: All right. Now I know step two is also looking at identifying and overcoming internal and external barriers to those workforce goals. So, you mentioned one barrier in time. What are some other challenges that you see companies run into when they're looking at developing and implementing their workforce strategy?

Paul Shands: Well, I think really for the most part, one of the strongest values that PrideStaff has is that, we work with a variety of different companies and can often anticipate internal and external issues, no matter the size of the companies, including companies that have highly specialized staffing needs. Just last week for example, I was talking to a prospect and they were a very highly specialized business. And when they were talking about what they do and the skillsets that their workers need, it really resonated with me that they were very similar to another company that we actually staff for. And when I mentioned that company's name, they were like, "Wow, okay, cool. We staff for them, we know them. We actually partner with them; we work with them." And so that allowed us to share some market intelligence and guidance on how to recruit, and how we have the ability to selectively source more candidates effectively.

Brad Smith: So that's interesting. You're working with a variety of different companies. Some may be similar in the local market. But that gives you a leg up because you understand what's actually happening in the market. You understand what the supply and demand look like, challenges. Now, I imagine you're proactively recruiting for a bunch of different companies. Do you ever find that as you're recruiting for one company, you uncover some talent that might be a perfect fit for another one of your clients?

Paul Shands: Absolutely. And that's when our recruiters do a really good job of making sure that with all the clients that we work with, that we know the type of candidate that they're looking for, and that we can actually submit the resume of that candidate to that client through what we call MPC, which is most placeable candidates.

Brad Smith: And that's why I think step one is so important. So, you're going in with a new client and really identifying and understanding their company mission, their values, what they're looking to accomplish. You got a good feeling for the type of people they need, and then you're constantly on the lookout, even if you're

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not directly recruiting for them, but you have a candidate that fits the exact profile of the person they need, you're sharing that with them. I love that approach.

Paul Shands: Absolutely.

Brad Smith: Now, steps three and four, I'm going to combine together because I think they really go hand in hand, and it's really tied to strategic direction. So, you mentioned earlier that you're looking at the supply side, so how much talent is there out there? You're also looking at the demand side, and what is the demand and the competition for this challenge? And then for step four, you're running a gap analysis. So, you're looking at where skills are missing, what a specific company might need. So, walk us through that step in evaluating supply, looking at demand, and then the gap analysis.

Paul Shands: Absolutely. Well, for the last several years there's been a shortage for talent, and I think we can all recognize that. Most recently there's been a slight decline with companies hiring, but there's still a huge talent deficit. And at PrideStaff we cast an extremely wide net for candidates. We recruit, interview, hire large volumes of people consistently. We know that we will need several qualified candidates for every job opening there is. So, we are very aggressive at recruiting for certain skillsets and transferable skills. We proactively recruit for key clients that consistently hire people with certain work histories and for specific skill sets.

Brad Smith: Paul, a lot of great points there. You mentioned you cast an extremely wide net, so you're constantly recruiting 24/7 I know your team is recruiting. And another thing that you brought up is that you actually need several qualified candidates for every job opening. And I know that it's very important, especially in today's highly competitive talent market, that end companies make a quick decision. Because if you wait, if you don't hire a person that's the perfect fit, they're going to find a job really quickly. So, I know that that's why you're constantly recruiting and looking at several people for each skilled position. Now, one thing that I've noticed you do particularly well in your market, and many other PrideStaff offices as well, is that you've built an extremely strong employment brand. So, in order to recruit several candidates for every assignment, you need to make sure that you are seen as an employer of choice in your market. How have you gone about making sure that people see you at that level?

Paul Shands: Absolutely. PrideStaff in Knoxville is the most reviewed agency in the local market. We built an extremely strong employment brand. And it means a lot to our team, to me. People that come in, they want to work with a company that gets them, that understands them, that treats them with respect, dignity, and honestly treats them as a human. That holds a lot of weight and helps us ensure our supply talent meets the demand for our clients.

Brad Smith: I love that. So, for those listening, it's very important that you look at your own employment brand. So, companies that have strong online reviews, that have

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employees that are happy, that enjoy working there. It's much easier to recruit top talent for those type of organizations. So, for yourself, look at and evaluate your online reviews. Make sure you have a strong online brand. Now on the flip side of that, when you're looking at a workforce partner, it's very important to look at their online reviews, see how they treat candidates, see how other clients appreciate and like working with them. And that can help you identify and pick out the strategic partner, the staffing agency that you really want to work with. And Paul, I commend you again on building that amazing employment brand. You're dead on. You have more reviews and more five-star reviews than any other organization in your market, and many other PrideStaff offices do as well. So great job.

Paul Shands: Great. Absolutely. Thank you.

Brad Smith: Let's transition to step number five now. And this is where we really implement solutions. So, Paul, I know for most of your client relationships, you're working on this workforce strategy and plan. I think for some it might be a little transactional, you might have a one-off fill that you need to make. But talk us through the solution implementation phase.

Paul Shands: Absolutely. Well, you are correct, and in some cases we are transactional. You need a specific person with a specific skillset, and we go and recruit that person. But for most of our clients, we put together a complete recruiting workforce management plan together, based on what their needs are. And this can include candidate outreach, working with our recruitment vendor partners, people already in our database. But then we also have an outreach in which we can use the PrideStaff technology platforms, that we can go out and reach specific candidates based on what our clients are looking for.

Brad Smith: Absolutely love that. So, you've got candidates that you've already vetted and recruited, you have a strong database, you can build out, I'm sure referrals from that database, right?

Paul Shands: Absolutely.

Brad Smith: Yep. So, getting people that are already successful, that have already been vetted, that have already successfully filled assignments and getting them to find like-minded people and refer them to you. And oftentimes those top tier workers associate themselves with other top tier workers, that's a great source of talent. But then you have kind of deep recruiting budgets. I know as a national company you have some deep resources and some efficiencies of scale there to reach the masses. And then you use technology for candidate outreach, and to make sure that talents engage, make sure that they show up on assignment, make sure that they're happy, and really identify issues before they pop up.

Paul Shands: Right. We focus on communication, transparency and feedback through the entire process. We want to make sure that we stay engaged with our employees. We find that that's a very, very important aspect in today's market. Of course, as you mentioned, we use the PrideStaff technologies to help discover any issues before they happen. We are in the people business. I mean, things will happen. But we use things like PrideStaff Connect for employment engagement. We share this information back with our clients to identify any issues or concerns that would negatively impact their business, and really put a plan in place to mitigate that risk.

Brad Smith: Yeah. And that really is step six, right, that monitoring. You hit the nail on the head. So, you're using technology to discover issues before they happen. You are making sure that employees are engaged, uncovering potential attendance issues. In some cases, I would assume even you're getting feedback from your temporary staff that could help the client improve their processes, their managers, their training, their onboarding, everything else, right?

Paul Shands: Absolutely. And we share that feedback. Again, transparency is really important. And when we have meetings with our clients and getting that feedback, that's one of the things that they often compliment us on, is the fact that we are very transparent and that it seems like we always have a plan. No matter what the situation and what comes about, what may happen, we always have a plan in place. And that's important not only for the client, but also our team.

Brad Smith: Wonderful, thank you. So, I appreciate everyone listening. Just as a quick recap, step one of your strategic workforce plans is aligning workforce requirements to your annual business plans. Make sure that there's alignment there. Make sure that you are prepared to meet those annual business plans and you have the talent to do so. Step two is identifying an overcoming internal and external barriers to meeting your goals. Steps three and four are looking at the supply and demand side, and then running a gap analysis to make sure that you're prepared. Step five is implementing those solutions, implementing the recruitment strategies that are going to help you meet the needs of your talent, and meet the needs of your organization and your clients. And step six is monitoring that entire process. Because as Paul mentioned, we are in a people business and things will happen. So, we need to monitor our process, make sure that we identify issues before they come up. Paul, thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate it.

Paul Shands: Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

Brad Smith: And everyone, this wraps up part two and part three of our series. Paul will be joining us again, and we're going to talk about aligning your workforce for the future. Thank you so much 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.

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