



SERIES EPISODE 3

Proactive Workforce Planning: Aligning Your Workforce for The Future

- 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 for tuning into this episode of Strategic Insights by PrideStaff. I'm your host, Brad Smith. Today I'm joined by workforce expert and owner of PrideStaff Knoxville, Paul Shands.
- Paul, thanks for joining us today.
- Paul Shands:** Thank you, Brad, for having me.
- Brad Smith:** Everybody and thank you for listening. In episode one of our three-part series on workforce planning, we introduced what strategic workforce planning really is. In episode two, Paul joined me to talk about his six-step process for developing and deploying your workforce strategy. Now in part three of today's episode, it's all about aligning for the future. When I say aligning for the future, we need to embrace change. We know that businesses change, the business climate changes, consumer demand can change, people definitely change, and as we're in the midst of things right now, we know that the economy changes. These can all impact our workforce, our business, our strategy, and our future. Companies need to adapt.
- Paul, I'd like to start by talking about some changes that we're seeing in markets right now. We are in the midst of a massive, massive demographic change. We have an aging workforce that poses a ton of different problems, including a lack of in-demand skills, re-skilling challenges. We have a mass retirement going on. What are you seeing in the market and what do companies need to be aware of and plan for when it comes to their workforce?
- Paul Shands:** Right, well, we're seeing a record number of retirements. Companies need to have a knowledge and skill transfer process in place. They need to bring in staff to learn and get the knowledge and consider an off-ramping program. We want to remind companies also that there are less people entering the workforce so even during an economic downturn, you will need to continue to recruit. With the youngest workers coming in, they want to see a defined career path and direction for where

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they can grow in a company, and so we're always encouraging our clients to paint that picture for them. Even if it's something as simple as appealing to parents, that can have an impact. We're seeing more of the younger workforce look to their parents for guidance on their jobs, careers, so they need to be aware of this.

Brad Smith: That's really interesting. We've got an aging population that's getting out of the workforce. I know that when COVID hit, we saw a mass exodus of people retiring and taking those skills with them. In your strategic workforce plan, it's thinking through what's going to happen with your workforce over the next year, two years, five years, and do you have a plan in place to bring in people now so that knowledge just doesn't disappear? Your people that are retiring are taking away a lot of knowledge, a lot of skills, and as Paul mentioned, you need that off ramping program to make sure that you have people that are ready to step in when that time comes.

Then Paul, in part two of this series, you had mentioned one thing that really resonated with me that I think is important to note here. When you recruit for a position, you're not just recruiting one person. You're in many cases recruiting three, four, five, maybe more people for a job, right?

Paul Shands: That's right.

Brad Smith: When thinking about your workforce plan, your workforce strategy, you need a plan to mass recruit because things are moving quickly. People are taking jobs quickly, are on the market one day and off the market the next day. When you're developing your workforce plan, you need to have agility, speed, and strategy in that. I think partnering with a company like Paul's, partnering with PrideStaff, can really help you build in that level of recruitment to make sure that you're not left stranded without talent that's ready to step in and replace people that have either retired or left for another position.

Paul, I'd love to transition now to talent management. We know that talented employees form a competitive advantage for companies of every industry, every size. You need great people to lead your organization and grow. You need people with the right drive, the right soft skills, all of those things are extremely important. How do you accomplish that in the current talent market where we have upwards of 10 million job openings and not enough people to fill that? What are you seeing in the market?

Paul Shands: Well, there is a talent shortage, and one of the things that we talk to people about is transferrable skills. With some of the people that are exiting the workplace, they have, as you mentioned, deep experiences in certain industries. Sometimes it's important to talk to companies about what that looks like and bringing in people that can learn, that has the capabilities of learning. An example would be maybe print production is something that we run into quite a bit. It's hard to find people to have that specific skillset, but we will go in and, again, look at those transferable skills. Maybe they're mechanically inclined, maybe there's some soft skills, maybe they've had some machine operating, but they're great workers and they're great

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learners. We can see from the data that the available talent is limited so we're there to help source new pools of talents to fill that need. Often, we find that people we put in place that can learn skills quickly turn out to be amazing contributors.

Brad Smith: You actually have data that will tell you how many people in a specific area have the skills that your client's looking to recruit for?

Paul Shands: Absolutely. It's something that we go to quite a bit. It's something that when we meet with our clients, we can present to them as well because we're all looking for ways to make sure that these employees that again, are exiting the workforce, that all this knowledge and their deep experience is transferrable to the younger generation.

Brad Smith: Paul, I know in part two of this episode when we were talking about your six-step process, we really looked at supply and demand and we looked at gap analysis. I love that you're using data and reports to look at the supply of available talent, look at the demand for that talent, and then look at gap analysis. I think that ties directly into the talent management side of things here. You actually will run these reports for your clients and give them the information they need to make educated decisions around things like required skills or pay rate or things like that, correct?

Paul Shands: Absolutely. Of course, pay rate is a common topic that gets brought up. In the last couple years with the talent shortages, we've seen pay rates go up and it gives us the ability to talk to our clients, to talk about within this certain pay rate for this specific skillset, we can identify how many candidates that are actually available in the market, and we can also talk to them about specific pay rate ranges in which they have the information to go back and decide if that's something that they feel like that they need to move on.

Brad Smith: That's definitely one of the advantages of working with an organization like PrideStaff is you get access to this data that you wouldn't have access to otherwise, you can understand what other companies are paying, you can get a good solid benchmark, you can make sure that you're not under or overpaying for your talent, making sure that you have attractive opportunities, and also looking at the demand and availability of this talent, you can make decisions on whether or not you can sacrifice on specific requirements or not and also look at what transferable skills might be appropriate to widen the recruitment pool.

Now Paul, I want to talk a little bit about flexibility. We started this section off by talking about how business changes, how the economy changes, how policies can change, how talent changes. In a competitive landscape, we need to be able to change quickly. Companies need to be able to adapt. When you're thinking about the war for talent, when you're thinking about workforce planning, when you're thinking about your clients being able to meet their yearly goals, how do they need to start to prepare to win the war for talent?

Paul Shands: Sure. Well, companies need to be open to training people that want to learn. They

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need to be open to hiring hungry people. Some companies that we run into have extremely long hiring processes, and in this market, speed is vital. It's so important in today's recruitment market. Candidates are in high demand and they have a short shelf life. They are ready to go and get to work and if you're willing to wait a day or two to interview, they're gone. We just don't want our clients to lose top talent and settle for the fifth choice because the first four are already hired. Another thing is I think communication's key. We need to embrace technology to help make communication easier and most effective. This allows us to stay engaged with our employees. We have a tool called PrideStaff Connect that allows us to build stronger and deeper relationships with our talent to keep them engaged. This also helps the hiring company get great feedback from us.

Brad Smith: I love that. You're working with organizations to find people that have good skills, but also have a soft skill fit so they're ready to learn. You're working with them to hopefully shorten their hiring process, make it more effective and efficient, and I know that one of the challenges hiring managers fall into when they're trying to do this themselves is that hiring and recruiting isn't their core job function so either they fail at their core job function, or they fail at recruiting, and it's tough to be great at both, so bringing in a partner like you can really help there.

Then I think you're dead on in that communication is key. You need to constantly communicate with your staff, with applicants, with candidates, and make sure that you have that feedback loop in place to ensure that your workforce strategy is identifying problems before they pop up and you have solutions in place before you really need them. Excellent points, Paul, thank you so much for joining us today.

To close, any closing words of wisdom? As companies are out there developing their workforce plans, looking at their workforce strategies, determining when they need to adjust or change, any closing thoughts?

Paul Shands: Well, I believe that the goal of workforce planning is to have the right people in the right place at the right time, and PrideStaff is certainly here to help companies do that.

Brad Smith: That's terrific. Well, thank you so much. I will reiterate that PrideStaff is the company that can help you find the right people in the right place at the right time. I think the goal with a strategic workforce plan is not waiting until you have a need. It's anticipating that need. It's having a partner that will proactively recruit the type of people you need to meet your yearly, your two year, your five year goals. It's very important that in this market you recruit proactively. You cannot wait until you have a need because it's so hard to find the right person, and as Paul mentioned, you're going to settle for that fourth or fifth person.

I also think it's crucially important to partner with an agency that gives you access to data and education and market intelligence to make the right decisions. Paul mentioned earlier how PrideStaff has that data. You can request those reports from your local PrideStaff office. Just go to pridestaff.com, find your local office, and request a supply and demand report, request a salary or position analysis, and they

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can work with you to show you what supply and demand in that market looks like.

Finally, if you feel like you don't have a solid strategic Workforce plan or you'd love a second set of eyes, reach out to a local PrideStaff office. We have experts like Paul who can work with you to identify your business goals, help you match a workforce strategy, workforce plan to meet those goals, and then help on the implementation and recruitment side. Thank you all so much for listening. Paul, thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate it.

Paul Shands: Thank you so much for having me. It's been a pleasure.

Brad Smith: All right. Take care, everyone.

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.