



2025 Running USA Industry Conference Panel Discussion: Strategies for Employee Recruitment and Retention in the Running Industry

The Employee Recruitment and Retention Round Table, led by Dianna Parkman, provided a platform for industry professionals to discuss challenges and solutions in hiring and retaining staff within the running industry. The session highlighted several key issues and offered practical mitigation strategies to help organizations build stronger teams.

1. Recruitment and Retention

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Emphasize Company Culture:** Highlighting the unique work environment of running organizations can attract candidates looking for flexibility, visibility, and impact beyond a paycheck.
- **Networking & Community Engagement:** Collaborating with local running clubs and events can increase brand awareness and establish relationships with potential employees.
- **Employee Development:** Offering career growth opportunities through training and mentorship programs can enhance retention.

2. Burnout Prevention

This was the longest discussion topic, emphasizing the importance of work-life balance and employee well-being.

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Flexible Work Schedules:** Encouraging remote work options and adequate time off helps maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- **Manageable Workload:** Breaking projects into smaller tasks and conducting regular check-ins can help prevent burnout.
- **Focus on Well-being:** Wellness programs, group runs, and designated wellness days contribute to mental and physical health.
- **Mental Health Support:** Providing access to counseling services and mental health apps normalizes discussions around mental well-being.

3. Limited Staff Support

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Cross-Training:** Training employees in multiple roles enhances flexibility, though small teams may find this challenging.
- **Technology Investments:** Automating repetitive tasks can free up staff for more valuable work.
- **Outsourcing:** Hiring temporary staff for administrative tasks allows in-house employees to focus on core responsibilities.

4. Addressing Limited Resources

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Prioritizing Core Needs:** Focusing on revenue-generating activities ensures sustainability.
- **Seeking External Support:** Partnerships with local businesses and funding streams can provide financial relief.
- **Leadership Involvement:** Transparent leadership fosters team morale and informed decision-making.

5. Competing in a Competitive Job Market

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Offering Unique Perks:** Flexible schedules and a supportive culture make small organizations attractive.
- **Strong Organizational Branding:** Showcasing company values and impact within the running community appeals to passionate candidates.
- **Employee Referral Programs:** Incentivizing referrals can be a cost-effective recruitment strategy.

6. Competing with Larger Companies and Benefits

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Highlighting Company Culture:** Smaller organizations can offer employees more influence and direct impact.
- **Running-Industry Perks:** Benefits like race fee reimbursements and gear discounts can attract running enthusiasts.
- **Non-Monetary Benefits:** More vacation time and professional development opportunities add value beyond salary.

7. Managing Culture Shifts and Workplace Dynamics

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Clear Communication:** Regular meetings and feedback loops address concerns and improve transparency.
- **Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives:** A welcoming environment fosters collaboration among diverse personalities.
- **Adaptable Leadership:** Leaders should adjust their styles to support employees during transitions.

8. Maintaining Competitive Salaries

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Regular Salary Reviews:** Ensuring competitive wages within the industry helps retain employees.
- **Non-Monetary Compensation:** Additional vacation time and flexible work arrangements can compensate for salary limitations.
- **Career Growth Opportunities:** Defining clear pathways for promotions boosts motivation and retention.

9. Employee Incentives and Recognition

Mitigation Strategies:

- **Spot Bonuses:** Rewarding employees for exceptional contributions through small incentives fosters motivation.
- **Employee of the Month Programs:** Public recognition and small rewards enhance morale.
- **Gamification & Challenges:** Running-related competitions encourage engagement and camaraderie.

- **Team-Building Activities:** Events such as group runs and wellness days strengthen workplace relationships.

Conclusion

The round table emphasized that employee retention and recruitment challenges require a proactive approach. By fostering a strong company culture, supporting employee well-being, and offering meaningful benefits, running industry organizations can build resilient, motivated teams that contribute to long-term success.