

Help Wanted!

*Learn How to Attract the Right
Help & Retain the Staff You Have*



by John T. McQueen, CFSP, MBA

DRIVE DOWN MAIN STREET

in almost any town throughout the United States and a common sight are signs that consist of two words: “Help Wanted” or “We’re Hiring”. Based on a 2022 funeral industry survey and report, between 2020 and 2030, the U.S. Total Employment Growth Rate is expected to be 7.7%. Of course, the report also shared that the growth rate in the funeral profession is going to be a dismal 4.0%.

So how does this compare to other trades in the service industry? According to the *Employment Projections* by Projections Managing Partnership, bartenders are expected to increase 32.5% and barbers will increase 17.5% during the same period. In addition, dental hygienists will increase 11.2%, EMTs and paramedics by 10.9%, and electricians by 9.1%.

What does this mean for many in the deathcare industry going forward? There are decisions to be made regarding the path companies can take. One option: Owners and managers can work more hours and begin performing many of the tasks they may have long ago foregone. A second option: You could also delay your retirement and work longer into your old age forgoing those “golden years” you have dreamed of with your spouse. A third option: Continue adding more and more work, along with more hours, to your existing team members. But don’t be surprised when they begin to resign from your employment, either due to burnout or family pressures.

But there is a better option: Build a culture that fosters growth, encourages teamwork, and improves the customer experience.



Culture Forward

Developing the right culture takes time and energy, but once properly implemented the results are often profound. I say the “right culture” because every company has a culture already — some are good, some are bad, and some are flirting with disaster. As stated in the August 19, 2022, *Forbes* article, “Understanding The Importance Of Corporate Culture After The Great Resignation,” author Paula Morgan shares:

Organizational culture is a powerful dynamic in your company. It cements employees’ confidence in their work, and keeps them motivated and inspired to do their best. Culture is a set of beliefs and attitudes about the way things are done in your workplace. It may not be discussed every day, but culture is always there in the background, affecting every bit of work that gets done—or doesn’t. It’s the human factor.

According to a 2018 survey by Robert Half International of more than 1,000 workers and more than 5,500 senior managers across industries in the United States, the following results were found relating to the role company culture plays in the hiring process:

- 35% of workers would decline a job offer if the role was a perfect fit, but the corporate culture wasn’t
- 91% of managers say a candidate’s fit with the company culture is equally or more important than skills and experience

The Robert Half survey also concluded that employees are seeking corporate cultures that are more supportive, team oriented, and innovative. They also desire company cultures that are less traditional and less competitive.

Glassdoor’s Mission & Culture Survey 2019, conducted online by The Harris Poll in June 2019, found that over three-quarters (77%) of adults across four countries (U.S., UK, France, Germany) would consider a company’s culture before applying for a job at that organization. It also found that 79% would consider a company’s mission and purpose before applying.

We have already discussed the expected dismal results in growth rate (4%) for the funeral profession between 2020 and 2030. Below are some additional key findings from the Glassdoor survey related to company culture and mission that affect employee recruitment and retention:

- Company culture matters significantly more amongst younger adults. Millennials (18–34 years of age) are more likely to place culture above salary than those ages 45 and older in two of the four countries—U.S. (65% vs. 52%) and UK (66% vs. 52%).

- Nearly two-thirds of employees (65%) state company culture as a main reason for staying in their jobs.
- 71% of employees stated if their company cultures were to deteriorate, they would seek employment opportunities elsewhere.

Personality Outshines the Rest

My philosophy with respect to hiring has been “*hire for personality, train for the rest.*” Personality, which includes an individual’s beliefs, values, and desires, is more important in most cases than skill set. Sure, having the technical knowledge and aptitude to perform given tasks is important, and will expedite the integration phase for the new hire. However, if their personality will be one that deteriorates your culture and disrupts social networks within the organization, your company will suffer.

In fact, personality is instrumental in the success of the customer experience among both your internal and external customers. As I’ve shared many times, people buy from people they like, so if an individual is engaging and personable—exhibiting traits of likeability—your customers will be more forgiving of small mistakes.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to teach people to exhibit a great personality; yet teaching them how to embalm and make funeral arrangements is indeed doable.

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Passion Counts

Combine personality with a strong company culture, and passion will blossom within your employees. Why is passion important? Have you ever been served by someone who had no passion? We all have experienced a time when we were made to feel like an imposition. Of course, the passion begins with you, as science has proven passion is contagious. You cannot be an inspiration to others if you are not inspired.

More and more successful companies and leaders are using passion as a criterion for hiring staff. As Carmine Gallo shares in her book, *Talk Like Ted*, the founder of Starbucks, Howard Schultz, said that “when you’re surrounded by people who share a



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collective passion around a common purpose, anything is possible.”

In addition, Gallo provides hiring insights from Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin brands, who says he hires people with the “*Virgin attitude*”: they smile a lot, are positive and enthusiastic, and as a result, they are better communicators.

In the book, *Uncommon Influence*, former NFL Coach Tony Dungy shared the sage advice that Pittsburgh Steelers’ coach, Chuck Noll, shared with him when he joined Noll’s coaching staff. Noll’s statement was simple and straightforward:

Your job is to help your players play better. You’ve got to get to know each of your players. You’ve got to figure out what things they need in order to improve. And then you’ve got to find a way to get them those things.

The same holds true for every business, including funeral service. Do you take the time to get to know all your employees? What about their families? Do you know what motivates them? How about their personal

goals and desires? Once you get to know them, you can better coach them so they can serve customers—both internal and external—better.

A great by-product that develops when your company is purpose-driven, with a strong company culture, and employees who are passionate about their work—potential hires seek you out. Will all of this change the shortage of employees within the industry? Not in the near term. But it can change your shortage of applicants. **M**

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