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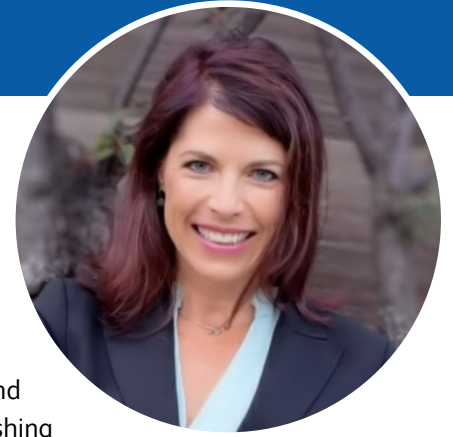


*How to Attract More Top Talent to Your
Organization By Focusing on Brand,
Culture and Talent Management*

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executives and
entrepreneurs
achieve results
through a
people-centered
approach*

Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at Sara@LaForestConsulting.com or via [LinkedIn](#).

Improving Performance

Navigating Transitions

Accelerating Results

A recent survey, conducted by the Kaufman Foundation with entrepreneurs at the Inc. 500 Conference revealed that the biggest impediments to growth are: Finding qualified people and managing fast growth (which represented 61% of the impediments facing fast growing companies).

We know from high school physics that physical bodies attract with a force proportional to their mass. So metaphorically we are saying that future employees are attracted to your organization and great employees will stay, based on its mass. And we define “organizational mass” as:

1. Your brand
2. Your culture
3. Strong strategic leadership to establish strategic growth plans
4. Sound management practices, focused on communication
5. Being competitive in the market place with compensation and benefits
6. Being a “learning organization” so people that come will stay and grow with you
7. Being a business that celebrates and recognizes the greatness in its employees and collective results

Interestingly, as you build a talent gravity organization, you will also be addressing the second impediment to growth – managing a fast growing company.

Step 1 toward Successful Talent Attraction: Starting with Branding

As business leaders who want to grow your organizations, you want to attract high potential talent that will best position your organization to deliver its promise to the marketplace.

What are you doing about your brand? You don’t have to be a Google, an Apple or some other billion-dollar company. What you have to be is different and remarkable in your niche. How you choose to present yourself to your market will either encourage or discourage candidates. Consider these 3 key questions:

1. What’s your message to the marketplace?
2. What’s your promise?
3. How is it different?

Next, how are you getting that message out to the masses? For example, you can be writing articles and position papers, creating videos, distributing podcasts, and presenting on teleseminars, webinars and at live events.

Yes, a small company just starting out can catch the attention not only of the market but also from the people who you want to attract.

Contrary to current fear-based economics and projections, there are more jobs available in select areas than there are qualified people to fill them. So to grow, you need to fill them, and you will only do that if you are a place people are standing in line to become a part of. And it

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starts with your brand!

Step 2 toward Successful Talent Attraction– Get Your Future Employees Excited

Just like in the market, your brand can bring clients (and future employee prospects) to the door, but then what happens? Do you keep the promise, or is it all fluff?

Future employees need to be excited about what they see and experience when they meet you. Candidates want to have their expectations met. They want to see and hear:

1. Excitement about where the company is going
2. Frequent talk about the team and “how you get things done”
3. Success stories – how you win in the marketplace
4. Stories about the successes of employees both in a job-related context and in a personal context

None of these cost money! They are the by-products of a company with a strong culture.

Do you know what your culture is? Do you know the experience interviewees have with your company?

Now, the next step deals with how to close the deal and not have buyer’s remorse – or a disappointed new employee.

Step 3 toward Successful Talent Attraction- Select and Retain the Best Talent

Talent management starts with selection. (Remember your brand and culture brought them to the point where they are interested in talking to you about employment.)

We recommend eight components for a successful talent management program:

1. A rigorous talent selection process
2. On-boarding program that supports transition and swift assimilation to your organization)
3. A meaningful (vs. routine) performance review system
4. Opportunities for learning and growth, whether training is part of annual goals identified by and with the employee, a learning management system, coaching, off-site training or opportunities for certifications
5. An employee incentive, reward, and recognition program
6. Management training that prepares new/promoted managers for their role as leaders verses staff, line or field workers
7. Leadership development to establish and promote emerging leaders for your succession plan
8. Succession planning where you identify and develop the leadership pipeline of successor candidates for executive and mid-management roles

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Remember, the process is not over when you hire a new employee. It's a process that starts – not ends – with the job offer. The best way to look at the eight components is not linear, but as a circle starting with talent selection, with each component building on the previous component. Succession planning is the transition point. The point where one employee transitions out (into a new and bigger role within your organization) and another fills the vacancy. Think about this as an upward spiral for the employee.

Businesses are "organic organisms". They thrive or fail based on how they are nourished. And it is your talent that nourishes your organization. So don't feed it junk or starve it.

Finding qualified people will continue to plague the marketplace for the next few years. It will take time for the educational system to catch up with the new marketplace demands.

You Have Two Choices as an Entrepreneur, Small Business Owner or Organizational Business Leader:

1. You can complain about it and about the shortcomings of the educational system and the lack of good candidates, or
2. You can focus on becoming what we call a "talent gravity organization" and make choosing your company the decision of choice.

