Ankeny Economic Development Corporation
Notes from CEO Roundtable – The Talent War
March 7, 2017

This panel of professionals not only provided current and relevant insight for today's talent war, they went above and beyond by providing us with their notes so the benefits of our discussion can go beyond the March 7th breakfast.

Recruiting
David Leto, Executive Vice-President, Palmer Group
dleto@thepalmergroup.com, 515.225.7000

Recruiting red flags – What keeps prospective employees from applying to some companies or departments?

- Realize the importance of your "employment brand." Do you have a name/brand that is recognizable? If so…what are people saying? Are you known as the market leader? Company reputation is so important.
- What are your current employees saying to others about the work environment?
- Google Reviews and online presence is critical. Are your social media pages informative and how do they portray your company?
- How strict are your job requirements? I have seen too often that companies will put on the job posting that a certain skill is required, when it really is not. Less is more if you want to increase your candidate pool, but be specific with what is really required. You also need to explain why someone should want to come and work for you.

- How difficult of an application process do you have? In this tight market, don't make it more difficult than you need to.
- How responsive are you when an application comes in? If you are not responding to candidates within 48 hours, you are doing yourself a disservice and them as well. If it becomes known among an applicant and their network that your company never responds to applications, then the less candidates you will get.
- Are you known to have good benefits?
- Who are the leaders of the organization and how are they viewed within the community?

Tips for attracting talent

- What do your current employees say about the work environment?
  - Your reputation from how you treat your people will get out in the community and will make recruiting easier
  - Make sure your company mission and values are public for them to see
- Strong Social / Digital Presence
- Companies that are highly adaptable to technology – companies need to keep up with the time and create a WOW factor.
- Community Involvement - Need to clearly understand how the company benefits the community and get them interested in being a part of what you are doing.
- Money still matters in attracting people, especially when they have been frustrated with something in their current situation that has caused a reason to consider a new position
- Prioritize meaningful work over pay – what type of career development program do you provide? They want to know their company is investing in them and this must be done on a continual basis.
  - They want and need to have a voice at the table…even if it is an informal voice. They want to make sure you are listening. They want to count, be appreciated and valued.
  - Get your teams "plugged in" to what you are doing and why you are doing it.
  - Benefits
  - Provide them mentors – give them someone to look up to and someone who will set the example for them on what it takes to be successful in your business
- Help them identify their "purpose" within the organization – everyone needs to understand how they can impact the business and lead from the seat they are in.
- Company Culture critical
- How "cool" is your office space? Aesthetics are important.
- Flexible schedules – Collaborative work environment – work-life integration
- "Sell Des Moines and what we have to offer as a community – especially to those who may be looking to relocate here.

Attracting and Managing Millennials
Rowena Crosbie, President Tero International
rcrosbie@tero.com, 515-221-2318

Millennials is the label attached to the American population born between the 1980s and early 2000s. It is the largest population group ever to enter the labor force at one time. By the year 2020, it is estimated that there will be nearly 86 million millennials in the workplace—or 40 percent of the total working population.

Millennials are popular subjects to observe and evaluate. As a result, we hold stereotypes and biases around this group that must be challenged if we are to bring out the best in them and in our organizations. Here's one such example:

It is commonly believed that millennials hook up for the purposes of sex more frequently than preceding generations. This perception may come from the growing number of dating apps available and the large number of social media posts by millennials chronicling their sexual exploits. The facts tell a very different story. Gen Xers born in the late 1960s were more than twice as likely to have been sexually active as millennials born in the 1990s. Millennials who are sexually active have fewer partners than both Xers and boomers. The only generation comparable to millennials was born in the 1920s.

What millennials really want from an employer?

Millennials expect different things from the workplace than the generations that preceded them. They are largely unimpressed with the corner office or the usual trappings that communicate status and rank. They prefer an open work environment that fosters collaboration and provides access to decision-makers. Other appealing features to the workspace include common areas where they can enjoy informal conversations and meetings with coworkers. They also expect up-to-date technology.

Millennials are said to have new ideas for where, how, and when work should take place. The nine-to-five traditional workdays of the past are being discarded in favor of more flexible and mobile work schedules that leverage technological resources. While it's easy to argue for the merits of these work options, there's a dark side to being constantly connected. Not surprisingly, millennials who also express an interest in balance and quality of life wrestle with a paradox. How can "always connected to work" and "quality of life" coexist? Always "on," many millennials struggle with the very work environments they say they crave.

Millennials say putting people first, acting with integrity, and living by a code of ethics are key factors contributing to long-term success. They extend that attitude to organizations. In choosing an employer, they favor companies that share their values. As consumers, they are willing to pay a premium for products and services provided by companies with strong corporate social responsibility reputations. Their employment and buying patterns confirm this. It would seem that millennials put their decisions where their mouths are.

Where do employers go wrong with this group?

1. Failure to invite feedback

   Being asked for their input and seeking input from others is so much a part of the culture of millennials that the phrase "ask everyone to weigh in" could be printed on a T-shirt. Many millennials were raised in an environment where they were invited to weigh in on decisions as routine as "what should we have for dinner?" to major decisions such as "where should we go on the family vacation?"

   These early experiences may offer insight as to why millennials question their leaders and offer ideas and opinions at higher rates than seen previously in the workplace. It is not out of disrespect that they do this. They have a sincere interest in learning more and contributing to the organization. Since the leaders they're questioning are often members of earlier generations, the active sharing of ideas by millennials can be perceived as offensive. In fairness, remember that many of these leaders were raised in the "children should be seen and not heard" generation. Their negative reaction to unsolicited ideas, opinions, and feedback is understandable.

Leaders are advised to invite feedback from millennials while also communicating that not all ideas will be explored or implemented.

2. Failure to provide feedback

It is a myth that millennials only want positive feedback. While all of us like to hear nice things about ourselves, millennials also crave regular feedback that includes constructive critique. Millennials are used to feedback. They not only received it from parents who provided frequent praise and encouragement to bolster self-esteem, they're accustomed to instant feedback from the video games they play, the text messages they send, and the computers they've grown up with. It's how they know they're doing well or how they find out if they need to shift their behaviors or approach.

Millennials have a deep interest in not only knowing what they're expected to do but also why it matters. This is a different perspective from previous generations of workers who commonly carried out the work they were instructed to do without a lot of questions. What's driving this change?

- One explanation may be the measuring stick millennials use to measure productivity. Rather than considering the hours worked in a day as a measure of success, they look to the results of what they've actually done.

- Millennials feel compelled to know that what they're doing has value, even in little things.

At the heart of both of these trends is the imperative for feedback. Feedback should be frequent and specific.

3. Failure to provide professional development

Millennials consider learning and growth opportunities to be as important a part of their compensation package as health insurance, flexible time, paid time off, and their 401K. Many millennials have even accepted a position that paid a little less than another one because it offered the opportunity for professional development and personal growth.

According to Gallup, 87 percent of millennials rate professional or career growth and development opportunities as important to them in a job. This is an especially impressive number when compared with the 69 percent of non-millennials who say the same thing. This deep interest in professional development may be the single most important differentiator for millennials in the workforce.

What professional development needs do they have?

Millennials are highly educated, resourceful, team-oriented, and inclusive—at least that's what the prevailing beliefs suggest. They also suggest that millennials are too busy to talk to people, possibly because they're too busy texting friends. Talking to people, especially without a purpose, can seem like a waste of time. Is it true that millennials don't know how to conduct themselves professionally in the business environment?

When you grow up with texting as a primary method of communication, where and how do you develop interpersonal and conflict resolution skills? It's possible that you don't. Lacking the volume of phone and face-to-face experiences of previous generations, they may even struggle to accurately decode the nonverbal elements of communication that aren't present when communicating is one-sided, brief, and electronic. They may even misinterpret

disagreement as yelling—a misunderstanding at the heart of many cross-generational conflicts.

Employers are wise to conduct needs assessment to determine skill gaps and offer training opportunities to millennials. Members of this cohort are anxious to learn and grow. Many feel their formal education didn't adequately prepare them for the challenges of the workplace and 91 percent of them aspire to be leaders. They are looking to their employers to help them acquire the skills for career success.

4. Creating a culture of entitlement by failing to set expectations

Are millennials narcissistic and lazy, believing that they are entitled to rank and privilege they haven't earned? Or does their ambition make them anxious to leave behind what they perceive to be an outmoded framework for career growth and success?

One of the greatest challenges faced by organizations is providing a work environment and benefits that attract the best employees yet don't foster a culture of entitlement.

Leaders in organizations never intend to communicate that the comfort and personal equity of the employee takes priority over what he or she is tasked to do. Yet what is the interview candidate or new employee expected to think when the tour includes a visit to a state-of-the-art fitness facility, no formal dress code, game rooms, compensated meals, convenient flex hours, and optional educational programs? Add to this the promise of lavish bonuses when the company is profitable, regardless of individual contributions.

Is there a problem with companies seeking to create a state-of-the-art workplace and exemplary employee benefits?

No. The problem lies in incomplete communication. Many organizations offer their employees a unique and upscale work experience. Zappos and Disney are two examples. What they communicate, and many organizations fail to, are the expectations of their employees.

5. Falling prey to the multitasking myth

Of all the beliefs people hold about millennials, the one that is touted as a great strength is their ability to multitask. Employers seem to covet this ability. After all, doing two things at once must be better than doing one thing at a time, right? It seems so intuitively simple and logical.

One of the most enduring myths around personal efficiency and time management is that multitasking saves time. Evidence of the widespread belief in this myth comes from the more than six million web pages offering strategies about how to multitask.

But the research on the subject of multitasking does not support this myth. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Multitasking actually slows people down and leads to errors and increased stress. When you try to do two things at once, you either can't do it or you won't do either task as well. It is a recipe for losing efficiency and effectiveness.

When two activities demand complete attention, leaders should encourage their multitasking millennial employees (and themselves) to choose one and focus.

Engagement and Retention
Tips for Retaining Employees
Tracy Lewis, Director of Human Resources, PurFoods, LLC

1. **Pay fair and competitive wages**. Most people work to support themselves and their families. Let's face it – money is an important motivator. Offering below-market wages increases the likelihood that employees will look for work elsewhere. Check salary surveys often to ensure the organization is keeping pace with the market. Invest in **Creditable Salary Surveys**.
   - Pay factors
   - Over pay/Under pay
   - Palmer Survey

2. **Offer competitive benefits**. Employees are scrutinizing benefits closely as they become responsible for greater benefit costs. Determine what benefits are important to your employees. Make every effort to keep your benefit package comparable to the benefits package offered by competitors. **Every year, what can you do to take it up a notch? Employee Opinion Survey (EOS) is important as it provides a Blueprint. EE Holidays – Birthday and Floating to disperse the time away from the office.**
   - Vision
   - Flag Pole (EOS)

3. **Develop employees.** Determine your employees' talents and goals and help them to expand their abilities through discussion, cross training, seminars, and a variety of assignments. Mentally stimulating work is high on most employees' wish lists. **Tero can be a great partner!**
   - Talk to them – don't assume

4. **Provide opportunities for advancement.** Make sure employees know what is expected of them and have the tools they need to be successful. Set clear standards for what must be accomplished to receive a promotion. Set goals and conduct performance reviews periodically to measure progress toward these goals. **Provide career ladders when possible.**

5. **Train supervisors and managers.** A good relationship between an employee and his/her manager is critical to employee satisfaction and retention. It has often been said that "Employees join companies, but they leave managers." Make sure all managers have appropriate training and coaching to develop good supervisory and management skills and are held accountable for the engagement and retention of those they manager. **Managers want this. What are your issues? Dealing with Conflict, appropriate interviewing, etc. Living the Core Values.**

6. **Communicate with employees.** Employees tend to be more loyal when they feel they are "in the loop" where key company information is concerned. Don't make it necessary for employees to get their company information through the rumor mill or the local TV station. Company executives and managers should communicate with employees frequently, divulging as much "company confidential" information as they are comfortable revealing. **Quarterly meetings or State of the Union type meetings, etc.**

7. **Conduct employee option surveys.** How can you know what employees are thinking if you don't ask? Periodic anonymous employee opinion surveys are the best way to determine

what is working and what needs to be fixed. **Blueprint for the year. Key is to follow up immediately, take care of low hanging fruit right away, act upon suggestions and communicate outcomes.**

- This can be anything from very expensive to home-grown survey

8. **Be as flexible as possible.** Employees are more willing to go the extra mile for an employer that makes it easier to manage the demands of their lives outside of work. Features such as flexible hours, sabbaticals, on-site services (such as dry cleaning or child care), and the ability to work remotely can all increase loyalty and commitment to the organization.

9. **Provide regular positive feedback to employees.** In addition to recognizing big accomplishments, take the time to recognize employees who have made smaller contributions. Let them know that you noticed and appreciate their efforts. It is important for employees to know when they are on the right track. "Catch 'em being good!" Positive reinforcement works.

   This survey came out in 1946 by Lawrence Lindahl in Personnel magazine, in 1949. The survey has been conducted several times over the years with similar results. Full appreciation for work done is consistently the #1 item that employees are looking for.

10. **Have fun!** Employees spend too much time at work to be serious all of the time. Celebrating successes can lead to more camaraderie and increased employee morale. Humor is a great stress-reliever and should be liberally sprinkled throughout the day. **Led by the Employees NOT HUMAN RESOURCES!!**

    PurFun Committee
    - Popcorn Friday
    - PurFun Book Club
    - Olympics Competition
    - Fun Friday (Super Hero day, PF apparel Day)