

HOW TO MAKE A FIRM ATTRACTIVE TO JOB SEEKERS



HOW CAN A SMALL OR MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESS
STAND OUT TO JOB SEEKERS? FIRST, CREATE AN
ENVIRONMENT WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO WORK.

STORY NICOLA HEATH

Superannuation Advisors Australia (SuperAA), a self-managed super fund admin and audit provider with offices in Geelong and Vietnam, is not like other workplaces. Its principal, Mike McHenry, says a great working environment is the first, most important profile booster. He involves his 120 staff in decision-making at every step. "We don't have a hierarchy. It's a flat structure," he says.

Employees are organised in lanes governing different business areas. Lane leaders are rotated every two to three months and results reported at monthly management meetings. "We try to put people in lanes that suit their strengths," says McHenry. "I don't want anyone to call me CEO – I'm Mike, and I have my lane strategy. If everyone does their job, it works beautifully."

The Geelong office is an industrial space decorated with inspirational posters and filled with games and activities – from darts to a golf simulator. The team participates in compulsory monthly team sport knockouts with medals awarded to the winners. If the

competitions aren't completed in time, access to games is shut off for the following month.

There is a strategic rationale behind the games. "The fun stuff in the office is not an amusement park – it's there for a reason," says McHenry. It creates a forum for staff to engage, he says. "It helps them set deadlines, helps them communicate, but, more importantly, when they're playing together, they're laughing...and they get to know each other."

The result is a high level of trust in the team. People are more likely to support each other and ask for help when they need it, says McHenry. "That's the most important thing. That's what drives the business."

McHenry's investment in culture has paid off – SuperAA relies solely on word of mouth to find new staff. A very process-driven workplace, it mostly recruits graduates and university students. There is "a queue" of commerce students and graduates keen to work at the practice, he says. "We'll interview five people in the next week."

AT A GLANCE

➤ According to Mike McHenry, principal of SuperAA, creating a great working environment is the first step in attracting job seeker interest.

➤ A flat structure and a culture of fun, he says, help build trust, create a forum for staff to engage and boost productivity.

➤ Salary is important, but the most sought-after perk is flexibility.



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THE POWER OF A STRONG EMPLOYER BRAND

As SuperAA shows, employer brand is one of the most effective tools a firm can use to attract job seekers. "One of the most important things you need is a solid reputation," says leadership and people management specialist Karen Gately, founder of Corporate Dojo. "If candidates are asking someone who currently works there what it's like, they need to be hearing really positive things. They have to be inspired to want to pursue an opportunity with your practice."

Culture is a significant contributor to an employer's brand, she says. Candidates want to know that the workplace is an environment where they'll be treated with respect and decency, and that their employer is willing to invest in them and provide opportunities for learning and career advancement.

In an ideal world, she says, "if you get to a point where you have a really strong reputation, people will be approaching you and asking if there are openings and opportunities, even if you are really small".

ENTITLEMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

While salary is always important, other strategies can be used to attract candidates. The most sought-after perk is flexibility, says Leah Lambart, a career and interview coach and founder of Relaunch Me. Employees value "some leeway that allows them to attend a school event or go to an appointment without being made to feel guilty about it".

Other benefits that may appeal to job seekers include offering additional annual leave, the capacity to work from home, gym membership or on-site child care.



MEMBER RESOURCE

CPA Australia's
*Employer's Manual and
Staff Manual* is available
for download at:
[cpaaustralia.com.au/
employermanual](http://cpaaustralia.com.au/employermanual)

McHenry offers university students in the SuperAA team the option to work fewer hours to accommodate their studies. "The priority is that they pass uni," he says.

Learning and development is another drawcard. McHenry runs two-week training modules for staff delivered in daily sessions. "With the training that we give, and the way it's framed, they'll be an expert within a year to a year and a half in self-managed super funds," he says. "I'm teaching these young people to one day be able to run a really great business for themselves or run a business for someone else." ■

TIPS FOR ATTRACTING JOB SEEKERS ONLINE

01

DON'T LIMIT YOUR SEARCH TO A SINGLE JOB AD

Corporate Dojo's Karen Gately says it's worthwhile to post ads on traditional job sites like SEEK, but "the challenge with that is you get a lot of applicants that aren't qualified".

02

ADOPT A MORE TARGETED APPROACH

Use platforms such as LinkedIn, Gately advises. Share posts to interest groups and leverage your existing network in your ongoing hunt for quality candidates.

03

USE SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TO SHOWCASE CULTURE

Use compelling images and video content to show the team celebrating wins, socialising at events, and making the most of workplace perks.

04

PAY ATTENTION TO ONLINE SEARCH RESULTS

"If someone is serious about their career, and that's the person you want in your practice, they're likely to do their research," says Gately. If the top search result a prospective candidate sees is a negative review on Glassdoor, "that's going to influence their decision".