

JOB HUNTING

VIA takes recruitment high-tech with e-Careers online applications

Those aspiring to a career in railways are now just a few clicks away from recruiting opportunities and career development. VIA Rail Canada recently launched e-Careers, a service that posts management and entry-level unionized job openings at www.viarail.ca, facilitating the application process for candidates. "E-Careers service, which is part of a larger

effort to create a more passionate and engaged workforce will help us attract the right candidates," said Denis Gauthier, VIA's application database administrator.

Takes more than money to hold on to talent

HIRES GET UPPER HAND

BY DEREK SANKEY

CALGARY • More money, better perks and the voracious appetite of headhunters is making it increasingly harder for companies in hot economies to hang on to their best talent.

Merge Gupta-Sunderji, a leadership and workplace communication expert, says businesses have to look at retention in a broader sense if they want to win the war for talent. Employees, meanwhile, are the primary beneficiaries of a job hunter's market.

"In the old job market, when there wasn't this huge demand for employees, they stayed because there was nowhere else to really go," Ms. Gupta-Sunderji said. "Now, people have competing offers all the time."

That means companies have to think about retention strategies from every angle, leading to increased demand for everything from rewards and recognition specialists to wellness programs.

"We haven't done a good job of recruiting in the past five or 10 years," said Brian Lindenberg of Mercer Human Resources Consulting in Calgary. "Employers are finally acknowledging that

we've got a perfect storm here.

"We've got to look after all of this other stuff because it's a potential differentiator between your environment and a competitor's," Mr. Lindenberg said.

"People joining the labour market have that upper hand; they have the power to influence the employer," said Taira Hutchings, a recent university graduate and compensation analyst at Mercer.

The fight for talent goes well beyond money. Fair compensation and benefits are simply a prerequisite. In fact, companies appear to be turning away from boosting salaries because it's not a sustainable recruitment and retention model, Ms. Gupta-Sunderji said.

"Money is not why people stay, but lack of money is why people leave," she said. "The challenge with money as a reward is that as soon as you take it away, it becomes a demotivator."

Companies across North America are looking to creative rewards and recognition programs that affect how employees feel about showing up to work.

Bank of America, for example, recently introduced a program that offers up to US\$3,000 in rebates to employees who buy a hybrid vehicle. It's aimed at alleviating the escalating cost of getting to work.



PETER BROSEAU / CANWEST NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO

A weekend trip to Chateau Lake Louise in Alberta is a creative perk offered to employees at law firm Frasier Milner Casgrain.

Others, such as law firm Frasier Milner Casgrain LLP, have devised awards and mentoring programs to help recruitment in a highly competitive field.

Adam Pekarsky, a securities lawyer turned recruiter for the law firm, says money is just one factor in retention.

"If you reward an associate of a law firm with a \$10,000 year-end bonus and they were sort of expecting \$15,000, you've actually disappointed them," he said.

Instead, the firm offers weekend getaway trips for employees who have gone above and beyond in their work. It could be a trip for two to Vancouver Island or a

long weekend at Fairmont's Chateau Lake Louise. "It generates an almost unquantifiable amount of goodwill," he said.

One size doesn't fit all, either. "Get to know your employees personally so you get to know what motivates each one of them," Ms. Gupta-Sunderji said.

Managers and leaders should concentrate more on creating the kind of corporate culture that makes people want to stay.

"It's never too late," she said. "You've got to have all of this stuff in place on a regular basis and it's those companies that have less turnover."

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