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The Hourly Workforce Playbook:
**Expert Insights to
Boost Recruitment,
Retention, & Productivity**



FEATURING



The Hourly Workforce Playbook:

Welcome to The Hourly Workforce Playbook, a comprehensive guide to achieving business success through effective management of people and policies. This guide draws on insights from "The Hourly Podcast," hosted by AJ Richichi, which features in-depth discussions with experienced leaders who share stories and strategies for winning in today's tumultuous labor market. It also features real-life case studies from top brands that have been featured in Richichi's book, "Hourly," showcasing the significant impact these initiatives can have on organizations.

Whether you are looking to build a stronger company culture, improve your hiring practices, increase employee engagement, leverage technology, or enhance training and development, this playbook has you covered.



AJ Richichi | Founder & CEO | Sprockets >>

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Industry Leader Profiles



Jim Balis | CEO | **Sizzling Platter**

Jim Balis brings extensive experience in the hospitality industry, focusing on creating strong company cultures and effective employee engagement programs.



Erik Frederick | Multisite C-Level Executive | **Uno & Staples**

Erik Frederick strategically navigated business challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and has a deep understanding of the correlation between employee engagement and financial performance.



Monigo Saygba Hallie | Global HR Executive | **Checkers and Rally's**

As Chief People Officer of Checkers and Rally's, Monigo Saygbay-Hallie excels in fostering a diverse workforce, shaping organizational culture, and leveraging technology to improve HR practices.



Natalie Rothman | Chief People Officer | **Inspire Brands**

Natalie Rothman is dedicated to focusing on frontline team members and creating policies and perks that humanize the workforce while promoting internal mobility.



Laura Varn VP | People & Culture and Communications | **Parkland**

Laura Varn's journey from communications to HR highlights the strategic importance of HR in driving company success through employee development and engagement.



Heather Morgan | Chief of Staff and Strategy | **Alamo Drafthouse**

Heather Morgan discusses the unique culture at Alamo Drafthouse, the importance of competitive pay and mental health services, and effective strategies for onboarding and training.



Building a Strong Company Culture

Building a strong company culture is fundamental to maintaining a motivated and cohesive workforce. Jim Balis discusses the importance of creating a supportive and engaging environment for employees. By focusing on retention first, Sizzling Platter has created a “flywheel effect,” where happy, engaged employees contribute to better customer experiences, which in turn boosts profitability and allows for further investment in employee satisfaction. This approach ensures that employees feel valued and are more likely to stay with the company, creating a positive cycle of retention and recruitment.

Natalie Rothman from Inspire Brands highlights the significance of a frontline-focused culture. By prioritizing the needs and well-being of frontline team members, businesses can create a supportive environment that encourages employee engagement and satisfaction. Natalie shares how Inspire Brands promotes internal mobility, allowing employees to see clear career progression, which further strengthens their commitment to the company.

Heather Morgan at Alamo Drafthouse adds that a unique company culture can set a business apart. By offering competitive pay, mental health services, and immediate access to healthcare benefits, Alamo Drafthouse ensures that employees feel valued and supported, which is crucial for maintaining a positive workplace atmosphere.

Key Takeaways:

- ❖ Emphasize inclusivity in your hiring practices.
- ❖ Invest in comprehensive training programs for all employees.
- ❖ Foster a culture of continuous improvement and support.
- ❖ Focus on frontline team members and promote internal mobility.
- ❖ Offer competitive pay and comprehensive benefits.

Case Study

Sizzling Platter, employing 15,000 hourly workers in the restaurant industry, introduced the President’s Club in January 2023 to celebrate outstanding team member contributions to company culture and business performance. The designation is awarded based on employee sentiment, turnover reduction, training achievements, promotions, and financial performance. This initiative has fostered healthy competition and camaraderie among General Managers, significantly improving company culture and financial performance across numerous restaurants. Their focused efforts have elevated company performance across these key metrics.

“A lot of what our teammates are looking for when they apply is a sense of belonging. So that culture is really important, and we try to protect it very carefully.”



HEATHER MORGAN
Chief of Staff & Strategy



Effective Hiring Practices

Effective hiring practices are crucial for building a strong workforce. Natalie Rothman advises looking for candidates with strong problem-solving skills. Assessing whether potential hires enjoy working with others and are excited about the role can help ensure they will contribute positively to the team.

Monigo Saygbay-Hallie from Checkers and Rally's stresses the importance of diversity in hiring. By bringing in individuals with different backgrounds and perspectives, companies can foster innovation and creativity. Monigo also highlights the role of technology in streamlining the hiring process, making it more efficient and effective.

Heather Morgan from Alamo Drafthouse emphasizes the importance of making a good first impression during interviews. She explains that candidates are interviewing the company just as much as the company is interviewing them and that positive initial interactions can set the stage for successful employment. Heather also stresses the need for training leaders to recognize and mitigate unconscious biases, ensuring a fair and effective hiring process.

Key Takeaways:

- ❖ Look for candidates with strong problem-solving skills.
- ❖ Assess cultural fit and enthusiasm for the role.
- ❖ Promote diversity in hiring to foster innovation.
- ❖ Use technology to streamline the hiring process.
- ❖ Ensure positive first impressions during interviews.
- ❖ Train leaders to recognize and mitigate unconscious biases.

Case Study: Luihn VantEdge Partners

Luihn VantEdge Partners introduced an Employee Referral Program in May 2021 to leverage the networks of its 4,000 hourly workers. The program incentivizes employees to refer candidates, resulting in over \$16,000 in referral bonuses paid out in 2023. This initiative has not only streamlined the hiring process but also strengthened employee camaraderie and engagement, showcasing the effectiveness of using internal networks for recruitment.

“For some, the thinking is if they have a pulse and want to work for us, that’s great. But our standards are higher... We’d rather take our time to get the right folks who are going to stay with us longer.”



Laura Varn
VP, People & Culture & Communications



Employee Engagement and Retention

Employee engagement and retention are critical for sustaining a productive and motivated workforce. Heather Morgan emphasizes that happy employees lead to happy customers, which ultimately benefits the business. Providing competitive pay, comprehensive benefits, and mental health services can significantly enhance employee satisfaction and retention.

Erik Frederick from UNO's and Staples shares how engagement surveys can provide valuable insights into employee satisfaction and areas for improvement. By regularly assessing employee engagement, companies can identify and address issues before they lead to turnover. Erik also notes the strong correlation between engaged employees and financial performance, underscoring the business case for prioritizing engagement.

Jim Balis of Sizzling Platter discusses the importance of listening to team members and demonstrating compassion. By understanding and addressing the needs of hourly workers, Sizzling Platter has been able to foster a supportive environment that enhances retention. Jim highlights that creating a culture where employees feel valued and heard is crucial for maintaining high engagement levels and reducing turnover.

Key Takeaways:

- ❖ Prioritize employee engagement through regular feedback and recognition.
- ❖ Offer competitive pay, benefits, and mental health services.
- ❖ Conduct engagement surveys to identify and address issues.
- ❖ Train managers to enhance their leadership and communication skills.
- ❖ Recognize and reward employees to boost morale and retention.

Case Study: Sweetgreen

Sweetgreen introduced "Free Greens" around 2010 to offer free meals to all team members. This initiative has significantly boosted employee engagement, with regular consumers reporting higher job satisfaction. The program also facilitated valuable feedback, leading to menu innovations like the popular warm, grain-based bowls. In 2023, Sweetgreen saw a 20-point decline in turnover, highlighting the positive impact of this perk on employee retention.

“If you make a list of the locations with the best employee engagement and then make a list of the most profitable locations, you’ll realize they are the same list.”



ERIK FREDERICK
Multisite C-Level Executive



Leveraging Technology for HR Success

Leveraging technology can significantly enhance HR processes and improve overall efficiency. Natalie Rothman discusses how Inspire Brands uses AI and automation to streamline hiring and onboarding. By adopting advanced HR tools, companies can reduce administrative burdens and focus more on strategic initiatives.

Jim Balis from Sizzling Platter emphasized the transformative role of AI and text messaging services in streamlining operations. He discussed how AI-driven tools facilitate exit interviews and automate reminders for interviews, enhancing efficiency and reducing friction in the hiring process. This approach has significantly improved the engagement and attendance of potential hires.

Laura Varn from Parkland highlighted the impact of leveraging technology to enhance operations. She discussed how implementing pay-on-demand services has benefited 20% of their workforce, enabling employees to access wages as needed. Additionally, the introduction of a text messaging service has significantly improved communication and engagement with hourly employees, boasting a 95% click-through rate.

Key Takeaways:

- ❖ Implement AI and automation to streamline hiring and onboarding processes.
- ❖ Use AI-driven tools to facilitate exit interviews and automate reminders for interviews.
- ❖ Adopt pay-on-demand services to provide employees with immediate access to their wages.
- ❖ Utilize text messaging services to improve communication and engagement with employees.
- ❖ Focus on leveraging advanced HR tools to reduce administrative burdens.

Case Study: Michell Enterprises

Michell Enterprises, LLC, a McDonald's franchisee with 28 locations, leveraged Sprockets to enhance their hiring process. By using AI to evaluate applicants based on personality traits and compatibility with top performers, they significantly reduced 90-day turnover rates to 34%. Real-time alerts for ideal candidates also improved hiring speed and efficiency. This technology-driven approach enabled Michell Enterprises to achieve optimal staffing levels and maintain a more engaged and cohesive workforce, demonstrating the transformative power of technology in the hiring process.

“AI is enriching the job of our team members by taking over routine tasks, allowing them to focus on customer interaction and execution of strategy. I’m loving what AI is doing in our industry right now.”



Monigo Saygba Hallie
Global HR Executive

Checkers

Rally's



Training and Development Initiatives

Training and development are essential for building a skilled and motivated workforce. Laura Varn emphasizes the importance of soft skills in effective leadership. Parkland's 12-week training program focuses on enhancing managers' communication, problem-solving, and change management skills, which are crucial for driving team performance.

Jim Balis highlights the importance of comprehensive training programs that go beyond job-specific skills. By offering leadership and life skills training, Sizzling Platter has seen increased employee engagement and retention. These programs help team members feel more connected to the company and better prepared for their roles, leading to higher retention rates.

Natalie Rothman at Inspire Brands emphasizes the importance of internal mobility and career growth. She explains that Inspire Brands focuses heavily on promoting from within, providing employees with opportunities for development and advancement. By investing in training and creating clear career paths, Inspire Brands ensures that team members can grow their careers within the company, which boosts morale and reduces turnover. This approach not only helps retain talented employees but also strengthens the overall company culture.

Key Takeaways:

- ❖ Invest in training programs that enhance leadership and soft skills.
- ❖ Offer comprehensive training that includes both job-specific and life skills.
- ❖ Focus on promoting from within to create clear career paths and boost morale.

Case Study: Delaware North

Delaware North established the Culinary and Hospitality Excellence for Future Success (CHEFS®) program in May 2022, developed in collaboration with CIA Consulting, a division of the Culinary Institute of America (CIA). This 12-month on-the-job learning and mentoring program aims to address challenges such as culinarian burnout and a diminishing workforce. CHEFS® offers rapid career progression for hourly cooks and new Sous Chefs, guided by Executive Chef Mentors. Since its launch, 86 participants have benefited from the program, resulting in improved culinary and leadership skills within the company.

“A huge focus of ours right now is how we train, coach, and empower our managers. Because if we can do that well, then they are equipped with the skill sets to go help all of their folks.”



Laura Varn
VP, People & Culture & Communications



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Advice for Implementing These Strategies

Implementing effective strategies for managing an hourly workforce requires dedication, insight, and continuous effort. By building a strong company culture, adopting effective hiring practices, engaging and retaining employees, leveraging technology, and investing in training and development, you can create a thriving work environment that benefits both your employees and your business.

Key Takeaways:

- || Start small and scale gradually: Implement one or two new strategies at a time to see what works best for your organization.
- || Get feedback from your team: Regularly ask for input from your employees to ensure the strategies meet their needs and improve their work experience.
- || Stay flexible: Be willing to adapt and refine your approaches based on feedback and changing circumstances.

More Resources and Insights



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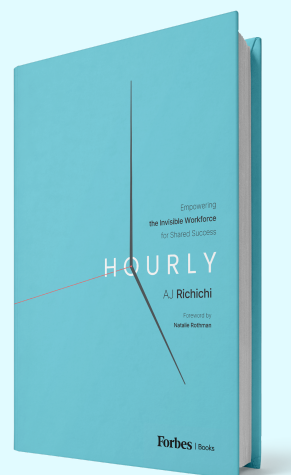
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About Hourly

While the vast majority of business books focus on the white-collar, salaried workforce, this book shines a light on the often-overlooked majority of the US workforce: the “invisible” hourly workers. In Hourly, we show that success in recruiting and retaining hourly workers requires working against outdated processes and introducing innovations that benefit workers’ lives, employers’ bottom lines, and society as a whole.

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