

3.3 Human resources

The key human resource

Businesses fail or succeed for many different reasons, but the main reason is you. You, the entrepreneur, are the key human resource in your business, especially if it is owner operated. As such, you must examine your personal strengths and weaknesses in terms of the business requirements and in terms of managing the human resources you may require. If you find a critical weakness, consider taking an appropriate course of study to offset that weakness.

Do a reality check

Be prepared to do a reality check before starting up a business. Self employed people generally work very long hours at least on a seasonal basis. Be sure that you can afford the time and possibly lesser earning ability for the start-up phase of your business. The reality is that you may have to adapt your entrepreneurial plans to allow you to retain your day job while you start up the business.

Employees are different

A reality check is also in order when it comes to hiring employees. An employee is not going to work the same way you do. In fact, there will be a substantial difference in commitment between you and your employees. Although you may need them because you can't do the work alone, employees will also bring an increase in bookkeeping, scheduling, paperwork and your time commitments.

When should you hire?

The decision to expand beyond a one or two person, owner-operated business is basically a business decision. If you answer "yes" to the following questions, then you may want to consider hiring employees:

- Can you afford to have employees?
- Do you have the business and potential growth?
- Does your business need to grow in order to succeed?
- Are you willing to give up absolute control of the business?
- Will you make a good employer/manager?

An employer is a manager

As an employer, your business success will depend on managing your employees effectively. The key characteristics of a good manager are people skills, organizational abilities, and flexibility. A good manager deals with people issues before he deals with getting the job done. If you are new at management, be sure to read some of the literature on the subject, such as *The First-Time Manager* by Loren Belker and Gary Topchik. Or look online for management resources. If you decide that you cannot be a manager, you have the option of hiring or contracting a manager or management services.

Selecting the right person

The most important thing you will have to do as a manager is to select the right person for the job. Some of the steps you should go through to ensure this are:

- defining the job with a careful description, including appraisals by others who have done the job
- defining the requirements to do the job, including skills, knowledge and attitude
- rating the applicants by their resumes and interviews on a worksheet against the criteria you have defined
- checking all references
- specifying a probation period with an appraisal toward the end of that period

Employment standards, policies

For information on Employment Standards within the tourism industry, you should contact the Labour Services Branch of YTG Community Services. There are also policies in place pertaining to the employment of non-Canadians and more information can be obtained from Citizen and Immigration Canada. You as an employer are responsible for all employee source deductions and their remittance to the government. Revenue Canada will supply you with the information necessary to deal with taxes. You must also provide Workers Compensation coverage for your employees. The Yukon Worker's Health and Safety Board will help you deal with compensation coverage and fees.

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Trained or untrained?

If you hire trained people, be aware that they may have work methods which are not right for the job at hand and may have to be retrained. Be certain in the hiring process that the training which the person has is appropriate or that they have the aptitude for training. For some jobs, starting with an untrained person will require more up front effort, time and money but may have better long term results. Specifying a probation period will make it less complicated to let an employee go should they not meet the position requirements.

Orientation and direction

Once you have a staff of employees, it is critical to manage them for success. The most important thing for you to do is to orient people to their jobs and then provide ongoing support. Do not simply throw them into a job and expect them to find the best way to do things by trial and error. Give them a clear set of objectives and then show them how to achieve them. Objectives should extend to customer service policies and procedures – how to answer the phone, how to direct inquiries, and the like. When you get feedback from your customers, pass it on to your employees. Some managers provide on-going support by writing work or performance plans for their employees and then follow these up with annual reviews.

Training is an investment

Good managers make an investment in their own future when they train their staff. The critical consideration is how to apply the skill being acquired by the employees to their jobs. It must be put to work to be worth pursuing. To that end, the manager must first determine that a lack of skill is the problem and not that he has the wrong person on the job. The most effective skills training programs are done step-by-step with much practice. With this approach, there is a greater likelihood of your staff *owning* skills and applying them on the job.

Staff and customer service

Your staff will be a direct link to your clients and therefore key to the success of your business. Most travellers remember the people they have met along the way. What they remember best is the level of customer service they have received. Customer service happens every time a customer comes into contact with your business, over the phone, through email, or through the front door. It comes down to you and your staff's ability to meet those customer's real and anticipated needs.

Certification and standards

In today's tourism industry, a well-trained staff is a *professionalized* staff. Security and safety are primary tourist concerns and this makes *certification* an important consideration. In fact, the potential for lawsuits or other action against tourism operators who do not provide acceptable standards of safety and security is considerable.

Customer's expectations

For many travellers, the Yukon is regarded as an expensive, long-haul destination. For a couple to visit for a two-week period including international air fare, the price tag could be upward of \$6,000.00. Because it is expensive, there is a correspondingly high level of expectation of quality service. Bringing your tourism business up to "national standards" is one way of ensuring that the quality of your service is on par with your customer's expectations.

Training programs

There are several agencies that can help you achieve this goal. The Yukon Tourism Education Council (YTEC) offers industry-led development of a professional tourism workforce through education and training. The council develops and implements standards and certification programs, with national recognition. YTEC is the Yukon representative for the online tourism training program Emerit, the nation's seal of excellence in human resource products and services. YTEC also works with Yukon College and private trainers to develop programs for industry needs. One last note – you may qualify for up to 50% of training costs through the *Yukon Tourism Training Fund*, administered by the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The First-Time Manager Loren B Belker, Gary S Topchik, 2005, AMACOM Div American Mgmt Assn www.amanet.org/books

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1109 First Avenue, Suite 3, Whitehorse, (867) 668-3331
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Yukon College, Professional Studies
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