

Shrinking Talent Pool, Expanding Recruitment Tools

When your business is growing but the number of qualified applicants is shrinking, you need to work extra hard to find the best talent. Sandy Steinman, chief development officer at Ray & Son Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc. understands that building the business depends not only on finding new projects but also on recruiting the people to complete them.

“Our company is 43 years old, but it’s doubled in the last few years,” Steinman said. “We’re pushing \$10 million in revenue from a fairly large commercial division and also residential replacement and service.”

To respond to strong, but variable demand for its services, Ray & Son’s workforce expands and contracts. On average, they have a base of about 45 employees, but can reach up to the 60–70 person range depending on their current level of activity. Contractors and subcontractors help fill many of their needs, but employees still play a key role in profitable operations.

“We’re looking for people on a daily basis,” Steinman said. “It’s a lot like a professional football team on draft day. But, we are always looking for the best talent regardless of our immediate, particular openings.”

The Search Goes On

Why is Steinman so eager to snap up skilled talent whenever it’s available? “I’ve been a consultant for years and looked a lot at the construction industry,” Steinman said. “It’s hard to find candidates for anything that requires a skill because people aren’t going to tech school in the numbers that they were in the past. More young people are going to junior college instead of trade or tech school. We’re finding we have to train our own people more than we had to in the past.”

Another factor that makes recruitment challenging for Ray & Son is their location. The headquarters in Nashville, Ga. sits 20 miles from Valdosta, so they don’t have a huge pool to fish for employees. Also in southern Georgia, individuals tend to develop deep loyalties to their companies. That means recruiting outside of their immediate vicinity is essential to meeting their needs in the area and for their work across the country.

Casting a Wide Net

Ray & Son does use some newspaper and general job board advertising, but relies heavily on MEP Jobs to find the precise talent they need to expand. “We really will look at MEP Jobs on a daily basis,” Steinman said. “Then, as we have specific needs, we’ll run ads or hone-in on a particular skill set by searching through the resume database.”

For cost-effective recruitment of people in particular trades, Steinman sees MEP Jobs as a great value. “We had a time when we were looking for a whole group of people ranging from project managers to foremen to superintendents to pipe fitter to metal workers,” Steinman said. “We decided to do newspaper ads in addition to MEP Jobs to reach more people in markets with high unemployment, but it was very costly. To advertise with about 12 or 14 lines in the Chicago area costs about \$3,000 for one Sunday. You can do a lot more with that kind of money on an online job board.”

Steinman plans to continue to subscribe to MEP Jobs because of the value it offers in the skilled trades recruitment process. “MEP Jobs really offers more quality applicants than other online recruitment tools,” Steinman said. “I don’t know what I’d do without them!”