

# Always Recruiting, Always Interviewing, and Always Prepared to Hire!

## Management Maxims

by Dennis Vicars

Have you ever really thought about what we do? We like to think that we are in the early care and education business. Quality care and the education of young children might well be our product, but our real business is the people business.

Ultimately, what you are selling is the quality of yourself and the staff that surrounds you. A good director enrolls children, but a quality teacher keeps them. In other words, without good people, your center is worth about 10¢ on its original dollar.

For as long as I have been involved in preschool education, the one con-

sistent theme I have heard is, “We need teachers.” That is not a new theme; it is as much a part of our business as is presenting a quality program or paying the milk man every Monday. I dare say it will always be part and parcel to early care and education regardless of wages. Why? Because it takes a very special person to work with young children. Not just a person with the appropriate educational background, but more importantly, a person with the right heart!

With all this being said and with over 60% of our expenses going to labor and benefits, why are we not paying 100% of our attention to the greatest challenge facing our center’s success? Why do we put ourselves in the position of hiring a “warm body” to meet ratio and hoping it will somehow all work out? I compare our field’s mentality in hiring to that of buying a car. Look for that next car long before you need to replace your old one because if you wait until your present one breaks down, you’ll compromise your judgment and probably make a hasty decision. That hasty decision, whether about cars or people, will cost you long after the purchase.

Our dominant thoughts guide our behavior and lead us to our goals. Taking on the daily mentality that “I am always recruiting (even when I am fully staffed), I am always interviewing (that gets your C or average staff thinking), and I am

always prepared to hire” leaving you in a position to never again hire out of panic or crisis.

Once you take on this mindset, everyone becomes a candidate. You have to keep your eyes open and look for what you like in a teammate. I once hired a flight attendant while on a flight. Her outstanding customer service skills (which I insist upon) led to a conversation where she informed me she was being laid off and had a degree in ECE. I once hired a Starbucks’ part-time employee (who also displayed excellent customer skills) after learning she was working on her minor in ECE. Yes, you must engage in conversation if you see what you like.

Not all of these people will be candidates, but your winners are there if you are always looking proactively. Quality people will magically appear in your life when your daily mentality is one of “I am always looking”!

I will leave you with a pearl of wisdom once shared with me by a former mentor. He said, “We as a team are only as good as the people we have. Therefore, if you want to be better tomorrow than you are today, you’d better recruit better people than you have now.”

Good luck with your new theme: “I am always recruiting, I am always interviewing, and I am always prepared to hire!”



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