

# Stop Whining About Hiring

by Donald Burns |  
July 1, 2018

YOUR

Houston, we have a problem. Look around at the headlines or even the lack of applications coming into your restaurant. They call it the war for talent. You complain that the market has become bloated with new restaurants and bars that make it hard for us to find “good” people.



You put out “help wanted” ads on social media asking people to join your team. You try and try again the paid online job boards, just hoping that you find one decent person who will at least show up for the interview. You cringe when you finally do get a live person to talk to and hire them despite the ten red flags that occurred during the interview. You sit in your office and finally admit defeat by making the following statement: “There are no good people out there.”

And with that declaration to the universe, your wish is fulfilled.

Let’s look at some truths about the current labor market before you open that bottle of vodka in your bottom desk drawer and start doing shots to ease the pain.

## **Opportunity Everywhere**

There are a lot of restaurants and bars out there. Opportunity is everywhere you look today for restaurant jobs. Some of them do hire exceptional people to work in their establishments, so the statement that “There are no good people out there” is pure bullshit.

Today’s employee (Millennials and Gen Z) do not want the same things as older generations such as Gen X and the Baby Boomers. Enticing them with the same benefits that have worked over the last 30 years is futile (and ignorant).

Reality TV has poisoned the mindset that the restaurant industry is full of arrogant chefs that yell, scream, and demoralize their teams. Let’s be honest here: Yes, there are some old school chefs who relish the thought of making a team member cry. They get more press than the good chefs out there because drama sells in the media. Why don’t you skip a season of Top Chef, Cutthroat Kitchen, or Hell’s Kitchen to realign your hospitality compass.

Einstein once said that the true definition of insanity is doing the same (stupid) shit over and over again, while expecting different results. Okay, I might have taken a little creative license on the “same (stupid) shit” part.

However, if he were alive today, I would bet he would say it that way. Einstein was a pure badass when it came to matters of relativity. Badasses don't mince their words!

If people are not actively seeking you out to work in your restaurant or bar, here are some of the real reasons why. They might not say any of these to you, but rest assured that they do make the rounds on social media.

### **They don't want to work for you.**

Yeah, this one hurts. It's like asking that person you think is hot out on a date and getting shot down with a made-up excuse ("I'm donating a kidney this Friday."). Sadly, they don't tell you the truth. They might even take the job and then never show up.

You rationalize that it's them not you. Reality check: No, it's you. You most likely have a bad reputation in your market as an owner, manager, or brand. Like attracts like, so if you are getting the dregs of society, then you must re-examine your leadership (or lack thereof) that has become more of a stench of disparity over the sweet smell of success.

### **You haven't given them a reason why they should join your team.**

Here's another classic mistake that many make: You don't show why you are different, so potential staff generalize that you're the same.

Let's be frank: the restaurant industry does not have a stellar reputation about being a great place to work at the moment. It's not that all restaurants are bad—there are some exceptional restaurant leaders, owners, and chefs who are dedicated to creating incredible cultures and brands.

If you don't market things like testimonials from your team, videos of your team having fun, or content and materials showcasing your team...people assume you don't care about your employees. If you don't care, they lump you into the "bad place to work" category.

Yes, those beautiful pictures of your food and specialty cocktails are stunning. How about showcasing that your team is important too?

### **Your culture sucks.**

This kind of ties into the one about your leadership. Culture is created by the owner and leaders in the restaurant. If people are avoiding working for you, look deeper into what you are not doing.

Do you have opportunities within your organization? Do you have a continuous training program that allows your staff to continue to learn and grow? Do you offer benefits? Do you pay people above the average in your market? Do you offer an employee (family) meal? Do you offer anything that goes beyond what is the norm in your market?

Your culture can become a beacon for—or a repellent to—attracting top talent. Think of it as your calling card to the world. What is your culture saying about your restaurant?

You can sit there, whine about your team and have a pity party, or you can cowboy up, look in the mirror and face the facts. You need to change the way you lead and cultivate your culture if you want better people to join your team.

A-level players don't want to work for a C-grade brand. Water does seek its own level. If you're not getting the right people, then it's time to raise the bar. Stop whining and start taking action.

## JOB DESCRIPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Why do you need to hire someone?

---

---

---

If they can only do five items, what are they?

1.

---

---

2.

---

---

3.

---

---

4.

---

---

5.

---

---

What will they need to know to do these? (*What are you **NOT** willing to train them?)*

---

---

---

What areas can/will you train them in?

---

---

---

What physical requirements do they need to have in order to do this job?

---

---

---