

THE CHALLENGE: STAFFING

- More than 60 open or unfilled positions in an organization of 350.
- Poor staff retention, poor staff morale.
- Recruiters often report interview candidates saying, “I’ve heard you’re not a good place to work.”
- Complex, specialized work; therefore, hard to find entry hires with needed skills.

THE TECHNIQUE: APPRENTICE PROGRAM

- 8-week program open to recent graduates, offering 8 hours per week of training with 32 hours spent shadowing staff and doing client work.
- Pay \$20 per hour. If each apprentice is billed out to clients for 15% of hours worked over the 8-week program, apprentices becomes self-financing program.
- Recruit and train apprentices for all job categories but strategically target those specializations that are most difficult to hire.
- At end of program, a full-time job offer could be made, contingent on fit, success, and open positions available at time of completion.

THE INTERVENTION

- Developed 64 hours of curriculum covering technical skills and key organizational culture expectations.
- Built a program identity through visible branding and special projects that united the apprentices and created an organizational impact.
- Recruited executive leaders to conduct training, resulting in exposure to top-most priorities and programs.
- Focused program on lasting value for the organization and apprentices. If apprentices were not selected to be hired, they should feel an investment and leave still interested in working for the organization in the future. To that end and specific to the millennial training audience, training sessions included individual psychometric testing (Myers Briggs), group discussions of how to work within a professional team, and a workshop on building a career over a lifetime.

THE RESULTS

- Of 25 apprentices, hired 19 at a lower cost to traditional recruiting.
- Apprentice model expanded to global offices—UK, Australia, India, Milan.
- Based on data from comparable programs, retention of new hires expected to be 30% longer than standard entry-level hires (data outstanding).
- Discovered critical gaps in onboarding and training assumptions for millennial candidates.
- Built a cross-organizational cohort of employees who share an identity (‘the apprenti’—they created their own name) and connected outside their teams and disciplines.
- Experienced a morale boost. Existing employees showed greater enthusiasm and pride in their work when sharing it with enthusiastic apprentices.
- Created pipeline of possible hiring options for senior leaders to use strategically for targeted, critical hire positions.