

Realistic job descriptions keep prospects interested

Organizations which offer new recruits a more realistic view of the company will have less unnecessary turnover than those who exaggerate the mob's appeal, says a Michigan State University management professor.

Dr. John Wanous, who teaches and does research on organizational behavior,

says many companies make the mistake of hiring over-qualified, over-educated people who soon become disenchanted and quit.

"The people who do the hiring don't try for a good fit. The Armed Forces is a perfect example. Recruiters get people into the Armed Forces, but they're

not accountable for what happens to them after that."

Wanous is the author of a new book, "Organizational Entry," just published by Addison-Wesley, in which he advocates more realistic recruiting.

Says the author: "Realistic recruiting is not a specific technique. It is a general philosophy or approach to dealing with newcomers. Employers need to realize this is in their own best interests."

PROSPECTIVE employees often have inflated expectations about the new job, says Wanous. Recruiters need to discuss the job's good and bad points to temper inflated expectations.

"The idea is that individuals will have less regret about making a decision if they can anticipate the probable

negative consequences of making it than they will have if they are naive in their expectations," he says.

Studies have shown that the inflated expectations of newcomers affect their job satisfaction and commitment to the organization, says Wanous. That helps cause premature turnover, which costs the company money.

"The costs vary widely from job to job and organization to organization, but there are always costs, even for the lowest level, lowest paid jobs," says Wanous.

"A certain level of turnover is highly desirable," he says. "Not everybody gets the appropriate job and turnover insures you get rid of lousy employees. I'm talking about people who should not have taken the job but were misled. That type of turnover is avoidable."

In his book, Wanous points out the example of the telephone company which recruited telephone operators by playing up the excitement of the job rather than explaining the realistic problems involved. For new recruits with six months or less seniority, the turnover rate was 150 percent.

Wanous included 13 examples in his book where companies recruited personnel by giving them a realistic preview of the job, using such techniques as work-sample tests, films, oral presentations or booklets. Turnover among new employees was 15 to 25 percent lower for those receiving a realistic job preview, compared to the more traditional "selling" approach to recruitment.

"SOME COMPANIES are afraid

that if they told the truth about the company, they would lose important recruits," says Wanous. "Five of these studies examined the impact of realism on the organization's ability to recruit newcomers, and all five found that realism has no negative impact."

Larger companies which have other career planning programs tend to be more progressive than smaller companies, but Wanous' philosophy can be used by anyone who does the hiring.

Wanous' book is part of a new Addison-Wesley series called "Managing Human Resources." Wanous also serves as editor of this series. It includes six books and continues to grow along with the increasing attention paid to human resource management by all sectors of business and the armed services.

Grant awarded U-M for safety training

The University of Michigan has been awarded a \$4 million grant by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. It will be used for student training programs involving modern approaches to safety engineering, occupational medicine, and industrial hygiene in industry.

The U-M program will combine the resources of the College of Engineering's departments of industrial and operations engineering and of chemical engineering, the School of Public Health's department of environmental and industrial health, and the Medical Schools department of internal medicine "to expand the occupational safety and health orientation of graduate education."

Director for the integration of these programs is Prof. Don B. Chaffin, chairman of the industrial and operations engineering department. He noted that U.S. Rep. Carl Parnell (R-Mich.) has been working with U-M officials to bring the training program to the university.

"The overall focus of this endeavor is to train students in the civil engineering and sources of work-related injuries and illnesses and to provide instruction in the development of controls for the prevention of such hazards. To do this requires a team effort of appropriately trained physicians, hygienists and engineers," says Chaffin.

"Approximately 300 students, including industrial hygienists, engineers and practicing physicians, will benefit from this grant," he says.

Richard D. Remington, dean of the U-M School of Public Health, calls the award "an opportunity to rebuild the formerly outstanding program in occupational health. With the recent increase in activities in toxicology, this financial support will provide an opportunity to expand the graduate level programs in occupational medicine and industrial hygiene."

This combination of the teaching, research and service activities of the three schools will give the university

one of the strongest programs in occupational health and safety in the nation."

Under the five-year grant:

• The current graduate programs in industrial hygiene and occupational safety engineering will expand. Currently, partial support is provided for graduate student education in industrial hygiene and in occupational safety engineering. Under the new grant, tuition support in all the graduate programs will be increased, with some students also receiving stipends, Chaffin says.

• A graduate program in chemical safety engineering will be added. Beginning in the 1980 winter semester, M.S. and Ph.D. degrees stressing occupational safety and health will be available to students in either industrial and operations engineering or chemical engineering.

Chaffin describes the special degree option in industrial chemical safety as "entirely unique. Students will focus on new chemicals and their associated processes that expose workers to unknown chemical hazards."

• Undergraduate engineering courses in which will stress occupational safety and health as a basic engineering discipline will be developed. The departments of industrial and operations engineering and of chemical engineering will provide the major leadership in developing the undergraduate engineering options.

"Interested students will take a set of courses emphasizing the human as a vital but fragile component in production systems which they, as engineers, will design in the future. These courses will provide the students with the skills necessary to recognize potential hazards as part of the engineering design process," Chaffin explains.

• The graduate program in occupational medicine will be re-established. Through the department of environmental and industrial health, M.S. MPH (Master of Public Health) and PhD degrees will be available not only in industrial hygiene but in occupational medicine as well.

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