

## Why should I work here?

### Attracting the right talent

**W**hat makes good companies great is their ability to attract and retain the right people. Employees who are excited to come to work get the right work done, and are far more creative, productive and committed. Their passion infects both clients and colleagues, in the most positive way.

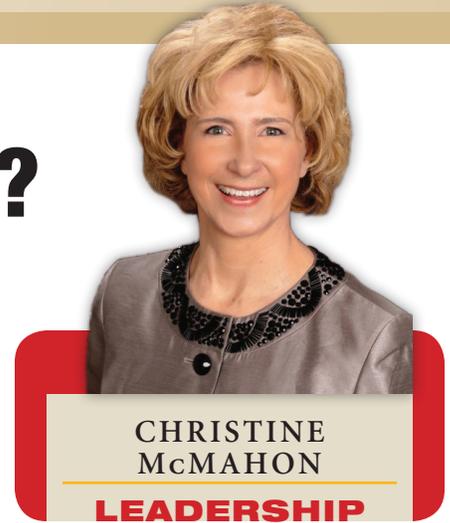
Business leaders want more of these employees, but few understand what makes candidates want to say, “Yes!” to the opportunity.

Attracting top talent has become a strategic priority for many companies. Too often, however, the direction is to focus on talent management incentives – increasing health care benefits, compensation, vacation time and training or offering flex work programs – rather than what makes the company a special place to work.

Research shows that people make employment decisions depending upon the role work plays in their life. In a study called “A Job by Any Other Name,” researchers Tamara Erickson, Ken Sychtewald and Bob Morison categorized workers into six segments on the basis of the role work plays in a person’s life and the factors that contributed to high engagement. Here’s what they found:

While these distinctions will help simplify who will best complement your company’s culture, values and work environment, it’s important to define the company’s value message and story(s), and then take that brand to market.

When attending Disney University’s leadership program several years ago, the vice president of human resources took us through Disney’s theme park inter-



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view process. We were escorted to an auditorium, where we watched a 15-minute video that details Disney’s culture and expectations. Throughout the video the commentator says, “At Disney, we hire HAPPY people.”

The video closes with these written words, “At Disney, we hire HAPPY people. If you are not ‘Disney HAPPY,’ we thank you for your time and ask that you not submit an application.” More than 75 percent of candidates self-select out.

Disney has figured out what Erickson and Lynda Gratton define as its “signa-

Employee Type	Expressive Legacy	Secure Progress	Individual Expertise & Team Success	Risk & Reward	Flexible Support	Low Obligation & Easy Income
<b>The Role of Work</b>	Work is about creating something of lasting value.	Work is about improving one’s lot in life and finding a predictable path.	Work is about being valued and part of a winning team.	Work is one of the multiple opportunities to live a life filled with change and excitement.	Work is a source of livelihood but not yet a priority.	Work is a source of immediate economic gain.
<b>What Appeals &amp; Engages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Autonomy</li> <li>Entrepreneurial opportunities</li> <li>Creative opportunities</li> <li>Stimulating tasks that enable continual learning &amp; growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fair, predictable rewards</li> <li>Concrete compensation, solid benefits &amp; retirement package</li> <li>Stability</li> <li>Structure &amp; routine</li> <li>Career training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration</li> <li>Fun</li> <li>Stability &amp; Structure</li> <li>Opportunity to gain competence</li> <li>Opportunity to leverage personal strengths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to improve personal finances</li> <li>Flexibility</li> <li>Opportunity to choose tasks &amp; positions from a long menu of options</li> <li>Open-ended tasks and approaches to getting work done</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility</li> <li>Well-defined vacation and family benefits</li> <li>Well-defined work routines – the ability to plug in &amp; out of tasks and assignments with ease</li> <li>Virtual, asynchronous tasks and assignments</li> <li>Fun</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jobs that are relatively easy to come by</li> <li>Well-defined work routines</li> <li>Lucrative compensation and benefits packages</li> <li>Stability and security</li> <li>Recognition</li> </ul>

ture experience” – what makes Disney distinctive and unique. Erickson and Gratton describe a signature experience as, “a visible, distinctive element of an organization’s overall employee experience. In and of itself, it creates value for the firm, but it also serves as a powerful and constant symbol of the organization’s culture and values. The experience is created by a bundle of everyday routines, or signature processes, which are tricky for competitors to imitate precisely because they have evolved in-house and reflect the company’s heritage and the leadership team’s ethos.”

To find your company’s signature experience, begin by looking through the company archives. Who were the founders? Why did they start the business? What were they passionate about? What principles did they live by? What hardship did they overcome? How did they achieve

success? What is their legacy?

Recently, I heard Dan Ariens, Ariens Co. president and chief executive officer, describe the company’s signature experience as: “Passionate people. Astounded customers.”

Simple. Straightforward. Impactful.

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*“People make employment decisions depending upon the role work plays in their life.”*

Ariens told the story of how his grandfather and then his father lived and molded the company culture by honoring these values:

“Be honest. Be fair. Keep our commitments. Respect the individual. Encourage intellectual curiosity.”

As part of Ariens’ onboarding process, every new employee learns why these values are important and hears stories, past and present, about how Ariens employees have and continue to “live” these values.

He said, “At Ariens, we want Monday to be as fun as Friday.”

Defining your signature experience and related stories creates a company that is truly one-of-a-kind. Distinct. Unique. Easily communicated. Emotionally connecting.

Regardless of the products and services you sell, people who align with your company’s culture – how the work gets done – are excited to join the team. This re-

sults in dramatically higher talent attraction, employee engagement, employee retention, and overall company performance.

What is your company’s signature experience? ■

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