

Recruiting and Retaining Quality RiderCoaches

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Introduction

Many motorcycle rider education programs/sponsors/providers are in need of additional RiderCoaches (RC's). The RC work force is graying and retiring. Programs find it difficult to recruit candidates and once recruited many drop out of the RiderCoach Preparation Course or are not successful. New RC's sometimes only remain for a year or two. This document aims to provide a summary of tips and best practices for recruiting and retaining quality RiderCoaches. The tips and practices were gathered by web searching and reading articles related to the topics recruiting, selecting, interviewing, training, mentoring, and retaining employees.

The author has no special experience or education in employee recruitment; however, he successfully managed a regional rider education program for many years, instituted many of these practices and experienced extremely limited difficulty recruiting and retaining RC's. It was rare for a recruited candidate not to be successful in RCP.

Recruitment and Retention Myths

(do a web search and you will find many articles on this topic)

- 1. People most often leave for more pay.** People leave as a way to express a perception of unfairness in how the organization values their contributions.
- 2. Productivity-based incentive programs produce long-term impacts and improved morale.** Nope. Studies show that carrot-and-stick motivation programs do not pay off with long-term employee retention. *Employees want a chance to learn and grow in the job, perform meaningful work, collaborate with good supervisors, and receive appreciation for a job well done.*
- 3. Employees do not want more responsibility.** Employees are not looking for more work, but are looking for opportunities to grow and develop their skills. Employees want to try things, to feel skillful, and to experience personal satisfaction that comes from higher levels of achievement.
- 4. Loyalty is dead.** Employees want greater work-life balance as well as the opportunity to make higher contributions to the success of the organization. Employees express loyalty when given the opportunity to better serve customers and when given more learning opportunities.
- 5. Improving employee satisfaction is expensive.** Research tells us that employees cannot be bought. Employees want a manager that listens & responds to employees' ideas, supervisors who support people's growth & initiative, more training in how to do their jobs better, and effective, positive co-worker relationships. Meeting these needs does not have to be an expensive undertaking.
- 6. Employee satisfaction is fluff.** Studies show that lower turnover and greater satisfaction levels have a positive impact on customer satisfaction & organizational financial success.

7. Supervisors are the problem. Supervisors today on average have more staff reporting to

them than in the past, yet the amount of training provided to supervisors is minimal. The root issue of underperforming supervisors may rest more with the organization than the supervisors themselves.

8. My organization's employees are different. Employee issues & needs are universal and are not dependent upon industry.

First retain. Concept of re-recruit

Even the most dedicated RC's can become vulnerable - they can get bored, feel taken for granted or wonder why they have kept at this for so long. That's why the concept of re-recruitment is so important - think of it as a "renewing of vows" between the RC and the program sponsor. Here are a few best practices for retaining your RC's.

1. Conduct a flight-risk assessment

Understanding your RC's risks is more art than science, but even though it can be hard to quantify, it's critical to assess your RC crew's stability by looking at factors such as morale, tenure, peer relationships and behavior patterns. Dig into what you're seeing and determine if an RC's risk level of departure is high, medium or low.

Next, analyze the impact of that person's departure. If an RC leaves, what do you lose and what is the threat to your program? Consider the importance of the role or function, any specialized skills and the number of incumbents for the position.

Again, rate the impact as high, medium or low and then put specific emphasis toward RC's who are high-risk and high-impact.

Other risk factors to consider are:

- Length of time since last raise or promotion
- Length of time since a change in job duties/responsibilities
- Tenure at the organization
- Gaps between desired and current career aspirations

In addition to these factors, you can gauge risk by observing RC's throughout work. For example, are they smiling? Are they productive? Do they speak with enthusiasm? You can also ask others to help you identify who may be at risk of leaving

2. Host a re-recruiting interview

When you've identified high-risk, high-impact RC's, schedule some 1:1 interviews. Ask the individual questions such as:

- What do you like?
- What are you good at that you're not doing?
- What questions do you have about the company's direction?
- What obstacles do you face?
- How can we make things better for you?

In these kinds of conversations, you uncover problem-solving opportunities or career concerns.

From there, a simple action plan created jointly can help the RC re-engage and feel cared for. To maintain that engagement, conduct periodic check-ins. Remember: when a person knows you care, he/she is more likely to stay!

3. Stay meeting

Sometimes called a "stay interview or stay meeting," host an event to gather information from the RC's about what they want, things they like and dislike about their work, their experience at your organization, future goals, training and development interests, and assignments or responsibilities that may be of interest.

These open conversations are necessary from time to time because they allow everyone to honestly share what they like and don't like about their job and the organization. This information helps you understand what your RC's want. *Use the information gleaned from these conversations to make positive changes.*

4.. Skip-level gathering

Consider scheduling "skip-level meetings" for the RC's with the leader above their immediate supervisor. This added visibility and high-touch approach demonstrates that your program is truly invested in your coaches. If you are their immediate, this means your supervisor and/or others up the chain of command would attend the gathering and be actively involved in facilitating the agenda and discussion.

5. Communicate and show your desire to retain the RC

Do your RC's know how much you want them to stay? Like you would with any external recruit, let them know you want to retain them and view them as an important part of the organization. Employees frequently walk away from organizations because they didn't grasp how much they were valued.

Similarly, employees stay at jobs when their leaders make periodic efforts to retain them. When leaders match what they say with specific actions and show that they are continually trying to improve their employees' job and work experience so they stay, retention thrives.

6. Re-energize the workplace!

To keep every RC more engaged, take real action. Good intentions don't move the needle! *Remember to offer routine recognition routinely.* It sounds simple, but it's commonly overlooked. Unexpected forms of recognition are especially impactful, such as an impromptu meal, a reward that extends to the RC's family or so up at the range unexpectedly to deliver a personal message or small recognition.

Changing the energy level of the workplace also boosts engagement. Consider starting the day with something like a standing huddle to keep everyone on their toes - literally and figuratively. Offer a ½ day paid opportunity for RC's to study a topic of interest outside of normal training duties.

Recruiting, selecting and training

Candidates need to be motorcyclists so nothing new here – just a reminder that the best sources for finding riders are:

- Current RC referrals
- Successful student lists
- Registration & endorsement lists

Recruitment Necessities: Making the right hires

The best way to improve every facet of your program performance is by tailoring your hiring process to attract top talent.

Develop a candidate profile

When it comes to recruiting new RC's begin by agreeing on a candidate profile first. In the authors experience very few programs do this. It is almost impossible to recruit/select the best RC candidates if you haven't even identified the experiences, qualities and characteristics of the person you are seeking. So, begin with this step.

Involve your current RC's

Before you start a search, gather your current people and make sure you're all on the same page. Having a shared vision for the hiring profile will ensure that you're looking for the right talent and can present an accurate picture of the role of a RiderCoach during the interview process. Talk to your existing RC's and management team.

Feedback from your current RC's is a crucial component of your recruitment process. Discuss your needs with your coaches. They may have insights into being a coach that a non-coach manager will miss.

Referrals

Plus, RC referrals are one of the best ways to attract new candidates and RC's who have been involved in the process will likely be more invested in helping find candidates. An article from ERE.net makes a powerful case for employee referrals. Here are some highlights:

- Referrals are the #1 source in hiring volume
- Referrals are also the #1 source for new hire quality
- 6 percent of all hires at top performing firms are referrals
- Referrals are hired at a rate of 1-out-of-3 applications for top-performing firms

(BTW - ERE is an industry leader in recruiting new and insights so visiting their website will provide a wealth of information)

Train your interviewers

If your interviewers (or you) ask questions like "What's your greatest weakness?" or "What kind of animal would you be?" you and they might benefit from some additional training. It's important to ask behavioral-based questions that reveal whether or not the candidate can do the job. Absolutely do not think you can change your hires.

"He's a great outfielder, but we don't need an outfielder. Maybe he'd be a good catcher with some
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training." Sounds stupid, right? It's equally nonsensical to approach the hiring process by thinking that a candidate who's great in one area can be trained to suit your needs. If a candidate does not have the right characteristics and basic skills coming in, the time and money you spend training and trying getting them up to speed will outweigh what you spend in doing a quality search in the first place. The biggest error I witnessed in my many years of experience as an RCT and program manager is program sponsors selecting RCP candidates based only on motorcycling experience.

Host a selection event

At a minimum your candidates must be able to pass the RCP entry riding skill test and be able to speak fluently in front of a group. A one-on-one sit-down interview will not give you this information. If you need two coaches, work to get 3-4 into RCP. To get 3-4 into RCP work to get 6-8 or more candidates that fit your profile to attend a selection event. Have candidates ride 2-3 exercises on training bikes (not the skill test) and have candidates perform 2-3 impromptu classroom presentation activities. Ideally, all recruited candidates do this as a group. Obviously, candidates need to know ahead of time that this activity is part of your selection process.

Keep them: Retain your high performing RC's

Quality recruiting is not enough. Training, and managing RC's can be expensive and time consuming but it's even more so if you have to do over and over again. A 2012 study by the Center for American Progress notes that the cost of replacing an employee ranges from 10 to 30 percent of their annual salary. That statistic is sobering enough on its own without factoring in high turnover's impact on employee morale and engagement.

According to Gallup's 2013 State of the American Workforce report:

18 percent [of employees] are actively disengaged: dissatisfied, unmotivated workers with attitudes that can be contagious to coworkers

52 percent are disengaged: doing the bare minimum required to keep their job, but without any real connection to their work

So how do you keep your RC's engaged and committed to the job at hand?

Never stop training.

You might not be able to make an outfielder into a catcher, but you can make the outfielder better. A 2012 white paper by the World Economic Forum noted that: "67% of industrial hirers polled experience substantial difficulty finding employees skilled enough to do the available jobs. 56% polled said that they anticipate the problem getting worse in the near future." That means that ongoing training is an investment in the future of your program. Plus, it keeps your RC's engaged, challenged and motivated. If they're learning, they much less likely to consider leaving. Annual update gatherings are a minimum. However, multiple shorter trainings and individualized educational plans, are likely more meaningful and more effective at helping retention.

Train your managers, too.

The quality of management is one of the primary drivers of employee turnover. Poor communication, a lack of clear expectations, and other managerial missteps can cause your RC's

head for the hills. The only manager your RC's have may be you so take a hard look at your style and what activities you are providing to train, energize, engage, reward and retain you current RC's.

Ask for feedback.

Your RC's are the people directly engaged with your customers (students) and your service (education/training). They see often problems occurring before you (manager) will. Often, they have innovative solutions for these issues. If you solicit their feedback and suggestions they're more likely to feel empowered and engaged.

Offer small perks to improve retention.

Bagels and coffee at the range before students arrive. A quarterly group activity – tickets to a SuperX , and certainly the old stand-by stuff -T-shirt, range card pouch, stop-watch, etc. can show RC's that they're valued by the program. Better yet, ask them what they'd like most.

Summary

For a program seeking to grow and or remain in operation the importance of quality hiring and active retention can't be overstated. According to research conducted by Dr. Jim Harris and reported in his book *Getting Employees to Fall in Love With Your Company* (1996, a reader-friendly, hands-on guide offers dozens of action ideas *for* creating a positive, high-energy workplace) there are five principles embraced by the best-run companies in America, including Walt Disney, ServiceMaster, Southwest Airlines, Marriott, Ben & Jerry's, North American Tool & Die, Lincoln Electric, Jacksonville Foods, and Cunningham Communication. These principles are as follows:

Capture the Heart. The highest achievable level of service comes from the heart. The organization that reaches its people's hearts will provide the very best service.

Organizations that help employees balance work & life demands, inject fun into the workplace, and create compelling visions of how they contribute to the organization's success capture the hearts of their employees.

Open Communication. Employees are more loyal when they feel connected to the organization. Successful organizations encourage their employees to ask questions of their supervisors regarding the business and to have them involved in critical business decisions.

Create Partnerships. Many of these organizations create partnerships by sharing financial numbers with employees, both in good times & bad, and by linking incentive compensation programs to both individual & team success and failure.

Drive Learning. These organizations require employees to develop their skills to perfection and ask their employees to learn something new every day. A number of these organizations make available industry-specific reading material and provide in-house seminars, allowing employees work time to develop their skills.

Employee Action. These organizations understand that to increase employee loyalty and retention, they must go beyond traditional empowerment programs. Rather, they give

employees the freedom to succeed. A rule at many of these organizations is to use your good judgment at all times.

Based on these five principles, the most successful organizations employ the following strategy in the recruitment and retention of key employees.

Pay attention to top employees to make sure they are being developed, rewarded, and recognized for their contributions. Develop a reputation for this in the industry to attract future talent.

Build and maintain relationships with top employees, so that departure from the organization will be a personal & very difficult decision for the employee. Top employees also will share this sense of belonging with potential new employees.

Increase confidence and hope among employees through a participative vision & strategy. Engage your employees. Develop a reputation as an open organization that really listens to employees and their ideas.

Build loyalty, commitment, and trust, so that employees offer these back to the organization. We only have to look at Enron, Wells Fargo, and WorldCom to see what happens when trust is lost.

Create clear communication pathways so employees always learn important information first hand.

Recruitment and retention are major issues for many motorcycle rider education and training programs. In order to attract and retain quality RC's, programs must have an effective, comprehensive strategy for recruiting, selecting, training, and retaining. Review the tips and suggestions above. If you are doing none or very few of these, don't expect get quality people to consider becoming a coach with your program and don't expect your best RC's people to stay.

If you haven't developed a written profile for the candidates, don't have multiple methods for engaging and rewarding your RC's, don't have written documents describing your comprehensive strategy - you have work to do. But like a lot of things, good quality work leads to good quality results.