

Arihatne Flores

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Prompt 2: Employee Attraction

Growing up and being exposed to the horse racing industry, it is no secret that the industry has been struggling to stay “alive”. Meaning, we are losing racetracks due to closures, there has been increase in labor shortage, and the system is flawed like many other industries. I have family members who have devoted many years of their lives to the racing industry, and they eventually grew tired of having to conform with the burden of always traveling and leaving their family behind due to their jobs. Before I initiate in providing recommendations in how to attract employees, allow me to bring into light the issues that this industry has, as a racetrack employee, I can provide you with this insight.

Throughout my years working as a groom, my family and I are dependent on this income to further my education. However, there exist more issues than benefits with this job. For one, traveling from racetrack to racetrack, this causes family’s to separate because racetracks like Indiana Grand Racecourse impose rules where children are not allowed in the dormitories. Fathers must leave, meanwhile, the mothers stay with their children due to school and lack of housing. Secondly, we have lost racetracks like Arlington International Racecourse, and when my dad and I were in search of jobs, every trainer would give us the same response, “I’m sorry, I don’t have enough horses and I am overstaffed”. With the closing of Arlington Park, many have left the racing industry and have realized that factory jobs are more efficient in their perspective.

The reason is, they realize they do not have to devote themselves seven days a week, all three-hundred and sixty-five days to their job. I always hear old track employees attempt to convince their friends or old co-workers to leave this industry and go to the factory with them because the factory gives you the weekends off, you get overtime, and you have holidays off so you could spend time with your family. Sadly, whenever there isn't jobs at Hawthorne and people don't want to leave their children behind, the factory is always their back-up and people end up staying there. Therefore, the manufacturing industry is the horse industry's biggest competitor when it comes to labor. I have also heard workers complain about the mistreatment they receive from trainers. They face racial slurs, and workers feel like they are being taken advantage of because of the intense labor and low wages. Workers feel like they do not have a resources where they can report a complaint for this unethical behavior. That being said, I do have ideas where the industry can attract more employees, yet, it always includes having to imply expenses, in an industry that is hungry for profits.

Primarily backstretches do not allow children. I strongly believe that they should initiate in investing money into their backstretch and make the dormitories more family friendly, it is the least they could do for the backbone of this industry. Imagine how ridiculous it seems to arrive at the stable gate and see a sign that displays, "NO CHILDREN OR PETS ALLOWED BEYOND THIS POINT." Making the dormitories big enough to fit at least an average family of four, where they have their own bathrooms, and you could have a section where it's family only and a single-person dormitory area.

Moving on, the factories are our biggest competitors at this point, we are losing our workers because of the benefits they provide them with. They are being offered days off, insurance, and

specific work hours. I have worked for trainers who want me to dedicate my entire day and life to their business, as if it were mine. That being said, racetracks should start closing the training track for more holidays and not only on Christmas Day, New Year's Day, etc. Racetracks need to start being more considerate of the benefits their competitor offer, and at least attempt to match some of those as well. My biggest problem is that, there exists no "price floor" which is a term that defines minimum wage. I have seen "cheap" trainers wanting to attract professional work, and that is not how life works. If you want the best, you must pay the price for the quality. Therefore, by imposing a price floor per horse, approximately \$110 per horse for a groom, and \$350 for a hotwalker who walks 7 horses per day, etc. In having trainers to comply with these rules, this wage will attract workers by using the same marketing tactics as the fast-food industry. We are seeing a labor shortage in the fast-food industry and we see advertising signs that say, "\$20/hr, insurance, paid vacations, etc." In having good marketing, it helps promote potential job candidates.

Lastly, I don't know if there exists a resource where people can go put complaints in for the inappropriate treatment that workers receive, and if there is one, advertise it more. Create something close to an HR department, where we can regulate the behavior of trainers towards employees. The racetracks do a fair job in regulating horse treatment, but what about the workers treatment? Include penalties or warnings, the way the Stewards have done with racing legislations, which restricts trainers from abusing their position when providing unethical substances or treatment towards horses. I strongly agree the system is highly regulated when it comes to the horses but not when it comes to the treatment of workers.

There also exists entry barriers for prospective employees because many are inexperienced. We also have racetracks that only want people who are not immigrants, and some backstretches do not allow people in to search for a job. However, I understand why security does not allow people to enter without a license, this ensures the safety of the backstretch members. A solution to this is to create a “job fair” where we can advertise the job opportunities and positions trainers are offering, and then provide “onboarding”. This can help potential workers get an idea on how to start their role and be more aware of safety protocols.

In conclusion, there exists many more ideas to attract employees in many creative ways. However, they all involve investment, and expenses that some are not willing to act upon. The only thing I can do is provide you with some recommendations/solutions, it is ultimately your choice to determine whether you put my words into action. The future of this industry lies in your hands, take control and lead it to a better place.