



The Need for Talent, by Stacy Puckett Taylor

HIRING A RECENT AUTOMOTIVE/MOTORCYCLE/MARINE RESTORATION GRADUATE

What are you looking for in an entry-level employee?

Objective

To hire an entry-level employee that will fulfill not just your immediate need, but can grow with your company and become a long-term asset through the application of a system, much like the classic apprenticeship arrangement. This position is called an apprenticeship and the new hire is an apprentice. You and your shop team are mentors.

Apprenticeship: A system whereby an employer trains a new generation of practitioners of a trade or profession with on-the-job training leading to competence over a period of years in exchange for their continued labor for an agreed period after they have achieved measurable competencies.

Steps to Achieving Your Objective

- Create a job description (short term and long term).
- Determine if this is a 6-month or 12-month apprenticeship and make this part of the employment agreement.
- Decide how much time (and money) you are willing to invest in the apprenticeship of this employee.
- Make a list of non-negotiable, essential skills necessary to begin the job.
- Make a list of skills that you want the person to learn while they are apprenticing.
- In conjunction, make a list for yourself regarding how you plan to teach those skills to your apprentice, i.e. paying for classes, having them shadowing in various areas of the shop for specific allotments of time, etc.
- Remember that it could be a while before an apprentice is making you money.

Posting Openings

In addition to posting in traditional locations, such as local newspapers, think outside the box:

- Local technical college
- National programs such as McPherson College
- The RPM Foundation
- Technical, career-based schools such as UTI and Wyotech
- Craigslist
- Your website
- Facebook – search for specific groups, i.e. classic car or fabrication groups
- Twitter – link to ad on your website
- SEMA – Specialty Equipment Manufacturing Association, “the” association for the after-market industry
- Goodguysforum.com and other industry-related message boards
- Automotive Museums
- Car Clubs – national, regional and local

Making Your Hire a Successful Venture for You and Your Apprentice

Clear and constant communication is essential for a successful apprenticeship. Remember, this is an investment for both parties and will require significant commitment from both parties.

- Create a time-frame that includes regular review intervals for you and the apprentice to track progress.
- State your expectations and time-frame on each project.
- If required, allow time for the apprentice to experience different aspects of your business.
- Personalities can clash, and people have different learning styles. Enable the apprentice to have interactions with as many people and aspects of the business as possible.
- Create an atmosphere that allows for open peer-to-peer review.
- Journal – have the employee keep a journal of their goals, achievements and failures.
- Trust – Don’t micromanage. Your apprentice must learn from doing. Let them make mistakes.
- On that same note, reward success (not necessarily monetarily; trust and increased levels of responsibility work just as well).

Summary

Remember that you are not only investing in an employee, but in the future of your company and the industry. You are helping to pass knowledge from one generation to the next. Have trust and patience and enjoy the experience of mentorship.

In My Opinion

For the restoration industry to continue to thrive, there must be a fundamental change in thinking. You may be hiring someone who has training and some experience; however, they will require mentoring. Think of a recent graduate/new hire as an apprentice. This endeavor will be successful if you and your apprentice go in with your eyes open. Be open and honest and COMMUNICATE!

Stacy Puckett Taylor (RPM Foundation Ambassador and Collection, Preservation & Restoration Consultant) has an Associate Degree in Automotive Restoration Technology from McPherson College in Kansas, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. Her experience working in the automotive industry is impressive and includes her role as Parts Production Manager at Classic & Exotic Services in Detroit, MI (overseeing the manufacturing of classic and exotic car parts), a summer internship at Italmotor in Los Angeles, a six-month internship at Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Fellbach, Germany, as Conservator of LeMay – America’s Car Museum Collection, and being the Resource Manager at Paul Russell and Company in Essex, MA.