

# Workplace Culture Enhances Recruitment & Retention Efforts

## TABLE of EXPERTS



**Moderator**  
**SARA JUNIO**  
Senior Operations Executive

Sara, a Senior Operations Executive specializing in strategic planning, project management and human capital development, is the owner of Joule Strategies. She helps organizations implement strategic and operational initiatives. She also helps teams uncover their strengths, empowering them to unleash their best self in the workplace.



**TIMOTHY R. SEIFRIZ,**  
FarWell

Tim is an experienced business and human resource leader who enjoys building strong leaders, teams and businesses. He has nearly 30 years of professional experience within a variety of industries and has led major transformation efforts across many companies. Tim helps clients develop capabilities in organizational change management and culture alignment.



**JESSICA DREXLER,**  
FarWell

Focused on business growth and pursuit of organizational excellence, Jess applies a diverse communications skillset to drive alignment across people and process. With the perspective that engaged employees build loyal customers, Jess works to help talent embrace change, connect their value contribution to the corporate priority and model a company's mission, vision and values.



**CHRISTINE BROOKS**  
Goodwill of Southeastern Wisconsin and Metro Chicago

Christine Brooks is Vice President of Human Resources for Goodwill of Southeastern Wisconsin and Metro Chicago where she leads Human Resources and Facilities. Christine has experience in Biotechnology and Healthcare, Manufacturing, Insurance and Banking for companies like MetLife, GE and Fiserv. Christine has a bachelor's degree in Sociology from UW-Madison and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Denver - College of Law.



**SUZANNE MALDONADO**  
Goodwill TalentBridge

Suzanne Maldonado is Vice President of Goodwill TalentBridge, the nonprofit's staffing and recruiting arm. Suzanne's background in sales, operations, talent acquisition and client development spans 25 years. She has held leadership roles in both international and regional staffing and recruiting firms, specializing in building new business units and developing teams. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin - Madison.



**HEATHER FORSTON ALBERTI**  
Pappas DeLaney

Heather is a Consultant and Vice President of Operations for Pappas DeLaney, with over twenty years' experience in executive search and talent development. Heather's professional practice spans many industries, working with all executive levels from management to board level in Manufacturing, Healthcare and Professional Services. Her clients include publicly held, privately held, ESOP's and private equity held companies.



**JAY D. ROSENKRANTZ**  
Pappas DeLaney

Jay is the Managing Director of Pappas DeLaney, a consulting firm that focuses on Executive Search and Development. He brings over 25 years of diverse business experience and insights into his consultative role. He is known for his unique ability to connect with all levels of organizations and can seamlessly position himself as a trusted resource by relating shared experiences and displaying knowledge and understanding of the competitive and political challenges organizations face.

# Employee priorities change companies focus on marketing to prospective talent

A tight labor market has made the competition for talent difficult for employers. Added to that is a new generation of workers who want a different work-life balance and are using the Internet and social media tools to research and identify the companies where they want to work. The Milwaukee Business Journal recently assembled a panel of consultants, recruiters and employers to discuss what organizations are doing to address these challenges.

**SARA JUNIO (Moderator):** Why is a company's work environment an increasingly important part of recruiting and retaining talent? Is it due to the tight labor force, changing social mores or a combination of both?

**SUZANNE MALDONADO:** There's definitely been a generational shift in the way people think about work, which has been made more intense with the challenging labor market. For young people especially, it's very important that employees believe they are supported in the workplace and feel good about the work they are doing.

**JESSICA DREXLER:** In the current landscape people have the freedom to be selective in their choice of employers. Today's workforce tends to come from more of a "I work to live" than the "I live to work" mentality we have seen previously; companies need to adjust to that.

**HEATHER ALBERTI:** People have always wanted flexibility. They have always wanted new experiences. We are at a point now where they can expect and get them. They want and expect to work really hard, but they want some flexibility on when that work is going to be done and where it is going to be done.

**TIM SEIFRIZ:** And I think a lot of employers believe that they will get more productivity, more innovation and higher quality work if they can provide their employees with some flexibility.

**CHRISTINE BROOKS:** Employees have always cared about the work environment, but with social media, they can now easily get a sneak peek at what a work environment is like.

about the employee side and about monitoring their reputation in the marketplace.

**SEIFRIZ:** A lot of marketing practices are being pulled to the recruiting side. Companies are more thoughtful about the channels they use to recruit and to whom they are targeting their message.

organization connects in the community by supporting causes and initiatives, or by the work the company itself does.

**MALDONADO:** Purpose matters. Employees want to join organizations that are aligned with their personal goals.



**Do you think that companies are using social media to promote the organization?**

**BROOKS:** Companies have traditionally looked at social media more from a consumer brand perspective, but I think they are getting a little smarter

**What are some of the most frequently sought-after characteristics employees look for in employers?**

**BROOKS:** More people are valuing the ability to connect to their work in some meaningful way, whether it is how the

**“Engaged employees become evangelists for your company and your brand. Its magnetic.”**  
**JESSICA DREXLER, FARWELL**

**JAY ROSENCRANTZ:** The only things companies really have to compete on, especially small and mid-size firms, is the uniqueness of their work environment. Companies have to figure out their value proposition for employees and build on that.

**ALBERTI:** They want a company that values them, that wants to grow them, that wants to use all of their skillsets, that gives them opportunities to stretch.

**DREXLER:** What Heather said is

huge. People want to work for companies that invest in their people. Companies also have to understand that not everyone is on a leadership trajectory. They may be good and highly effective employees right where they're at. They, too, need to be recognized and rewarded. It takes a village, right?

**“Thriving is being aligned with values of the company—happy, engaged and contributing in a positive way...”**

**HEATHER FORSTON ALBERTI,**  
PAPPAS DELANEY

**MALDONADO:** That is a really good point. Offering learning and development opportunities is important for all high-level contributors, whether they are

moving into leadership positions or not.

**How do companies go about differentiating themselves if they are competing for the same group of talent?**

**ROSENCRANTZ:** I think it's pretty basic. In order to figure out the type of people you want, look at your current employees who are thriving. Those are the types of people you want to hire. Talk to them and they will give you the blueprint, and they will be the best ambassadors for finding other people.

**MALDONADO:** The baseline starts with organizations understanding who they are, what they believe and where they are headed. Effective talent acquisition strategies are dependent on that understanding.

**DREXLER:** It comes down to being authentic with who you are and being okay with that fact that you might not be the right fit for everyone.”

**SEIFRIZ:** Organizations have to be thoughtful and intentional. They have to think strategically about where they want to go and what they need from a service and product standpoint to get there. That will define the skills, people and problem-solving methodologies that will be needed.

**ALBERTI:** We have a client that for the most part seeks technically skilled people that are in high demand around the country. They've really struggled with how to differentiate themselves. And they have done it through reasonable work hours, a laid-back working environment and a lower cost of living than the Silicon Valley. They expose employees to interesting work and customer interaction earlier than other places. And it has worked. They have a turnover rate that is close to zero and they don't have much trouble recruiting.

**ALBERTI:** Thriving is being aligned with values of the company — happy, engaged and contributing in a positive way to the overall efforts of the organization.

**DREXLER:** Engaged employees become evangelists for your company and your brand. Its magnetic. They have that positive attitude that people want to be around.

**MALDONADO:** Employees are really some of the best ambassadors for any organization's culture and they are also the best recruiting resource. When people are engaged with their work, they are very willing to go out and talk about how great the company is.

**BROOKS:** I agree. If you are struggling with recruiting this is where you really want to focus. People who are thriving are going to bring people in who are like-minded and they are going to thrive.

**“Companies that have a positive, powerful culture use it as part of their brand message to differentiate themselves.”**

**TIMOTHY R. SEIFRIZ,**  
FARWELL

**Employer and employee perceptions of an organization's work environment can vary considerably. How can an employer go about accurately defining it?**

**SEIFRIZ:** The biggest mistake companies make is sending executives off to a boardroom or retreat to define the company's work culture. They need to go out and talk to front-line staff to get true insight into their company culture.

**MALDONADO:** And there has to be a willingness to be transparent about what is learned and how it is going to be addressed.

**DREXLER:** I agree. One of the most damaging things a company can do is ask for employee input and then do nothing about it.

**BROOKS:** We also have to be honest in admitting that we don't always get it right, which will help to establish trust and openness. Talk about who we want to be on our best day because it acknowledges that we are not at our best all of the time, but we are continually working on it.



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**ALBERTI:** Culture should be defined by how thriving employees think and act. Once it is defined, organizations need to reinforce it. How do you reinforce it? By holding people accountable when they violate it. You can't become an organization that says one thing but does another. That's really dangerous.

**MALDONADO:** It becomes part of the constant conversation on how we do things here.

**BROOKS:** One of the things we do is incorporate it into performance reviews. Employees are evaluated on both what they did and how they did it. It is a 50-50 split.

**“Companies . . . are getting a little smarter about the employee side and about monitoring their reputation in the marketplace.”**

**CHRISTINE BROOKS,**  
GOODWILL OF  
SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN  
AND METRO CHICAGO

**Do you have any lessons learned about companies where they have tried to define culture?**

**DREXLER:** I once worked with a business who wanted to define its employer brand. I met with leadership to better understand their perspective for why someone would want to work there but realized quickly that the story leadership was telling didn't match what employees were saying. Fortunately, I was able to discuss my findings with leadership and they made a really mature decision to pause the work and get a pulse on what was really happening. The first thing we did was initiate an anonymous engagement survey to gather some feedback. We then used our findings to develop initiatives to overcome some of the challenges we were hearing about and to design messaging that more accurately highlighted the company's strengths and culture.

**ROSENCRANTZ:** A mistake some people make is changing things too fast. Cultural change is incremental. You are who you are as an organization. You can change it, but it is going to take time and commitment. A great deal of mergers and acquisitions fail because two high-performing organizations with very different cultures tried to come together and change cultures too fast too quickly.

**SEIFRIZ:** A lot of companies make this the responsibility of HR only but it has to be everyone's job, leaders across the organization — and it has to be worked at daily. Otherwise it is not going to be sustainable or successful.

**ROSENCRANTZ:** It is about communication and commitment. Some of the most unsophisticated companies have the strongest and most thriving cultures you could imagine. They have low turnover because people love working there.

**Once an organization's culture has been defined, how difficult is it to build on its strengths and address its weaknesses?**

**MALDONADO:** Storytelling matters. We start meetings at Goodwill with a mission moment where someone is asked to share something that happened that was in alignment with our mission.

**BROOKS:** When we are making decisions, we ask ourselves whether our decision follows our guiding principles. We want to reinforce our guiding principles with every decision that we make.

**DREXLER:** There is no perfect culture and that is OK. But if you are willing to take the time to figure it out, people will respect and honor that.

**ALBERTI:** We ask our clients to stay committed to the behaviors that they want to see in the organization. And if you have a powerful culture that works for you, protect it at all costs.

**Does a company's brand impact its work culture, or are they two separate things?**

**ROSENCRANTZ:** I think it does. One of the things that

has changed the workforce more than anything else is transparency. You are going to struggle if your culture does not match with the external brand you have in the marketplace.

**SEIFRIZ:** Companies that have a positive, powerful culture use it as part of their brand message to differentiate themselves. It is one thing to have the CEO or a recruitment ad say it, but quite another to have testimonials on your website — to have peers say you will love it here.

**What are some of the strategic consideration's organizations should consider to build a strong foundation for its future workforce?**

**MALDONADO:** Thinking about where you are going to be in the future depends on understanding where you are now. It is about doing the deep dive into how things are right this moment, what the world looks like around you right now, and where you want to be based on where you see the world going. Competency-based hiring is

one of the things we emphasize to our customers. It sounds straightforward, and it is, but it can be challenging to the way a lot of people hire right now. It is very uncomfortable for some employers to throw out the resume and instead focus on the competencies people can bring to the table and whether or not we can make them successful with learning and development.

**“Purpose matters. Employees want to join organizations that are aligned with their personal goals.”**

**SUZANNE MALDONADO,**  
GOODWILL TALENTBRIDGE

**ALBERTI:** We have our clients focus on two things. The first is



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**JAY D. ROSENCRANTZ,**  
PAPPAS DELANEY

hiring people with the ability to thrive. You are better off having someone with a 100-percent ability to thrive and 50 percent of the skillset you're looking for instead of the other way around. The other thing we suggest to our clients is to hire utility players — people who can do more than one thing. Employers have traditionally focused on

hiring specialists, but we need flexible people who can jump into other roles or assignments when needed.

**SEIFRIZ:** Behavioral skillsets and a get-things-done approach are increasingly valuable. We are seeing the rising importance of the generalists and the situational players. They are the ones we will be clinging to.

**ROSENCRANTZ:** We tell our clients to interview for the fit first, before you fall in love with a resume.

**SEIFRIZ:** I agree with that, but in today's recruiting world, human beings are no longer the first screening tool. Companies are using applicant tracking systems that use artificial intelligence to look for specific, check-the-box skills. We're saying we should hire people with behavioral skills but right now companies are using technology to comb through resumes. That's not a good idea.

**ROSENCRANTZ:** That's a great point.

**Some HR professionals are concerned that the term “culture” is beginning to take on a negative connotation because it's perceived as exclusive by some. Is this your sense, and if so, how do you make it more inclusive?**

**BROOKS:** Sometimes when you hear the word culture, there may be a perception that it excludes, that you won't fit an expectation. I would shift the dialog to the experience the employee will have, because that puts the ball into their court: Here is the experience we offer, here is what is important to us and here is who we want to be, this is what we will offer you and this is how people thrive here. Then you enable people to make the choice on whether they want to be there.

**ALBERTI:** We have really encouraged our clients to move away from the idea of culture. It is better to focus on thriving. There are so many things people think about when they think about culture, but the ability to thrive can't be mistaken.

**DREXLER:** One of the greatest drivers of engagement is the value contribution an employee feels they are providing in helping the company achieve its mission. Companies that focus on the individual verses the collective culture will deliver a more personalized experience for employees.

**How can a company's culture be leveraged to enhance recruitment efforts?**

**DREXLER:** Connecting HR and marketing is important. The marketing team understands the company's brand and where the company is headed. Your marketing team should help your HR team just like they help the sales team.

**SEIFRIZ:** I would flip the question to ask, “How can you use your recruitment efforts to enhance your culture?” Start hiring more for fit, for shared values, for how they solve problems and not be constrained to how they check the boxes.

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**Coreen Dicus-Johnson**  
President & CEO, Network Health

