

# The 'Super Bowl' for Recruiters

**Many large employers, including UPS and retailer Kohl's, are using a variety of novel tactics to recruit thousands of seasonal employees for the upcoming holiday-sales blitz, including a new focus on hiring veterans.**

By Carol Patton

This year, United Parcel Service plans on hiring between 90,000 and 95,000 seasonal employees, approximately 10,000 more than last year, due to an expected increase of consumer deliveries ? both online and off.

That means hiring more people to fill a wide variety of positions such as tractor-trailer drivers, package care drivers, loaders and unloaders who work at its hubs, and helpers who work alongside drivers on delivery routes, to name just a few.

While hiring started in August, the company does not change its hiring practices or standards for seasonal workers, explains Lytana Kids, vice president of global workforce planning at UPS in Atlanta.

?Comparing ourselves to two to four years ago, we all know that the economy is picking up, that jobs are more plentiful . . . that our applicants have options,? she says. ?We?re sensitive to that and [we're] doing what we can to talk about the brand of UPS and why we would like them to come work for us.?

During the holiday season, HR professionals rely on a variety of recruiting practices to quickly ramp up staffing. Promoting a company?s brand. Targeting groups. Converting employees into recruiters. Launching social media campaigns. Even bringing back retired employees. Just about any strategy is considered that may lure top candidates to seasonal opportunities they may otherwise not have considered.

To ensure staffing levels are appropriate this holiday season, UPS launched several new campaigns.

?We?re bringing back UPS retired managers to help us during peak season,? says Kids, adding that they will be involved in everything from training to operational logistics. ?We have more than 400 retirees back on board this season.?



The company is also branding itself as an employer of choice for veterans. By 2018, it plans on hiring 50,000 more vets. However, by hiring them first as seasonal workers, the company is sending a strong message ? they can put their foot in the door for permanent job opportunities.

Social media is yet another strategy. Besides Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube, it launched a mobile application in 2011. ?More than 30 percent of our hires come through a mobile device,? Kids says, adding that in the past 18 months, the company hired roughly 25,000 employees, including seasonal workers, through social media and mobile devices. ?We really streamlined the hiring process.?

In the near future, UPS plans on building a talent network by staying connected with seasonal workers via social media throughout the year. So does national retailer Kohl?s, which plans to hire 67,000 seasonal workers this year ? 15 percent more than last year ? to work in its 1,163 stores and distribution, fulfillment and call centers, says Ryan Festerling, senior vice president of HR at Kohl?s headquarters in Menomonee Falls, Wis.

?My goal is not to have a new group of 67,000 people every single year,? he says, adding that hiring starts as early as August. ?We?re excited to utilize some social media tools to have an ongoing dialogue, not just as a previous employer . . . We?re different than other companies because our customers are our employees and our employees are our customers.?

HR is considering email campaigns that inform seasonal workers about new programs or practices, such as its loyalty program, or establishing an online alumni group. Not to mention converting employees into brand ambassadors. Festerling is big on brand promotion.

?Never underestimate the power of what 140,000 individual brand ambassadors can do,? he says. ?If one person refers one person, we?ve doubled our goal.?

Meanwhile, HR doesn?t skip any steps in the hiring process. It conducts a background check and drug screening test on every employee ? seasonal or otherwise. No compromises are made, says Festerling, explaining that recruiters never use the scale of employees needed as an excuse to minimize either the quality of people they bring on board or their customer service efforts since seasonal workers are also prospective customers.

There?s good reason to follow traditional hiring practices. According to the *26th Annual Retail Theft Survey* by Jack L. Hayes International, 78,085 ? or one in every 39.5 employees ? were apprehended for theft from their employer in 2013, up 6.5 percent from 2012. Over \$55 million was recovered from dishonest employees who stole 5.4 times the amount stolen by shoplifters.

Still, some companies avoid background checks for seasonal workers. Instead, HR conducts an online search, checking out social media sites for information about candidates. But that can expose employers to legal issues, since those employees aren?t properly vetted, according to the [National Association of Professional Background Screeners](https://www.napbs.com/media/releases/pr_111813.pdf) ([https://www.napbs.com/media/releases/pr\\_111813.pdf](https://www.napbs.com/media/releases/pr_111813.pdf)).

At Kohl's, Festerling says its brand message and employee value proposition are discussed throughout the year. Full-time workers are encouraged to tell their personal stories and share their employee experiences. He says the videos are a new recruiting and retention initiative. They're shown on the company's Intranet and in employee break rooms, and may soon be part of an email campaign.

"I am such a strong believer in the candidate experience and employment brand," he says, adding that HR deliberately targets employee engagement since high levels of engagement can lead to a strong referral base. "Referrals and having a positive experience are such an important part of [our] business. Whether [candidates] take the job or not, having a great experience with Kohl's as a brand is so important to this company."

Offering great employee experiences can encourage seasonal workers to return year after year. And it doesn't have to be elaborate or expensive. One store manager, he says, introduced potluck dessert days while another offers "favorite thing" days where employees celebrate their own day with their favorite thing, such as hot chocolate being served in the break room.

"This is a fun time for us," says Festerling. "This is our Super Bowl. We're looking for a lot of people for a defined period of time to join in that fun with us, providing that great customer service."

*Send questions or comments about this story to [hreletters@lrp.com](mailto:hreletters@lrp.com).*

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