

recruiting



Every news director knows how hard it can be to find good job candidates, especially for off-air positions. If you're in a small market, it's even tougher. Some prospects, even those who are right out of school, won't consider your openings because they're able to land better-paying jobs in bigger markets. Here are some suggestions on how to stay competitive in recruiting and hiring.

Connect with colleges

Visit colleges in the area and look for part-time or adjunct professors who might want to produce or write on the side. Recruit their best students for entry-level jobs. News director Mary Rigby of WCSC-TV in Charleston, SC, created a program with three local universities that have good broadcasting programs. "I promise them three presentations per year—myself or an anchor—and in return they give me their top two or three students as interns," she says. "I'm building a resource pool so when I have an opening, I've got someone to grab who knows how we do things."

Bring in interns

If you don't have an intern program, start one. Make sure your interns do more than answer the phone. Look for "wanna-be" producers, and let them write.

Groom your own

Look closely at the production department. Part-time camera operators and floor people are often students, making minimum wage. Scott Picken at KIVI-TV in Boise, ID, says he's had success bringing them over to the news side and having them help edit, run the assignment desk, or write. Gavin Maliska, news director at WXIN-TV in Indianapolis, IN, says that a month after a part-time writer is promoted to full-time, they start training to become producers.

“Recruiting was a bigger challenge than I thought.... Producers are getting jobs in bigger markets so they don't need a foot in the door.”

Robin Wojtanik • KIMA-TV/KEPR-TV • Yakima, WA

Build a database

Whenever you see a good prospect, keep his or her resume in your own database. Don't turn everything over to the human resources department. Stay in touch with people who have potential but don't fit your current needs. WHBQ's Ken Jobe even offers to critique tapes so he can track the development of individuals he might one day want to hire.

Look for “fit”

Keep the abilities and attitudes of your current staff in mind when you're looking to hire someone new. Temperament and commitment may be just as important as skill. In smaller markets, be willing to hire intelligence over experience.

Sell the opportunity

Keep a list of success stories to help you sell the advantage of starting in a small market newsroom. Be able to name people who worked at your station and have gone on to bigger and better things. Make clear you're the kind of news director who will help new hires improve and find their next job.

Sell the area

Get booklets from the Visitor's Bureau or Chamber of Commerce, and send them out to applicants. One news director suggests creating incentives for new hires to start in smaller markets through trade-outs for reduced rent or a used car that you can throw in with the job.