

How one firm saw the light on hiring

Teva Neuroscience nurtures a happy and productive work force by sticking to the HR basics and making sure employees strike a chord with its culture, writes CRAIG SILVERMAN

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MONTREAL -- The offices of Teva Neuroscience Canada are almost more remarkable for what they don't have: You won't find slick furniture, a gourmet kitchen or foosball table -- the bells and whistles that some companies have come to believe are essential to employee satisfaction and productivity.

Rather, people like to work there because they believe they belong there -- and they're rewarded for their loyalty and commitment.

"Five years ago, I was reading Fast Company [magazine], and they talked about having chefs to make lunch and playing basketball during the day," Teva Canada general manager Jon Congleton says in an interview at the pharmaceutical company's Montreal office. "That's the fluff -- not the substance that can feed people long-term and sustain a career."

"We focus on three clarities," he continues. "Clarity of structure: Where do I fit in with this company? Clarity of direction: Where am I going? And clarity of measurement: How do I know I did a good job?"

"Maybe it's not as sexy as a lot of other things, but it is sustaining and it feels more real, and I think people value that."

Largely because of this fundamental approach to human resources, and the way the company implements it, Teva has been selected as this year's best small company to work for, based on a survey conducted by Queen's Centre for Business Venturing and Hewitt Associates. It beat out about 120 small companies for the honour.

The 62-employee company borders on obsessive when it comes to living its values. It strives to hire the right people, keep staff well-informed, gather feedback from them and ensure that employees know how they fit in with the organization, Mr. Congleton says.

Teva stands out because it creates the activities, programs and environment that make those goals a reality for all employees. And it acknowledges their contributions with 18 different awards and other forms of recognition, such as reward trips for meeting corporate objectives, trophies and cash bonuses.

The result, according to Mr. Congleton, is a sense of purpose and belonging that permeates the organization and empowers employees.

The company needs that kind of focus, he says, because of its position as the Canadian subsidiary of Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., a global pharmaceutical company based in Israel.

Teva Canada staff work with the company's U.S. team of 627 people and must also integrate its operations and strategy within the 27,000-employee global work force. As a subsidiary, it benefits from being able to send staff to the North American headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., for high-level training and assessment programs to prepare them for upper management positions; yet, it also must meet global objectives and dedicate employees to North American and worldwide initiatives.

"We look for people who can work across geographical and across cultural boundaries," Mr. Congleton says. "There are multiple projects led from here and many of our people participate in global initiatives. So we need people who can turn on and off the leadership button."

Brigitte Bernard, Teva Canada's senior manager of human resources, says a key to its success is a rigorous candidate interview process that ensures the company hires the right people. "There's a really big focus on finding a person who is going to fit with our philosophy and culture."

Teva puts job candidates through a series of interviews, often back-to-back, with people from different departments and seniority levels.

In addition to a focus on the skill level and experience of the candidate, Teva delves into how the candidate will fit with the culture and values of the company. The company doesn't hesitate to end an employment trial if a new hire isn't fitting in. "When you make a hiring mistake, fix it promptly," Ms. Bernard says.

Another factor that makes Teva a happy place to work involves what it does.

The company is responsible for marketing, selling and conducting clinical research and customer support for Copaxone, a drug to help sufferers of multiple sclerosis, and Azilect, a new product for people with Parkinson's disease.

The nature of the products and how they help patients are a factor in employee satisfaction, according to Ms. Bernard. "We regularly meet patients and hear how the products have made a difference. We have a sense of the difference we're making, and that nourishes the passion [for the work]."

The company also inspires dedication through awards and other means of recognition. This includes annual bonuses, retreats for all staff for team building and to celebrate hitting sales targets, as well as special cash awards and certificates for exemplary work or attitude. It also pays \$3,000 to any employee who refers a successful job candidate.

Though it shuns the trappings most-associated with the dot-com era, Teva does provide a range of benefits. Its location offers access to an in-house gym, the company reimburses half the cost of tuition for employees, and it offers \$400 a year per employee for wellness and cultural activities, such as ski lift tickets and tai chi.

"[The reimbursements] are an acknowledgment of the need for a balanced life," Mr. Congleton says. "We can't just work them 20 hours a day and expect to get the best of an individual. People need to shut down their work."

Manon Bélanger, 43, senior manager of clinical research at Teva, says the company creates a positive work atmosphere that lets employees know they are valued.

"It's a friendly atmosphere but we also feel that associates are the focus of the company," says the employee of four years. "At other companies I saw the values literally posted on the wall but you couldn't feel them on a daily basis."

Mr. Congleton says it comes down to the "feeling that people have walking in the door everyday."

"Knowing what they need to do, [enjoying] the people they are interacting with, and getting that sense of trust," he says. "That's the stuff that's there every single day and it's what attracts people."

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The five-step plan for happy staff

Brigitte Bernard, senior manager of human resources at Teva Neuroscience, offers five steps to an award-winning work environment.

Hire for values, not just skills: "New hires should be interested not only in the job, but also in what the company is about," Ms. Bernard says. Teva puts candidates through several interviews with managers, executives and associates, often lasting a full day, to assess how applicants would fit in with the company's values, people, practices, and work environment. Hiring managers are trained in interviewing techniques and the company is quick to let a new hire go if the fit is not ideal.

Two-way communication: The company regularly conducts anonymous employee satisfaction surveys and follows up with focus groups to zero in on issues and find strategies to resolve them. Regular staff meetings with executives provide the overall picture of Teva's progress, and the company regularly communicates via e-mail and its intranet. "Open, clear and timely internal communications . . . is fundamental to creating

a sense of belonging, to motivate involvement and to earn the employees' trust," Ms. Bernard says.

Clarity: "Each employee must know and understand how he or she is contributing to building the company's success," she says. The company pursues this with frequent performance reviews and evaluations that ensure employees know exactly what their role is and what is expected of them.

Reward and Acknowledge: For meeting corporate objectives, Teva offers 18 different rewards and means of acknowledgment, ranging from cash bonuses and trophies to trips to a sunny locale, that are open to all staff. To motivate and provide accountability, every Teva employee is eligible for a performance bonus.

Balance: "[Our employees] are not just workers, but also parents, spouses, children, students, grandparents, etc." Ms. Bernard says. The company encourages work/life balance by offering reimbursements for wellness and cultural activities, such as painting classes and gym memberships, as well as for school tuition. It also allows employees to set their own schedule around the core business hours of 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and offers a competitive health benefits and vacation package.