



The struggle to find and keep **QUALIFIED EMPLOYEES**

EVEN WITH THE INFLUX OF NEW GENERATIONS

of prospective workers, many small businesses struggle with finding and keeping qualified employees. In fact, according to recent TAB surveys, this is the most pressing issue for a sizeable percentage of small business owners.

"WE STRIVE TO EXCEL IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

while also focusing on the importance of proper risk selection and pricing."

Kimberly Stuffle, who with Thomas Adderhold established Preferred Aviation Underwriters in 2005, has felt this pain acutely. As a key player in a niche industry—providing tailored property and casualty insurance to clients in aviation—the company's main goal is helping to reduce the cost of doing business and offering market availability in the areas of property, inland marine, auto, crime, premises liability and other hard-to-place risks.

But in its early days, Preferred Aviation Underwriters needed time to establish its credibility. As the business grew, Kim (in her role as President of Preferred Aviation Underwriters) found herself facing a rampant employee turnover rate, despite the well-paid jobs the company offered.

Being in a specialized niche, finding qualified people was proving to be tedious, time-consuming and costly. The company suffered from a lack of skilled staff and productivity fell because of the time spent in training new employees who didn't work out in the long run. Kim tried consulting with her staff to dissect the problem, but with little success.

TURNING TO TAB

"This company is my baby, and my employees only told me what I wanted to hear," she recalls. To get the hard truth, Kim turned to TAB.

Her fellow TAB Board Members opened her eyes to what was causing her hiring and retention problems, and it wasn't what she expected to hear. With their help, she realized she was only considering applicants if they had the correct college degree, almost completely discounting other personality traits that are essential to the job. Based on their insight and feedback, Kim modified her job descriptions, search, interview and hiring processes.

"There comes a time where you need to ask for outside help," she admits. "TAB's process opened my eyes to see that I needed to look beyond the resume when I was considering an applicant."

INSIGHTS INTO MARKETING THE COMPANY

Kim also took marketing-related issues to the Board and her facilitator. "In this arena of business, you have to have dedicated face-to-face time with your clients," she says. "One-to-one marketing demands a great deal of time and perseverance."

Kim's TAB Board encouraged her to increase the company's annual marketing budget to support a more hands-on, personalized approach to marketing. "This was outside of my comfort zone," she says, "but it was the right thing to do as it has helped grow my company tremendously."

These days, with Preferred Aviation Underwriters sustaining annual growth of more than \$25 million, Kim says she values TAB more than ever. In fact, she says that if she could go back in time, she would have reached out to TAB sooner.



"As a business owner, you experience peaks and valleys daily, but it's the perseverance and knowing when to ask for help that is essential for your success. My company would not be where we are today if I hadn't reached out to TAB and utilized their processes, which have proved to build a thriving company."