

# Reconsidering the Talent Attraction Cycle

Joe Baker

## Summary:

The talent attraction cycle strains under new pressures in the evolving hospitality industry. It's time to part with old ways and welcome the new.

## Here are some signs that your talent attraction strategy needs a makeover:

- It lacks inclusivity
- It's focused on a pre-covid industry
- You're tech-free and behind the times
- So far, your business has been framing it as a supply-demand issue
- Your business is not considering a new benefits model
- You haven't addressed the impact of inflation
- You haven't considered partnering with an expert to fulfill your potential
- You're frustrated, stretched, and at your wit's end! Look no further.

## How to Navigate Common Traps in the Talent Attraction Cycle:

- **Start by looking to those who are doing it right.**  
Model your business after success and embody the approach of those who are managing their people and their talent life cycle well. Use their talent strategies as a blueprint.
- **Refresh your talent strategy.**  
Conditions are changing, but we're habit-forming creatures, especially in business. Brands are rooted in standards and processes. Let go of old philosophies and approaches; design a talent strategy to meet the moment.
- **Stay relevant.**  
Keep yourself up-to-date with the conditions of your business, workforce, potential workforce, and client base.

## Ask the Expert:

### What would you recommend to someone starting in the hospitality industry in 2022?

**Joe Baker:** You know, if you were to start a hospitality business today, even if you were super well funded, flush with good ideas, and you had to design your talent strategy from scratch, you would take a very different approach than if you had been in business for a hundred years. And your marker of success is that we've standardized things, we've figured it out, we've always followed the path, and we've found success.



### **What do you consider to be the most important consideration for the industry?**

**JB:** Our people are our greatest accomplishment, and I think that you know so, the single biggest mistake is not refreshing your talent strategy because whatever it is that you and I are talking about right now, it may not be relevant in every single community, in every single market, in every single state and time. But what's relevant is being aware of what's happening around you.

### **Your evaluation of the labour shortage is that it should be seen as a social dilemma. Can you elaborate on your stance about the social dilemma that hospitality faces?**

**JB:** Yeh, so the hospitality and tourism industry isn't the best industry to work in anymore, but it can be, and it holds really limitless potential. And I'm saying that as somebody who was born and raised into Canada's restaurant and hotel industry. I say that from a perspective of love and compassion for what everybody in this industry has experienced over the last years, whether you're a successful business operator or whether you're one of the people who got displaced by the challenges of a culture that needed to be updated. So, to frame the challenge that we have right now as a shortage of workers or that it is about supply and demand is really selling the complexity of the problem short.

### **How do you suggest the social dilemma might be addressed?**

**JB:** I think there is a new social dilemma, and without getting too far into it, I don't expect hotels and restaurants, tourism operators, food truck operators... I don't expect them to come up with really complex, people-centric, social solutions to their hiring problems. I understand that their purpose is to run successful businesses. But I think that they should be aware of what is happening. And I think that they can contribute, and that's my purpose of framing the challenge that we're experiencing through the social lens.

### **What are the roots of the social dilemma in the hospitality industry?**

**JB:** It's not supply and demand. So, increasing immigration targets, increasing international education targets, and increasing interventions to get underrepresented groups into this industry. We need the lived experience of those people in our industry, local communities, and in our cities, provinces, and countries to function cohesively. There is no way that you can be a modern leader and not be aware of the affordable housing crisis that is facing our country. And I'm not talking about a housing crisis exclusively for people who meet low-income thresholds. I'm talking about first-time home buyers. I'm talking about New Canadians. I'm talking about the structure of getting a mortgage approved. You know, the cost of living continues to increase—supply chain issues, inflation, food is more expensive, gas is more expensive, education is more expensive, clothing is more expensive.

## What makes this issue significant in the hospitality industry?

**JB:** Everything is more expensive. You know, for these reasons alone, it's more challenging for people who are working in an industry that has a lower than average pay rate, or lower than average benefits, or career planning tools, or those other pieces.

## Do you think immigration plays a role in the complexity of this challenge?

**JB:** Yes, especially for new Canadians. Government officials are now saying that Canada will target 500 000 new Canadians every year from around the world. What is the social service industry that helps them integrate into this country and helps them understand the nuances of being Canadian?

## Why is this moment so important for the hospitality industry?

**JB:** To say that people have jobs just to earn an income does a disservice to the value that we have all collectively placed in having purposeful work. And people want to go to work every day, and they want to make money, absolutely. But they also want to feel like they're making a contribution, and all of those things require much more complex awareness and understating and interventions to create a path to success.

## How will the talent attraction process in the tourism and hospitality industry change in the coming years?

- The industry is on a path of continuous change and transformation. As Heraclitus, the ancient Greek philosopher, said, "Change is the only constant."
- There is and will continue to be an accelerated adoption of technology. The challenge of the last few years has forced some of those operators who were holding out to embrace technology.
- It won't be technology alone that solves the problem. That's too black and white. It's going to be a combination of technology and people. Technology has the capacity to connect us, and data analytics will be a key component that drives the connection between job seekers and employers.
- Community is essential. You engage with your workforce, your people, and your team much more like a community and leverage one another's talents and skills.

When places of business return to a sense of community, that will be the path forward.

### **And how do you ensure that you are in the best position to attract and retain the top talent to drive your business efforts forward?**

The answer lies in the sweet spot between human connection and technology. With the help of an innovative and thoughtful platform, you can leverage technology to increase efficiency without sacrificing what's essential—human connection.

#### **Looking for resources?**

**Take a look at ORHMA and the Passport to Hospitality Program.**

Click [here](#) to learn more about the new partnership between FindWRK and ORHMA.



### Who is Joe Baker?

**Joe Baker** is a passionate leader within Canada's tourism, hospitality, and education sectors and a vocal advocate for a resilient, inclusive, future-forward industry. He is CEO of Joe Baker & Co., a human capital consultancy focused on transformational strategy, coaching, training and talent. He was previously Dean at Centennial College's School of Hospitality, Tourism, and Culinary Arts, where he led the most significant transformation in the school's over 50-year history. Joe has held senior management roles at George Brown College's Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts, including Director of Operations, Services and Partnerships.

Before joining higher education, he worked in hotels and managed restaurants. He has a Master of Education in Higher Education Leadership, a Bachelor of Commerce in Hospitality and Tourism Management and extensive executive education and certifications. Joe proudly serves on the Board of Directors at Tourism HR Canada and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario.



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