THE RAINMAKING MAGAZINE

Recruit to Retain in the Age of AI: Lead with Connection, Purpose, and Well-being

By Janice Litvin
November 10, 2025

Your next great hire is not just looking for a job. They're looking for a culture they love.

Whenever I deliver a keynote or workshop, I hear the same complaint from clients, "we can't find enough good workers." And my response is, "what are you doing to look for them?"

After giving this conundrum much thought I developed my **Recruit to Retain in the Age** methodology. In today's world where technology has transformed every aspect of our workplaces, there are 3 winning keys to today's recruiting strategy: **connection, purpose and well-being.**

The companies winning the talent race today understand one powerful truth: **recruiting and retention are two sides of the same coin.** Here's how to make your recruiting process magnetic.

1. Use AI to Amplify Connection, Not Replace It

AI can do amazing things: screen resumes, automate scheduling, and identify top candidates faster. But there's one thing it can never do: **replace the human touch.**

Smart recruiters use AI to clear away the busywork, so they can focus on what really matters: *building relationships*.

Use technology to:

- Personalize outreach
- Improve diversity by removing bias in AI tools
- Give back time for genuine conversations

But remember, the goal is to make technology your assistant, not your ambassador. Candidates should never feel like they're talking to a robot.

A recruiter's superpower is empathy. A thoughtful message, a phone call, or even a simple "How are you holding up?" can make a candidate feel seen in a world that often feels automated.

I learned this firsthand during my 20 years in recruiting, back when we didn't have LinkedIn or AI tools. Every placement started with a real conversation. I'd spend time understanding not just a candidate's skills, but their *why* and what kind of work made them feel alive. Those were the hires that stuck, because people who feel seen from the start tend to stay.

AI may open the door, but **human connection** is what makes someone walk through it.

2. Lead with Purpose, Not Perks

The new workforce isn't impressed by ping-pong tables or unlimited snacks. They want to know **their work has meaning,** that the company stands for something bigger than quarterly results.

Purpose fuels retention because it ties people to a mission. When employees know how their work contributes to a greater goal, they're more likely to stay engaged and loyal.

One of my clients, a financial services firm, reframed its recruiting message from "Join a fast-growing organization" to "Help families build financial stability and peace of mind." That subtle shift began attracting people who cared about helping others, leading to stronger engagement and retention.

I also experienced this firsthand with *the best boss I ever had,* Frank. He trusted me with our branch's largest client, an international shipping firm whose data had to be transmitted nightly without fail. That level of trust inspired me to step up and be my best.

Then one day, Frank offered me a stretch assignment. He offered me the lead training position. Not only did I love helping people overcome their fear of learning new software, but also that one step lit the spark that eventually led me to what I do today: help leaders and teams banish burnout, thrive, and create a well culture that retains top talent.

That's what purpose looks like in practice. It's not a slogan or a mission statement. It's giving people meaningful work that helps them grow.

To do the same, communicate clearly:

- **Why** your company exists
- **Who** it serves
- **How** each role makes a difference
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Purpose attracts candidates who see your company as a *calling,* not just a paycheck.

3. Well-being Is a Recruiting Magnet

In a world where burnout has become an epidemic, **well-being speaks louder than any job ad.**

Candidates today are watching how companies care for their people. They're listening to what current employees say about leadership, flexibility, and whether "work-life balance" is real or just a tagline.

According to a 2025 Gallup national study, well-being and flexibility rank among the top factors influencing job decisions.

But wellness isn't just about free Zumba classes or an app that tracks steps. It's about emotionally intelligent leaders who know how to listen, check in, and set realistic expectations. It's about creating a culture where people feel safe saying, "I need a break."

Ask yourself:

- Do your recruiters and hiring managers talk about well-being in interviews?
- Do leaders model healthy boundaries?
- Is your culture truly supportive, or just advertised that way?

Organizations that build well-being into their culture don't just hire talent, they *retain* it.

When people feel cared for, they give their best, and they stay.

Recruiting to retain in the age of AI means weaving **connection, purpose, and well-being** into every part of the hiring process.

When candidates feel connected, they trust you.
When they see purpose, they feel inspired.
When they sense genuine care for well-being, they know they belong.

That's how companies move from filling jobs to building loyal, high-performing teams.

Recruiting isn't just about finding great people, it's about **creating the kind of workplace they never want to leave.**

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