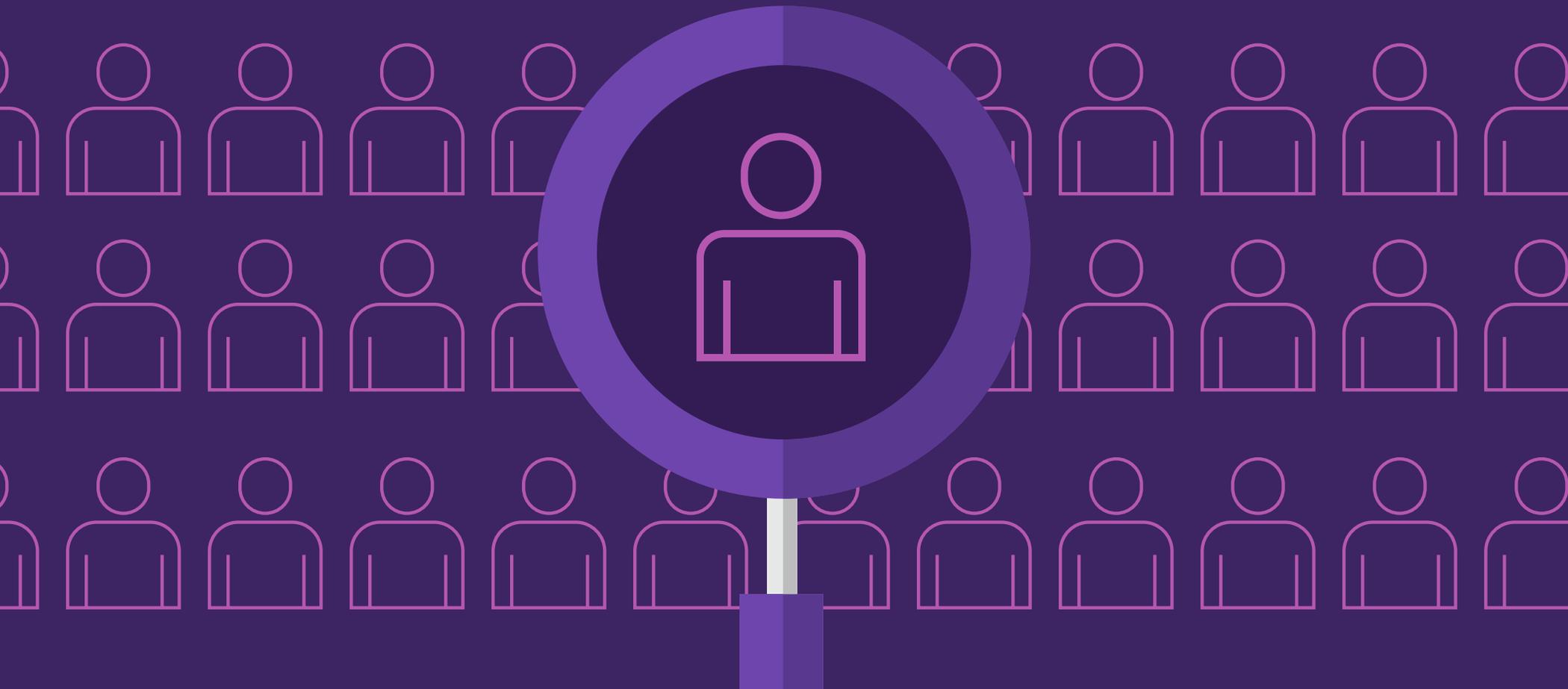


MONSTER

Small Business Hiring Guide

POST-COVID-19



The COVID-19 pandemic

has brought with it not only a public health nightmare, but economic pain and uncertainty – especially for small and medium sized businesses. As things begin to open back up, business owners have a lot to think about, including the delicate balance of how much staff they need to ramp back up.

For many, it will mean rehiring employees that were temporarily laid off, while others might need to replace people who don't wish to return, or add on new hires to meet entirely new customer demands.

All of this is very dependent on the state of your individual business, the demand for services, and your geographic area. To complicate matters even further, much of your hiring activity will need to be conducted virtually, which could be foreign territory if you're a brick and mortar business.

Sound familiar? If you're a small or medium-sized business owner, we're probably not telling you anything you don't already know.

Add to all of that the complexities of hiring people who may be nervous about working with the public or collecting more on unemployment that the business might be able to offer, as well as the rules regarding PPP loans, and it's no wonder why business owners are stressed.

Still, some businesses are in the midst of a hiring frenzy. For example, Dunkin Donuts recently announced that it will be hiring 25,000 workers to fill open roles in its franchises, and Taco Bell is similarly planning to explore its workforce. Some retailers and restaurant owners might be adding on extra staff to handle new cleaning protocols, expanded outdoor seating service, and delivery.

In other words, hiring is still happening, and when it comes time to ramp back up, businesses may have to learn to rely on some nontraditional methods.

This guide will reveal some of the key hiring challenges that small and medium businesses are contending with over the summer and fall months, along with hiring strategies and tips on how to prepare for an uncertain future.



SECTION 1

Hiring Challenges

Whether your business was completely shut down or continued operating in some capacity, chances are you have scaled back to some degree. Before jumping back in, the first thing to consider is your finances, and whether you are spending money on staff that aren't essential, says Morgan Taylor, CMO for LetMeBank. "In these times we need to trim the fat, at least temporarily, wherever we can," he says.

“ When things get back to whatever the new normal ends up being, then if you have shepherded your resources properly you will be able to hire all the people you want.”

In other words, be careful about trying to go directly back to how you operated before the crisis. **“Financially these are new times, with new challenges, and you may have to adapt accordingly,”** says Taylor.

So how can you decide who to hire or rehire?

“Depending on the industry, it makes financial sense to ramp up and get employees hired on the revenue side of the business,” says Claudia Johnson, vice president of internal recruiting at Addison Group, a national staffing and recruitment firm. If you've taken a PPP loan, that can help ease that burden, she says, and then once sales are coming in, you can begin bringing back your support personnel.

In the meantime, she recommends businesses develop an online presence to make up for the lack of foot traffic. That could be developing a website if they have product to sell, or just being proactive about getting the name out there on social media. That way, you can maintain customer relationships and stay top of mind for when people are ready and able to venture back out.

Back to business basics

- 1 Audit and trim unnecessary expenses (including staff).
- 2 Hire for the revenue side of your business first.
- 3 Create and prioritize an online presence to boost sales and weather uncertainty.



West View Savings Bank

Big unemployment checks make hiring tough

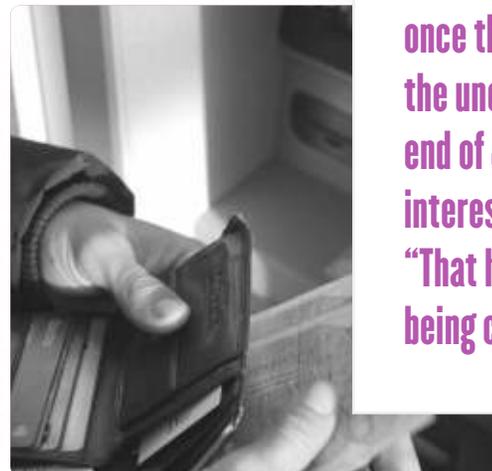
West View Savings Bank in Pittsburgh employs about 50 people and kept operating throughout the pandemic as an essential business.

“We did not have to let any staff go,” says Mike Rutan, the bank’s chief operating officer. “But we had a couple of people who had to spend time away from work because schools and day care were closed, so we’re down a couple of people.”

Recruiting people to replace them has been a challenge.

“One of the things we could potentially run up against is they can make as much or more staying home and collecting unemployment benefits,” says Rutan. “Plus, maybe people just don’t want to have much contact in a retail space. There are a lot of hurdles there for us to overcome.”

By September and October, Rutan anticipates there will be more people looking for work who want to work, and therefore, a bigger candidate pool. “The challenge is bridging the gap between now and then,” he says.



Johnson also predicts that

once the extra \$600 per week payment in the unemployment benefits ends at the end of July, there’s going to be a surge of interested candidates in every vertical. “That has been a sticking point —they are being compensated more.”

COVID CHALLENGE

Navigating the Paycheck Protection Program

Businesses that took Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans need to be aware of their obligations when it comes to rehiring and staffing in order to be eligible for loan forgiveness.

Villaggio's Restaurant and Café, located in Hartsdale, New York had approximately 20-25 staff members before the pandemic. **“While we stayed open, we let go of everyone except for four people,”** says Robyn Matarazzo, co-owner of Villaggio's. **As the phased reopening in New York continues, she's been slowly starting to add employees back.**

“We hope that we are back to our original staff once we fully open inside and out. It has been a little challenging bringing some staff back because some are making more on unemployment with the additional stimulus,” she says. But, she knows that even if they don't take the opportunity to come back, she's allowed to move on to hire other staff.

That's because under the Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act of 2020 (an amended version of the original act), there is a mandatory requirement that borrowers use at least 60% of the loan proceeds on payroll costs, explains Kelly Williams, founder and managing partner of Slate Law Group.

Document everything

“The Act also extended the time period for employers to rehire employees,” she notes, allowing up to December 31, 2020 to fully restore the average number of full-time employees to the business' 2019 levels. Also, if the borrower can demonstrate that they are not returning to the same level of business activity because of compliance with official guidance, and therefore cannot rehire the same number of employees, they can still be eligible for loan forgiveness.



“ It is important for employers to document everything, from their inability to rehire employees that were previously employed, to an employer's struggle to hire similarly qualified employees for vacant positions, to the lack of business activity resulting from COVID-19 related government orders.”

Kelly Williams, Managing Partner,
Slate Law Group

SECTION 2

Getting Ready to Staff Up

Market your roles as COVID-Safe

Beyond the financials, the other big roadblock to staffing back up is fear. That's why if you know you need to hire in the near future, get a jump on looking for candidates.

"In the last two weeks, I've been reaching out to candidates via phone or email even though I don't have a job opening posted right now," says Rutan. He used Monster's resume search solution **SearchMonster** to cull through some potential candidates that might be a good fit.

"I explain that we have safety protocols in place, acrylic barriers up, social indicators on the floor, cleaning supplies, and we are doing everything we can," says Rutan.



90% of candidates feel it's important for companies to have health and safety guidelines as part of return to work strategies.

Matarazzo in having similar conversations as she brings workers back to the restaurant. "We would share the same with new staff that we do with current staff, which is that their safety and health is most important as well as the safety and health of our customers," she says.

"We have a list of the measures we are taking to continue to provide a restaurant that is safe, well-cleaned several times during the day, and proper PPE."

How to show candidates you're a safe workplace

- 1** Add language to all job descriptions that explains what safety protocols you've put in place.
- 2** Communicate safety protocols in all employer branding including social media, your hiring page, and company's website.
- 3** Share (and show if possible) COVID-19 safety protocols during all phases of the interview process.



Postcard Mania

Keeping hiring plans flexible

For PostcardMania, a marketing solutions company in Clearwater, Florida, weekly sales crashed in mid-March and stayed down through late April.

“We had seen worse in the 2008 recession (when we lost 46% of our clients, who were in the housing market, virtually overnight), so we knew what to do this time around — and that was to maintain our pre-pandemic marketing levels regardless of the cost,” says Joy Gendusa, the company’s founder and CEO. **During the slowdown, the company implemented a hiring freeze.**

“Thankfully, we didn’t have to furlough any staff and I refused to lay anyone off, despite those five painful weeks where our incoming leads and sales really suffered,” says Gendusa. But by the last week of April, the revenue rebounded, so she lifted the hiring freeze on May 1. Since then, the company has added 25 new jobs that never existed before.

In fact, PostcardMania hired four new people at the height of the pandemic.

“During that time, our HR team really stepped up to make everything go right and ensure that all parties — both the people being interviewed and the managers and executives making the final hiring decisions — felt totally comfortable with the process,” says Gendusa.

Using a combination of internal referrals, social media ads to attract local talent, and job postings, Gendusa says the pandemic has actually provided more applicants than usual — probably because many people are unemployed.

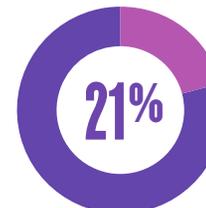
Along the way, her team has discovered that some aspects of its hiring process can be done more efficiently through virtual methods. “For example, the team figured out a way to deliver timed in-person tests to applicants virtually and now plans to carry that over post-pandemic,” she says.

“That proved to not only be reliable, but also a time-saver for HR, so we’re planning to continue this practice going forward. We’re always looking for ways to grow and learn, and this pandemic — while scary for a bit — offered a number of lessons to be learned and become better, and we embrace that.”

In an Addison Group survey from April 2020, of 500 hiring managers:



56% of respondents say this is the first time they have performed hiring activities remotely.



21% of respondents said that virtual interviewing will become a permanent fixture for their hiring process.

Embrace virtual onboarding and training

After interviewing candidates and hiring them, many small businesses are pivoting to virtual onboarding and training as well. The challenge there is how to give candidates a real feel for the job. Johnson recommends offering a virtual tour of the space they'll eventually be working in. "Then, have them talk to another team that's not part of their group to get a feel for other people in the office," she adds.

The most important thing is to be extremely transparent, says Johnson.

“ Companies committed to hiring right now need to keep the process flowing, keep communication going, and then stay true to their commitment, ”

In other words, the last thing that should happen is to start a process and then ghost the candidates because you're uncertain about when they should actually start. "Once your reputation is tarnished, it's hard to come back from that," she says.



The Little Gym

Prepare your staff for the new normal

Karalyne Ley, managing partner for The Little Gym of West Knoxville-Farragut, TN hired two new employees during the pandemic and had to retrain existing staff to prepare for the reopening. As a children's gym and day camp, it was imperative that everyone, including new hires, understood all of the new procedures.



“ While our protocols may have slightly changed, our mission to provide exceptional customer service remains the same, ”

“Therefore, we conduct our hiring process with this in mind and we have to continue to ensure that our potential employees understand what it means to be a part of our organization.”

In order to open back up safely, The Little Gym first focused on the local requirements for cleaning and social distancing protocols, and relayed that information to team members virtually via Zoom.

“The purpose of those meetings was to give everyone an idea of what our new procedures would look like once we reopened. This way, if our team members

felt uncomfortable or had concerns with anything, we could address those issues well before our reopening,” says Ley.

Then, about a week before the reopening date, Ley says they spent time going through cleaning procedures, reviewing checklists, and practicing all operations. “We also reviewed all of the social distancing protocols as well as talking through the ‘what ifs’ and trying to determine the best way to proceed in certain scenarios,” says Ley. “I really feel like this attention to detail helped our team feel prepared and comfortable with all aspects of our operation.”

While there is no blanket advice that can apply to all small and medium businesses right now since industries and regional reopening protocols are so different, here are a few universal strategies:



Get familiar with virtual tools that can help you continue your hiring efforts so you'll be ready when it's time to reopen



Work with recruiting partners that allow you to be flexible as your staffing needs change



Make careful hiring decisions and be transparent with candidates along the way



Read all of the PPP loan fine print so there are no surprises regarding loan forgiveness

Though no one knows what the rest of the year might bring as far as COVID-19 waves or state-issued mandates, being smart and flexible about your reopening and hiring plans will put you in the best position to get your business back up and running smoothly.

MONSTER

Need help hiring?

We've got job posting options designed to fit your small business needs.

[SEE PRICING](#)