

GROWERTALKS

Features

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The Heart of Your Employees

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At Southwest Airlines, being recognized for excellence in our industry is something our more than 46,000 employees around the country take pride in. We love to speak with colleagues in other industries and learn about what success and achievements look like to their company. Likewise, we are often asked about our best practices, how we hire, how we maintain our world-famous culture, and what type of training and benefits we offer.

Finding the right fit

Many feel that working for Southwest is more than a career ... it's a cause. How do we find those people? The most crucial recruiting strategy that Southwest employs is evaluating candidates for a cultural fit and ensuring that they're the right fit for the company, not just the job.

You may have heard it said that it's harder to get a job at Southwest than it is to get into Harvard. On average, we hire 1% to 2% of those who apply to Southwest. For comparison, Harvard sent offers of admission to 5.8% of applicants this year. In a competitive market like this, it's important both to stand out and fit in well.

Each step in Southwest's interview process has a purpose—to find the best. We begin with pre-screening questions for each particular job, and then progress to motivation and behavior via phone and in-person interviews. A recruiter from our People Department follows candidates throughout the interview process to ensure that they're a good fit, have done their research about the company and know what we're about.

We ask behavior-based interview questions to determine if the candidates' values align with ours. We seek leaders who have the ability to develop people, build great teams, think strategically and act as "Servant Leaders." Servant leadership aligns with Southwest's adherence to the Golden Rule—treating others as you want to be treated. Being a Servant Leader comes from the heart and from a passionate desire to help others and watch others grow. You can witness servant leadership in action every day in our incredible leaders who guide by example and treat each person as a person first—not an employee. The tendency to behave in this manner is what we seek in potential employees.

Apart from the tangible rewards of a career at Southwest, including excellent healthcare, wellness and

financial opportunities (employee stock purchase plan, profit sharing plan, 401(k) match), there are also intangible perks, such as generous travel privileges, the opportunity to make a difference in the communities we serve and our famous Southwest Culture.

Happy employees = Happy customers

We like to think of ourselves as a customer service company that just happens to fly airplanes, so we believe in the power of our people to provide the hospitality that sets us apart from our competitors. We're guided by our value statement, which includes living and working the Southwest Way. Living the Southwest Way includes showing our "Warrior Spirit," "Servant's Heart" and "Fun-LUVing Attitude." Breaking that down, those values mean:

Warrior Spirit:

- Work hard
- Desire to be the best
- Be courageous
- Display urgency
- Persevere
- Innovate

Servant's Heart:

- Follow the Golden Rule
- Adhere to the principles
- Treat others with respect
- Put others first
- Be egalitarian
- Demonstrate proactive customer service
- Embrace the SWA Family

Fun-LUVing Attitude:

- Have FUN
- Don't take yourself too seriously
- Maintain perspective
- Celebrate successes
- Enjoy your work
- Be a passionate team player

Working the Southwest Way is to focus on safety, high customer service delivery and low cost.

Southwest employees are empowered to "do the right thing" for one another and our customers within these values of living and working the Southwest Way. Each day, we hear tremendous stories from both employees and customers commending our employees for their above-and-beyond service and generous acts of

kindness. One of thousands of examples we like to share is the time a mother and her young son were on a layover and accidentally forgot the little boy's backpack with his most prized possession—"Hanover Bear." Once the family landed and realized that Hanover Bear was missing, they called the Southwest Airlines 800 number and were connected to a customer service agent in Nashville. The customer service agent went straight to the children's play area and found the backpack, and made sure the bear and backpack made it back to its family—with a note from Hanover Bear about his adventures at the airport.

Although we've grown into a large company, keeping our employees at the heart of everything we do remains a top priority. This has given us a reputation for our positive, goofy ways and, ultimately, a competitive advantage—all because of happy employees! We believe that happy employees lead to happy customers. Something that might surprise you when so many companies live by the motto "the customer is always right" is that at Southwest, employees come first. Employees are provided the same concern, respect and caring attitude within the organization that they're expected to share externally with every Southwest customer.

Culture

Southwest is unique in that we have a Culture Services Department whose goal is to foster, nurture and enrich our world-famous company culture through purposeful recognition, meaningful appreciation and fun celebration. This department helps to lead, organize and promote our dozens of employee awards, recognition programs, celebratory parties, random acts of appreciation and more. In addition, we have Local Culture Committees in the cities we serve and a Companywide Culture Committee charged with keeping the culture alive and thriving at our locations across the system. Employees from each location help to cultivate the culture at the local level through appreciations, community involvement, pay-it-forward acts and recognizing their local employees for a job well done.

When it comes to recognition, above-and-beyond customer service is recognized in a number of ways, including a letter from our CEO Gary Kelly. The best of the best are elevated and highlighted with awards and their stories are told throughout our communication channels to encourage similar behavior. We also recognize our employees during their milestone anniversaries with company cards, pins and recognition at a local level. Employees are invited to formal parties on their 10-year anniversary, and after 20-plus years, a black-tie event.

All employees have an opportunity to earn what we call "SWAG points"(Southwest Airlines Gratitude) for a job well done. Whether it's perfect attendance or receipt of an award, through positive actions, employees are able to accumulate a "bank" of points that they can redeem for a variety of merchandise, positive-space travel, gift cards and more.

Southwest is one big family. Families celebrate and mourn with one another through life's joys and hardships. Likewise, Southwest has an Internal Customer Care (ICC) Team to recognize and share in our family's milestones. The ICC Team's sole responsibility is to recognize employees' life events. Whether it's something positive, like a marriage, birth or graduation, or something somber like a family death or military deployment, this team reaches out so employees know Southwest cares.

Culture at Southwest isn't an illusion. We're expected to enjoy our work and it's up to each of our employees to carry out our values in their everyday work to ensure our culture continues to thrive. In September,

Southwest unveiled a bold, new look that's a true testament to our people with a heart at the center of it all. You'll notice the symbol, which represents who we are, on the belly of our planes. Our Director of Brand Communications, Helen Limpitlaw, explains, "It encapsulates what we offer as a company. It's symbolic of our care, our trust and our belief in providing exceptional hospitality. The Heart itself and the use of it just feels so right for the DNA of our brand."

Southwest is the only U.S. airline that can claim 41 consecutive years of profitability. We've achieved our success without resorting to layoffs or pay cuts. And our employees' dedication shows—we consistently hold one of the top rankings in Customer Satisfaction and have been ranked as one of Fortune's World's Most Admired Companies for 20 consecutive years.

Our new ad campaign sums it up nicely: "Without a heart, it's just a machine." We strongly believe that our people are the most powerful fuel. **GT**

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