

In 2021 the propane industry experienced more than 70 mergers and acquisitions, the majority of which include family-owned and operated multi-generational businesses. In today's economy propane marketers face a myriad of challenges when it comes to maintaining self-sustaining and profitable operation. They face obstacles such as addressing new legislative issues, escalated costs for product and transport, the requirement of necessary technology, employee retention combined with a shortage of qualified candidates, cash flow, or simply the lack of a next generation to take the helm. This decision to exit a great industry like ours can be an emotional and difficult process for both the marketer and its employees, while placing uncertainty in the minds of its customers. The first steps made by the acquiring company are crucial in instilling confidence in the company's future, establishing a relationship with its current employees, and most importantly their role within it. One individual very familiar with the importance of the transition process is James Devens, vice president of operations at Superior Plus Propane.

James served as a captain in the US Army and is currently responsible for managing Superior Plus Propane's retail operations. He brings more than 30 years of industry experience and expertise where he's held executive positions within the natural gas and LPG industry at Inergy Services and AmeriGas Propane. Over the last 2 years, Superior Plus has acquired 8 companies. James made it clear that it is important to immediately reassure the employees that the camaraderie and work environment our industry is known for will remain. "It's a challenging time to find quality people," he says, "we can't afford to lose those that have already committed to our industry."

"The reputation of the acquiring company is

paramount, and that begins on day one when our team starts the transition process," said James. "We want to set the best example possible." "These valuable employees were committed to the previous leadership due to the trust and respect built over many years. I think it's important to make it clear that my team and I plan to earn that same respect and continue the commitment the previous leadership had to them."

Whether focusing on retention of your current workforce or bringing new individuals onto your team, the challenges we face are difficult. LPG has an aging workforce, and it is important to our future that we take the correct steps to bring both civilian and military candidates into our industry. We have found that the following items are key to a company's successful recruitment and retention process.

1. Company Image

Today's generation has been raised with the ability to have instant access to any and all information, and they use this frequently when seeking employment. A potential candidate uses many open-source platforms to conduct research on potential employers



to better understand the company, pay scales, and its culture. It is crucial for a company to be proactive in molding its digital image and updating its mission relevant to the current times. Forming and maintaining the company's image will ensure that potential candidates are provided the clear and informative narrative that your company wants to portray.

2. Career Description

Companies that write concise job descriptions receive more military and civilian candidates. A point to remember about today's generation is that they are well informed and like to know all the facts. When a company writes a concise job description with transparency in the job posting (including pay potential), it will quickly establish accurate expectations and a higher level of trust with a potential hire.

3. Wage and Benefit Potential

In today's world most individuals look to the hourly wage or salary and benefits prior to applying for a position. Our industry provides a very competitive pay, and it is important that we properly convey the benefits available to the younger generation. The question of whether to disclose salaries in job ads is one that generally sparks much debate. Here's a statistic that should not be ignored—a study by SMART Recruit Online found that when job ads include a salary range, they get over 30% more applicants.

4. Career Progression and Industry Culture

Career progression is important for the younger generation we are attempting to attract into our industry. The candidates of today are not only applying for the position

currently available, but are also interested in what the future holds. It's important for us to convey the opportunities our industry affords applicants while also utilizing the industry's culture to demonstrate the commitment we have to our employees.

Focusing on items like these will assist in setting your company up for success. They seem to be simple and obvious recommendations, but we find many marketers overlook the large impact these items provide. "The future of our industry will depend on a strong effort from all marketers focusing on a well-thought-out strategy and implementation of their recruitment and retention process," says James.



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