

# How to Find and Create Your Dream Team



## Rob Parsons

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### Rob Parsons:

Welcome to season four of Paychex PULSE, an HR Podcast, where HR professionals can find great insights on today's top issues, and be inspired to build and lead effective teams in a healthier workplace.

### Rob Parsons:

Hi, everyone. Welcome, again, to the Paychex PULSE Podcast. Rob Parsons here. This is part three of our three-episode series focusing on research Paychex has conducted on business leader priorities for 2023.

### Rob Parsons:

Joining me to discuss this research is Stu Richards, the CEO of Bredin, who conducted the survey for us. Bredin is a great partner of Paychex, a B2B marketing consultancy that helps develop long-term relationships with small and medium-sized businesses, through original market research and outreach programs. Stu, welcome once again.

### Stu Richards:

Rob, thanks for having me again.

### Rob Parsons:

Today, we'll be bringing it home with episode three here, and we're going to talk about something that we've been talking about for some time now. We're going to talk about attracting and retaining talent. It's not a new topic, is it?

### Stu Richards:

No, it's really not. And it's an ongoing challenge. Rob, as we talk about in episode one, we've been conducting this research for five years now, and it is a persistent challenge on the part of small business owners to get the staff that they need. Whether it's bringing them in the door in the first place, or ensuring that they're fully engaged and optimizing their productivity. It has really been a challenge, and the many ways that small businesses are coping with it are really interesting to take a dive into.

**Rob Parsons:**

As a marketer, we've always been taught it's much less expensive to keep a customer than to get a new one. And we know the same holds true for employees. The cost of finding, bringing a new employee on board, training them, getting them to be productive, it's a real challenge, especially for a smaller business. Makes a lot more sense just to keep the people you have.

**Rob Parsons:**

Tell me, what did you find in your research? How are companies investing in their employees? How are they approaching this retention concept? Because we've got to stop the bleeding somehow, rather than just always trying to refill that labor pool.

**Stu Richards:**

Yep. No, you're absolutely right, Rob. And this is definitely something that we wanted to assess. It's interesting. The number one tactic that our respondents are using as a way to boost retention is increasing pay. That is a tried and true methodology, and no employee is ever going to complain about bringing home more money. But that's not the only thing that business owners are doing.

**Stu Richards:**

One of the other tactics that bubbled up to the top was encouraging a healthy work-life balance. Not just paying someone to work 100 hours a week, but paying them well and making sure that at the end of the day, they log off. Or on their weekends, they aren't expected to be working through their to-do list, but actually can really balance their work priorities with whatever they want to take care of at home.

**Stu Richards:**

That's, I think, really positive and really healthy, and of course, is going to play back on the part of employers with higher productivity, higher satisfaction, more engagement on the part of employees. They're also improving benefits across the board. So it's not just increasing, for example, the kinds of coverage that you get in your health insurance or dental or vision, but increasing the number of benefits that they offer as well.

**Stu Richards:**

And we see some real creativity around things like, for example, for younger employees offering tuition assistance, or even student debt repayment kinds of benefits. All kinds of things. For especially smaller businesses that might be strapped in terms of providing benefits, there are a lot of creative things that companies can do to boost retention, which might be as simple as offering work at home or some sort of hybrid schedule that provides more flexibility.

**Stu Richards:**

Then, rewarding and recognizing teamwork. Really, not just focusing on top performers, but focusing on how folks within an organization are really cooperating and working collaboratively to get things done. Again, that doesn't have to be an expensive trip to Hawaii for the top sales team, but it can be something as simple as bringing in some pizza and having a recognition event for, again, a team that's really done well on a particular task.

**Stu Richards:**

Then, finally, as I mentioned, offering flexible, remote and hybrid work options. Clearly, there's some mixed feelings among different kinds of companies about whether employees should be allowed to work from home or remotely at all, or part of the time or all the time. But for many, many, many employees who have either family obligations, whether it's children or older parents that they need to take care of, or other kinds of responsibilities, providing some level of flexibility is a huge benefit.

**Stu Richards:**

Again, it doesn't have to cost an organization a lot, so it can be very appealing for small businesses in particular. But again, across the board, Rob, we're seeing a lot of different kinds of strategies that companies can really tailor to what works best for them. But we think it's really healthy that employers, as you mentioned, are focused on keeping the great talent that they do have and rewarding them with benefits that really mean the most to individual employees.

**Rob Parsons:**

Yeah, I agree with you wholeheartedly there, Stu. It's interesting though. It's not just about keeping them. It's about keeping them engaged. We've heard a lot about quiet quitting, employee engagement. What did your research reveal around those areas? Because I can do some things to make, okay, Stu is going to stay. But how do I keep Stu plugged in and contributing and productive?

**Stu Richards:**

Yeah. Yeah. No, it's a great question, Rob. Because yeah, it's one thing to have someone at their desk and another thing to have them really dissatisfied and productive and firing on all cylinders. There are a whole host of tactics that we asked about on our research, and we, in this case, broke the responses out by company size because it's interesting to see how different organizations, different headcounts are doing different things to boost employment. But across the board, the most common tactic that companies are taking to boost engagement is simple. It's regularly communicating goals and progress to all employees. That's the number one tactic that almost all businesses are using.

**Stu Richards:**

Certainly, companies with under 50 employees, and those with 100 to 249. The companies with 50 to 99 employees and 250 to 500, well, the number one thing they're doing, and the second thing overall, is offering training to help employees develop new skills, which is fantastic. Because it's not always going to be easy to hire the new AI expert to develop your new AI application. But if you've got a great team and you can bring their skill level up, that's going to boost employee satisfaction and it's going to boost their productivity. That's a great tactic.

**Stu Richards:**

Number three, overall, and again, it varies a little bit by company size, it's between two and three depending on the size of the company, but empowering employees to suggest new work methods or projects. Not just operating a hierarchical, top-down kind of an organization, but really looking to frontline employees to suggest things. Whether it's based on what they're learning from their customer or prospect interactions, or what they might have learned from their peers. The smallest businesses in our sample, that's the second most popular for them, the five-to-nine employee businesses. Then again, the companies with 100 to 249 employees, that's what they're next most likely to do after regularly communicating goals and progress.

**Stu Richards:**

Fourth, overall, Rob, providing employees with the most current technology. And that is great. It's very easy to assume that someone's old laptop is just going to continue to keep chugging away for four or five or six or seven years or more, but making sure that they've got new technology that can handle the tasks that they're doing, that they've got new applications that are going to optimize their productivity. And of course, they've got the skillsets to really take advantage of those, most of all really important.

**Stu Richards:**

Then, after that, surveying employees about their job satisfaction. This one was interesting. It varied quite a bit by company size. For example, companies with 50 to 99 employees, that's the second most likely thing they're going to do. 44% of them said they do it, whereas only 19% of companies with 10 to 19 employees are doing employee surveys. That kind of makes sense. In a very small business, it's pretty easy to talk to employees individually and not feel like you're doing a formal survey.

**Stu Richards:**

But for bigger businesses, to do a formal survey and ask about what's your frame of mind and what would help you be more productive, and what kind of things should we as an organization be doing, can be very powerful as a way to bring great ideas up to the top.

**Stu Richards:**

And then finally, Rob, in terms of top five or six, providing cross-training as a way to boost skill building. Making sure that within any given team, employees can really backfill for one another. That's great because it not only provides for greater skill building and greater employee satisfaction, but also, if someone's out for whatever reason, then the team can pick up on their work. You're less likely to fall behind on a project when the team all has the same skills and can pick up each other's slack when they need to.

**Rob Parsons:**

There's a couple points here I thought were really interesting, Stu. One, of course, is a lot of times we talk about pay and benefits and everything that's good for me as a person, as an employee. But this idea of technology and training and giving me the support and tools I need to just do a better job and not feel like the company's working against me, I thought that was a great point in terms of engagement. Just thinking about those things you can do to help make it easier for employees to contribute and do their job and be productive, they're going to appreciate that.

**Rob Parsons:**

I also like that point about surveying. This idea that if you don't ask, you're not going to know what they care about and what they want. You can't just assume because oftentimes, a business leader is coming at a problem from a very different perspective than an employee.

**Stu Richards:**

Yep. Yeah. No, absolutely, Rob. And it's interesting. You're not only getting the benefit of the employee's perspective, and oftentimes they're going to have great ideas for things that'll work better, new things that should be tried, but by asking their opinions and acting on their suggestions, you're getting a team that's feeling much more empowered. They're feeling listened to. It becomes a very positive feedback cycle where you're soliciting great ideas and you're acting on great ideas. You're empowering your team to feel much more like valued contributors to an organization, and it's a great way to boost team morale and productivity. And as a result, engagement and retention.

**Rob Parsons:**

Love it. We've got a few minutes left here, Stu. I'd love to take a step back, one last time, and take a big-picture look.

**Stu Richards:**

Sure.

**Rob Parsons:**

What was your biggest takeaway from this research? Were there any surprises or any areas you'd want our listeners to pay a special attention to based on these findings?

**Stu Richards:**

Yeah, Rob, I think there's a couple real surprises. One is the ongoing resilience and optimism of small business owners in the face of some pretty severe pressures and uncertainties in running a business. We're always impressed at how positive the outlook of small business owners is in the phase of so many pressing concerns, some of which are simply beyond their control and they just need to react to, others of which they can manage, but often have many conflicting priorities.

**Stu Richards:**

And another, I think, really striking takeaway, of course, was the amount of time and money that it costs business owners, again, regardless of company size, simply around HR administration. We wondered when we were doing this research, when we ask someone to put down in black and white in a survey and they enter a number like \$233,000, does that shock them into taking action?

**Stu Richards:**

And it's a really good, I think, process for business owners to go to is to say, "Wait, what am I spending on HR administration? And what can I do that is going to make my team more efficient to perhaps reduce those costs, to perhaps boost employee satisfaction and retention, and improve productivity and help me achieve my goals?" I think a big potential answer to that is to really think about, how can we be more efficient in our HR administration and processes overall?

**Stu Richards:**

Again, from beginning to end of the cycle, from writing a job definition and setting salary, to starting the recruiting process and scoring applicants, all the way through to retention and skill building and serving employees for their best ideas. As a result, I think one of the big takeaways is to ask yourself, as a business owner, what can I be doing with technology to improve those processes? Are we still doing payroll manually? Well, a surprising number of companies are.

**Stu Richards:**

Or do we have a whole bunch of different vendors helping us with different aspects of HR? And would we be better off thinking about consolidating those into one vendor that can help us across the board? And there's no issue with, for example, creating errors by re-keying data. Is there someone who can help offload the burden of regulatory compliance for us? Which is a lot to cope with for any sized organization.

**Stu Richards:**

It's a lot of takeaways, Rob. I think there are a lot of interesting, some very consistent concerns around, for example, recruiting and retention, or winning and keeping new customers. But I think the big takeaways are really to think about, what are the costs of HR administration? And what can you do as an organization to handle it perhaps more effectively, especially through the use of technology?

**Stu Richards:**

And what are the many benefits of doing so in terms of not just your HR team's productivity, your own productivity, but your ability to recruit and to retain and to really optimize the productivity of your employees?

**Rob Parsons:**

Love it. Stu, thanks for joining me for this series.

**Stu Richards:**

Yeah, Rob, thanks so much for having me. It's a great conversation and a great topic.

**Rob Parsons:**

It really is. I love the research that Bredin does for us, and the insights you help us bring to businesses that maybe wouldn't have been able to get these findings on their own. So thank you once again.

**Stu Richards:**

All right. Thank you, Rob.

**Rob Parsons:**

For those who are interested, you can find a link to the 2023 Business Priorities in our show notes. We'll have a link right in there, so you can click on that and download the free report. Finally, thank you once again to our listeners for joining. As always, please stay happy and healthy.

**Rob Parsons:**

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**Speaker 3:**

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