



Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, Episode 45
A Series about Onboarding -- Produced By Suzie Price

More - Getting New Hires to Stay with HR Executive Judy Simmons, PHR – Transcript
www.pricelessprofessional.com/newhire2

Suzie Price: Are they going to be happy? Are they going to be productive? Will they want to stay, will they own their job and will they contribute their talent generously? Our topic today is “Getting New Hires to Stay” and I'm talking with Cooper Carry Associates Human Resource Executive, Judy Simmons. This is our second podcast on the topic of Getting New Hires to Stay and in this episode number 45, Judy shares the biggest mistakes leaders make with new hires, the best actions leaders can take to keep new hires on board and she shares innovative ideas that her organization has implemented to improve engagement and retention. Here's a little teaser about some of those innovative ideas because I think you're really going to be interested in them, some things that Judy and her team over at Cooper Carry have implemented, they have advocates for every employee, so she'll talk about how they do that. She talks about a steering committee that they have upcoming leaders who drive key initiatives. She talks about the result of their most recent focus group discussions and some decisions that came out of that and how they've turned performance reviews into career planning and forward facing meetings, so instead of it being backward focused, it's forward focused. I believe there are ideas here that you're going to want to implement or think about implementing within your organization. I think you're going to get a lot out of this episode, so let's get started. Hit it, Michael!

Intro: Welcome to the Wake Up Eager Workforce podcast, a show designed for leaders, trainers, and consultants who are responsible for employee selection and professional development. Each episode is packed full with insider tips, best practices, expert interviews, and inspiration. Please welcome the host who is helping leaders, trainers, and consultants everywhere, Suzie Price!

Suzie: Welcome! My name is Suzie Price at Priceless Professional Development. I am the Founder of Priceless Professional Development. This is our 15th year and I am a Professional Facilitator, Assessment Analysts and Author, and I love being with you here today on the Wake Up Eager Workforce podcast. I am in Atlanta, Georgia, it is June 2018 right before the fourth of July, the Thursday before, and it is storming here in Atlanta. I'm looking at in my home office window and there's thunder and lots of hard rain and it's a great thing because we've had very hot and humid weather here in Atlanta and so it's kind of a nice refresher. So if you hear thunder or rain or my dog's barking because they're sitting here with me asleep at the moment, that's why, because there is a storm a brewing.

Suzie: We are here today talking about new hires, how to keep new hires on board and the questions that I started with in my opening are five timeless, always applicable questions that should become a part of your role and things that you think about and have as much effect on it as you can as a leader when you're interviewing, when you're bringing on new hires and you're seeking to keep your top performers. And it's another way to look at engagement and retention. And I just liked the questions because it takes it down to the basics and the bare bones of things of why people stay. And I'm going to read the questions to you again. Are they going to be happy? Are they going to be productive? Will they want to stay? Will they own their job? Will they contribute their talent generously? Those are great questions and I use them often in

different workshops that I do around motivation and hiring, and interestingly, those questions were first shared in a quote by Dr. Robert Hartman in 1964. So Dr. Hartman, the reason I talk about him is he is the founder of the science behind the TriMetrix assessment that we use. One of the key areas that we measure is Acumen, how people think and make decisions and that's his science that he developed and was recognized in 1973 for a Nobel Prize. So it's interesting that he said those questions back in 1964 and they're just as relevant today as they were back then. That was 50 years ago. You know, are they happy, productive? Will they stay in their job, contribute their talent generously? And so that's what we're talking about today in our most recent episode and in so much of what we're doing around the Wake Up Eager Workforce business and podcasts. What we're about is helping leaders create environments where employees are energized, they're committed, and there's less drama, and we have tools and resources that help you do that around the hiring process, around the actual team building, conflict resolution, onboarding.

Suzie: So the first episode that I did on onboarding specifically was just recently and you can find it, it's episode number 44 about "Getting New Hires to Stay" and the show notes for it can be found at pricelessprofessional.com/newhire, all one word, lower case, pricelessprofessional.com/newhire. In that episode we talked about why preventing new hire turnover is more important today than ever before, the goals that you should be focusing on, there's three things, and we actually talk about it in this episode as well, one action you should take, and 32 ideas. So between that episode and all the great information that Judy shares and the innovative things that they're doing over at Cooper Carry, you're going to have lots of, hopefully, inspiration and insight of additional things that you can begin doing around onboarding and keeping your new hires.

Suzie: The show notes for today's episode with Judy is pricelessprofessional.com/newhire2, the number two. So N-E-W-H-I-R-E-2, pricelessprofessional.com/newhire2. We also have a book that talks about the hiring process and ties it into a process that the very last step is your onboarding. And so there's onboarding information and tools in there and you can find that book, it's "How to Hire Superior Performers: 70 Best Practices, Strategies and Tips," and it is at pricelessprofessional.com/hirebook, H-I-R-E book, hire book.

Suzie: All right, let me tell you a little bit about Judy Simmons and we'll get right into the interview. Judy has 20 years of experience in human resource management. She joined Cooper Carry in 2014 as the Director of Human Resources. She was named Associate Principal over at Cooper Carry on 2015 and she is a graduate of the Indiana Institute of Technology with a degree in Business Management and an emphasis in Human Resources. She leads employee benefits, employee advancement, organizational development, and talent management teams at Cooper Carry. Prior to Cooper Carry she was with the Atlanta Botanical Gardens for nearly 10 years as their Vice President of Human Resources and over the course of her career, she's had human resource positions in both private and non-profit sectors giving her a broad perspective of the needs and challenges for managing an effective HR team. She holds the Professional in Human Resource (PHR) designation from SHRM and is an active member in both the Atlanta and national chapters of SHRM, which stands for the Society of Human Resource Management. So we're very fortunate to have her share her expertise. She is practical. I've gotten to know her a little bit over the year. She's practical and smart, very straightforward, innovative, just a really great mix and has a great amount of experience and information and insight to share with you today. During the interview, we talk a little bit about



Cooper Carry and I want to tell you a little bit about that firm in case you're not familiar with them, and you might not be if you're not in the building or architectural world. Cooper Carry is a national firm that offers architecture, environmental graphic design, interior design, landscape architecture, planning and sustainability and consulting services. They were founded in 1960 and they have offices in Atlanta, New York and Washington, DC, with projects all over the world. And I think Judy and I talk about this in the interview, but they were just recognized by the Architecture Institute of America as the 2018 Georgia Firm of the Year, which is a great accolade. So let's get to our discussion.

Suzie: Judy, welcome to the Wake Up Eager Workforce podcast, thank you for being here.

Judy: Oh, I'm so glad to help out, it is going to be fun.

Suzie: Let's start with, speaking of fun, some light questions, I have already told everyone about your background, but want to give them something that they wouldn't normally get to know about you. And that is two fun questions. And the first question is, what is your favorite guilty pleasure TV show?

Judy Simmons: Oh gosh, you know, I am a huge do it yourselfer. So HGTV is my go-to, that may be sad, but it's true. And unfortunately or fortunately I get a lot of great ideas there, but then I also make a lot of projects for myself, but I enjoy doing all kinds of fun things with my hands.

Suzie: I remember you telling me about it, maybe it was your grandmother's kitchen that you re-did, or your Mother's, or somebody, you re-did somebody's entire kitchen, or something a while back. So that continues apparently?

Judy: Indeed it does.

Suzie: Is there a show on HGTV that you like the most or you just like them all?

Judy: You know, I will pretty much watch anything that comes on. There's always an idea or an inspiration for an idea to do something new and different either at my house or some kind of little fun thing to do. So, it's interesting.

Suzie: What is your most recent or most favorite project that you have done?

Judy: Um, most recently I did an up cycle of a really cool antique kind of cabinet drawers and it was in pretty rough shape and I put a new top on it and a new base on it and put it on wheels and it now resides in my kitchen.

Suzie: Oh, how nice. So are we going to see you on one of those shows one day?

Judy: Oh, I don't think so. You know so much of what we do, sitting in an office all day, you really can't see your work product. It's nice to go home and do something with your hands that you know, you have a tangible work product that you can see that you've put some effort into and it's beautiful and it's in your home.



Suzie: That's a great why on that? That's awesome. So from there, let's talk a little bit about another personal question. What's your favorite possession?

Judy: Well, I'm not sure if I possess them or they possess me, but our dogs are a huge part of our lives, and they are like our children and we just really enjoy spending time with them and going places and walks, and matter of fact they are so much a part of our lives we bought an RV so that they could travel with us and still feel at home, in a place that they are familiar with.

Suzie: I love it. So tell us what kind of puppies or cats or animals you have?

Judy: Well, one of them is a standard sized, silky haired dachshund and his name is Rider, and the other one is a Chihuahua, Italian Greyhound mix, and her name is Leah.

Suzie: So Chihuahua and Greyhound mix?

Judy: Chihuahua and Italian Greyhound, so small, kind of a miniature Greyhound. So she's small.

Suzie: And what is her name, Leah?

Judy: Yeah, so she's a cute little thing.

Suzie: And I think you're involved in animal causes, as well?

Judy: Yeah, I do. I do some volunteer work with one particular, Noah's Ark, in Locust Grove, Georgia and I am also just really interested in what they do there because it is an exotic animal rescue. So it's a neat place to visit and it's open to the public and there's my commercial for the day.

Suzie: I love it! So it's called Noah's Ark and it's in Locust Grove, Georgia?

Judy: Right.

Suzie: Okay. So I'll put a link to that in the show notes in case anybody else is listening and they're passing through Georgia or they're from here and would like to see that. So what's the most exotic thing they have there, thing, animal?

Judy: Oh gosh, they have lots of large cats. They have lots of primates.

Suzie: Like lion cats, like leopards?

Judy: Lions, tigers, spot cats, leopards, servals, lots of neat predatory cats and I think they have 10 or 11, and lots of primates and bears and coatimundis and lemurs and all kinds of exotic birds. So it's a really great place to visit and it's on a nice, beautiful park-like setting and the animals have huge habitats and they're well cared for and stimulated and they survive on donations alone and it's open to the public for free. So it's a great place to visit.



Suzie: Wow. Ok. Definitely going in the show notes for anybody who wants to go there, you're making me want to go there. I didn't realize all that is there, what you described, that's amazing here in Georgia, South Georgia too.

Judy: Pretty cool place.

Suzie: It's pretty cool. All right, well thank you for kicking us off with some fun questions. It gives us a way to know a little bit more about you outside of your professional background, which is impressive and very helpful to our topic today, which is "Getting New Hires to Stay." And I thought we'd start with kind of what you see, you've had your career in different organizations and you're with an organization now who's growing and just got nominated or recognized as Georgia AIA firm of the year. So GAIA is Georgia Architecture Institute of America, is that right? So the recognizes the Georgia firm of the year for that. So you've got a window seat to some of the biggest mistakes leaders make with their new hires. So every leader that's listening right now, what do you see happens with new hires with leaders?

Judy: Well, you know, I think when we talk about mistakes, some of the things that come to mind is really spending time with that person as they enter your organization to, get to know them and understand where their strengths are and what their goals are, so you can help them to quickly align with your own goals and your firm or company's goals. Helping them to understand the expectations that you have of them so that they can deliver on those expectations and have a mission right off the bat and really taking time to work with them, I think is important to keep them going on a daily basis, check-ins on a regular basis to make sure that they're still on track and they can deliver what your expectations are.

Suzie: So I think sometimes leaders forget just the basics.

Judy: And that does happen. I think one of the other things that I've noticed most recently in the last few years is that there's kind of an assumption that one size fits all, and that's especially true with millennials and companies have kind of tooled up to address the needs of millennials and I think it's a mistake for a leader to assume that everyone is the same. Each individual is different, they're their own person and it really will be to your benefit as a leader to get to know them as an individual and find out what motivates them.

Suzie: So when you think of a leader who's done really well in this area, what are some things that they've actually done, you say get to know them, are they taking them to lunch or, I don't know, anything special that you can think of?

Judy: You're right, they do go to lunch with him the first day and in our own organization sometimes they may not have interviewed that person. For example, a lot of our college recruits don't necessarily interview with the person that they will report to eventually, so it's important that they spend some time and get to know them and it's, you know, this is easy just to make sure that you walk by their desk, you know, at least every other day and take 5-10 minutes, "Hey, how are you doing? Do you have the tools that you need? Do you have questions?" Making sure that they get on the invite list to standing meetings, making sure that everyone in the department knows who they are and can learn a little bit about them and giving your group



time to bond and create a work buddy or a work friend organically that you know is that go-to person that will help you out.

Suzie: So it gets lost in the shuffle I think, sometimes in the midst of I've got this project, I've got this climbing, everybody's got so much on their plate, but the reality is if they don't make it and they don't feel welcome research says they're gonna leave in the next month or six months or 18 months. You know, turnover happens and it's a lot of times from some of the research and experiences that I've seen, it starts the first day they're on, how are they treated, how welcome do they feel, how productive can they become. Do you see that?

Judy: Oh absolutely. I think it starts even before they walk in the door, you know, it starts with making sure they have a realistic view of what the job is, what the culture is, and where they would fit into that. So I think it starts from the very first contact in the employment application process. How were they treated in that process and you know, were they kept informed of what's going on and you know, making sure they know what's going to happen their first day, before the first day.

Suzie: Yup, I always say they're not here to here. So just because you hired them, you have to keep in touch. Especially in this market.

Judy: Absolutely. That's very true. And yes, it is a very competitive market and the war for talent is present in almost every profession. So it's really important that you put your best foot forward because they have choices.

Suzie: Best foot forward is how would you treat a special guest that's coming to your home and are you doing those things and if not, why? Your organization can't do it for you. Judy can't do it, Judy's HR department can't do it all either you know.

Judy: Well we may be the first point of contact, you know, at the end of the day if people don't leave organizations, they leave their managers and that's something to always remember, is that's that point of contact and they're the person that influences your work life more than anyone else.

Suzie: Well said. So the biggest mistakes, if I were to recap, see if you would add anything, one is spending the time with them, getting to know them, make sure they understand the expectations, checking-in with them on a regular basis and make sure that they don't treat everybody the same, one size doesn't fit all. If they get to know the person, give them what they need to adjust to the system or the process or how you interact. Is that a good recap? And if so, is there anything you would add?

Judy: No, I think that's a pretty good assessment.

Suzie: So what are some top tools and tips and tricks and things that you all do at Cooper Carry?

Judy: As I mentioned, I think getting to that person early and making sure that we have good communication with them from the very start is really important. The other thing that we have



found is helpful is trying to do our onboarding process, and especially that initial orientation in smaller bites rather than having an all day or multi-day orientation process with HR we try to break that up a little bit. Give information, let them take that back to the workplace, kind of implement things and then maybe give more information down the road, and it seems to help them.

Judy: When you started a new job, you're excited about the new work you're going to do, not necessarily sitting in HR all day.

Suzie: Yes, I want to meet people, I want to touch a computer.

Judy: Right. "I want to go draw a building," you know? So we try to break that down and we know just from neuroscience, we know that it's difficult for people to retain all of that information. You know, when you try to just give them everything all at once while it's sufficient, it's not necessarily effective. So that's one of the things we do and as I mentioned, we always make sure that they're prepared for the first day of work. We let them know exactly what to expect, what their day is going to be like and we let them know what they should wear and what they should bring, you know, so take all of that stress off of their plate before they walk in the door. Other things that, you know, that can happen is finding ways to introduce your employees to the larger group, you know, so it can be a lot of different ways. We mentioned lunch, it can be a scavenger hunt and they have to find someone who has been here more than 20 years or maybe find someone who has been here less than six months and different things, find someone who has a specific kind of dog or something like that, just so that they, as new hires get introduced to other people. We have a social gathering once a month where we make sure that all of our new hires for that month, you know, are introduced and everyone has a chance to get to know them. And we encourage all of our employees to attend and interact and mingle. That's always a good way to get going. Assigning buddies is a good way to, or an advocate, is a good way to make sure that they have someone who's looking out and introducing them to folks and kind of helping them understand their traditions of your organization and what's going on and kind of answer questions so that they don't feel out of place is always another way to do that as well.

Suzie: Do you make that official, so, "Suzie, you and Rhonda are buddies for the next six months." I mean, is it that official, or is it very low key, or does the manager do it?

Judy: You know it depends on the location, and we do different things in different locations based on the needs and in some locations those buddies are volunteers and we pair them based on maybe interests that we learned about in the interview process or maybe they went to the same University so they have something in common there. We try to pair people up in that way in those areas. Where we have buddies in the other locations, we allow that to happen more organically with someone in their work area, so it really depends on the location and how the setup is.

Suzie: Yup, number of people and availability, that type of thing? I just did not know how much you systematized it.

Judy: Yeah, we don't. Everyone in our organization does have an advocate.



Suzie: I was just going to say, I remember that, that everybody had an advocate in addition to the manager. Do you mind talking about that because I think that could be a good retention thought that ties to what we're talking about.

Judy: It is and you know, it's been a really good program for us, so everyone in the organization has, and it is an assigned advocate, and what we do is that person is really their go to person for questions and "Gee, I really want a raise, I'm not sure who I should talk with about that and how I should approach it. I've never had to do that before. You know, what kind of recommendations do you have or I'm struggling to figure out how to work best with this person. You've known them longer than I have." That's just their person that really helps them with their career growth and helps them kind of fit into the organization as easily as possible. They also help them with preparing their annual performance planning for the following year and prepare for that meeting with their supervisor and they're really the go-to person for that person and typically more like a mentor.

Suzie: Kind of sounds like a mentor, but I love that you used the word advocate. That is really brilliant because it helps people understand, "This is your role, you're looking out for this person." Basically...

Judy: And they do.

Suzie: And they do because you've named it that way and you set the expectations it sounds like. Do they stay with same advocate the whole time?

Judy: We allow them to make a change if they want. Sometimes they really like working with that person. Sometimes it isn't the greatest fit. We try to try to make sure that we pair people thoughtfully, but it doesn't always work out, so if they say, "Hey, I'd like to make a change." We all recognize that sometimes changes needed.

Suzie: Does everybody have an advocate?

Judy: Yeah, until you get to the highest levels in the organization, everybody has an advocate.

Suzie: Ok. And the advocate sits in on the performance review too, doesn't he or she?

Judy: Right.

Suzie: Along with the person's manager, which is also an interesting dynamic. You don't generally see a mentor sitting in those meetings.

Judy: Right. We have kind of gotten away from the review process and we are more about career planning. We're very forward facing. You know, we obviously do a quick recap of the previous year, but we're really concerned with what happens next. We can't change what happened, we can learn from it and that's what we try to talk about in that process. But really it's about if you're successful and you're meeting your goals and you're happy, then the firm will be successful, and we have been doing that now for about three years and it has proven very effective for us.



Suzie: Yeah. I would say, you just got recognized as the AIA Georgia firm of the year, so, and you're growing it. It's working. That's awesome, I love it. If you missed that, if you were driving, are you listening to this and you missed that, their meetings with the manager includes their advocate, just want to state it, because it is every day for you, Judy, but not everyday for probably most people listening, the advocate joins in the session and it's about forward facing work, about career planning, what are your goals, what do you want to do to move forward, some recap of what's occurred, but forward facing and it sounds like it's working. You're in your third or fourth year of doing it. Is that right, Judy?

Judy: Yes, yes.

Suzie: Took a little while to get everybody kind of oriented that way or no, because it is different from what most people are used to.

Judy: Right. I mean we were in the more traditional 360-type review process where there was a rating scale and comments and those things are difficult to manage. They're quite a beast to logistically administer, so we've wanted to make it more about what's propelling us into the future, how will we be successful and making a plan for the individual success and the firm's success and we believe that we've got a good balance on that now.

Suzie: That is awesome. The first time I heard it, I thought it was awesome. And I like hearing it again it's like, "Yeah, that's really good." That's really good. What else would you be willing to share around either things that Cooper Carry does and/or things you've seen the best leaders do around new hires, keeping people on board. What else can you think of to share that we haven't already talked about? If anything?

Judy: Well, one of the things that I would encourage is, again, doing frequent check-ins, and really giving good, honest feedback is critical and so many times I hear complaints about an employee that isn't meeting expectations and sometimes I say, "Have you talked to this person about it," and the answer is "No." And it's just so critical that we have good, honest feedback in an open dialogue on a regular basis so that when there is something that is not quite right, or at least not the way you would like for it to be, then the open dialogue discontinues and it's just a normal part of your day-to-day conversation and it gets fixed without a lot of pain on anybody's part.

Suzie: No drama. Just have the conversation. Easy to say, hard for some people to do. How have you helped people get over that? Because even in organizations where one of their core values is, that, we have honest and direct conversations, and everyone's reminded of it, but people still oftentimes shy away. How do you help the leaders that you work with get better at this?

Judy: You know, one of the things that I have found is that they just have trouble finding the words sometimes, and we do role-plays. I will sit down with a leader, we'll bullet point a discussion so that they can stay on point and not get too far off track, and we really will just do a little bit of role-play on how this conversation might look and then they feel more confident going into that conversation when it happens and it really makes a big difference and having that bullet point list of things you want to make sure you cover can be critical in keeping on track and



making sure you haven't forgotten anything because it is an uncomfortable conversation sometimes. And having something, a reminder there to make sure you didn't miss anything is important.

Suzie: Yeah, and it practicing it with you because you're being a great coach and facilitator around that because it is easy. They're so busy, it's all in your head and then you stress and then you have the conversation unprepared and it doesn't go well. But if they sit down and just devote some time, it doesn't even have to be a long time, could be 30 minutes, could be, you know, 20 minutes could be an hour, whatever it takes to get clear. That makes so much sense and it doesn't always happen, so that's great advice and the role-play is awesome.

Judy: Yeah, and one of the things that we recently in the last two years we've been doing some focus groups and just really trying to come up with a cross-section of people within the organization so that we hear what's on their minds and one of the things that we definitely heard loud and clear is "I want more frequent feedback." And it's interesting that is something that people are asking for more. So one of the things that we did was during the performance planning process at year-end, the employee communicates to their manager, "I would like to meet with you at what frequency," and they calendar that at that time and are encouraged to just go ahead and calendar. If they say, "I'd like to sit down with you for 15 minutes a month, then we'll then lets calendar it on the second Tuesday of every month." You know, some employees say, you know, "Once a quarter is good, we just need to touch base once a quarter and talk about career planning and how things are going, and you know, I just need 15 minutes." So we encourage the employee to drive that process and communicate to their manager what their needs are in terms of feedback and how that loop should look.

Suzie: That's awesome. Such an amazing thing to ask for feedback as an organization, that's really good, but here's what's awesome, and you act on it, and you're really good at that. So that's a big deal. I mean, lot of people, one, they won't ask, but then they do ask and then they don't really act on it, which makes it worse because they asked and they didn't do anything. And here you are providing tools. Beautiful, that's good, that's great, good information. What else would you add to this conversation in regard to top tools, tips, tricks, things that you see leaders do well to make this work? Anything else? You've shared a lot of good information.

Judy: Yeah, we've covered a lot of ground today. If you can implement all of that you're way ahead.

Suzie: Yeah, you're way ahead. Some of the research is, I forget the number now, let's see I've made a note, for a large majority of organizations do not have any onboarding process or it's very limited and I hear that a lot, it's limited or it's scattershot, and so sounds like you've been able to implement something when you say you do the small bites, like if you were going to suggest kind of what you cover in the agenda. I guess the first is kind of just a welcome. What would some of other small bites be, if you pull people back in?

Judy: You know, things like benefits. We don't cover benefits on the first day. They have a really broad overview of what the benefits are going to be prior to their first day of work, but we wait a week before we have a benefits orientation. Let them get settled. You ask some questions about, "Gee, how do I find my way to the break area or where do I go to eat?" And all

of those things that are critical just to get settled. And then we talk about benefits when things are more settled in their mind isn't asking, you know, 10 different questions about I don't even know how to get to my desk and then back out of this place again, much less, you know, what do I need to do as far as decision making on benefits. And the other thing that we've really learned is that you have to judge your audience and sometimes your orientation needs to be a little bit more detailed or it needs to go a little bit more in one direction because what we have found orientation with those who are just recent college graduates and may never have had a job before versus someone who's been in the industry for 20 years is a very different look and feel, and being able to address their needs and their questions is important.

Suzie: Yes. Do you have other people within the organization come in and share or welcome?

Judy: You know, we've allowed each location to have a process that's a little bit different. For example, in our Atlanta office, it's our largest office, and we typically, the HR generalists, typically conducts the orientation on Monday mornings. She gets through most of the bulk of the information sharing and then she'll literally walk folks around and introduced him to people that they may need to know. For example, "Who do I call if the dishwasher isn't working or the temperature is bad in my office or my work area or whatever about facilities, who do I talk to about that? Who do I talk to if you know, if I need supplies," those kinds of things and making sure they know all of those people that will make their lives easier.

Suzie: Right.

Judy: And then after that each department has an administrator that helps them get signed onto their computer and helps them learn how to navigate through accounting for their billable time and all of those things that they need to do is there. In another office, maybe someone from IT does some of that stuff because they have a more intimate environment where they can do that and maybe they have a buddy that helps them figure out how to get through, you know, some of their day-to-day routine and how the filing systems work and all of those things. So it varies by office.

Suzie: The key theme is that you're making sure that people aren't walking around, scratching their head going, "Where's my desk, who do I talk to?"

Judy: Right.

Suzie: That actually happened to me, I did a podcast previous to this one on, you know, onboarding and new hires with some tips and tricks, and when I share my worst experience, I was there a couple of weeks before I even got my computer, you know, so you're making sure none of that happens. If you can control it at all, you are making sure they show up and feel welcomed.

Judy: Right, and we try very hard. As a matter of fact, you know, one advantage of being an architectural firm is we even have a full seating plan of the entire building, everyone can find everyone, and all you have to do is pull that up on the Internet and if you need to go see someone you can find their name on that seating chart and you can walk right to their desk. So we try to make it is easy as possible and it also shows, you know, like the printer room and the



work areas where the copy machines are and paper cutters and the model building area. So everybody can find everything.

Suzie: So smart. There's three things that I'd always say overall that you need to do with every new hire, whether they're a college graduate or a senior executive is one, reduce fear because everybody feels better when you're going into a new environment at some level, increase their understanding how they fit in the company and the role and on the team and who the team is and all of that. And then three, help them be productive quickly.

Judy: Yeah.

Suzie: If you can do those three things, everything you're doing is that and more, you know, so they don't want to leave.

Judy: Right.

Suzie: So part of it, very welcoming.

Judy: Exactly. That's the goal.

Suzie: And you're doing good work with it. Anything else before we go into some of your own best and worst new hire experiences?

Judy: We've covered a lot of ground. And I think your summary is excellent because those things are definitely what we're trying to achieve.

Suzie: Yeah. Good. Yeah. The biggest theme is you're spending time with these folks, there is no just throwing them in and seeing if they can swim.

Judy: Yes. Yes. And the HR team makes sure that as they encounter folks, you know, in the work areas or in the break room or wherever, that we check in with them, you know, "How are things going," and making ourselves approachable so that if there are questions or they need clarifications, there's no question about the doors open and the team is ready to make sure you have everything you need.

Suzie: How do you make sure that every leader in the organization gets it? That this is their job as well. I've recently had a conversation. I talk about it in the previous podcast with an HR leader who is running around, the image is there's holes in the roof and she's running around with buckets trying to catch the water coming through because the leaders are so busy they don't really see it as their job to help the new hire get acclimated, and so they've got some work to do in their culture around, you know, getting to where you are. But what are some of the secrets that you'd say to somebody who's facing that? You know, where the leaders just don't see it as their job. How have you help make that a part of Cooper Carry's culture?

Judy: Well, you know, it is a challenge and for some people that's a very natural thing to happen and for others it has to be something that they give thoughtful consideration to make sure that they do. It is difficult for some folks, we a great group of administrators who make sure



that they know who's coming to their department on Monday morning and they immediately try to set up an initial get to know each other lunch with that leader. They take the reins on that and make sure that that person is welcomed by leadership in that particular department and that there isn't time to sit down, if not one-on-one, in a very small group to just have conversation and just get to know one another because that comfort level coming early on relieves so much of the tension and so much of that fear you mentioned and helps them get ready to actually be productive. So it accomplishes a lot in a very short period of time.

Suzie: That's a key piece, having solid administrators in place for each department and having them be an advocate for this to help the leaders who are busy. I think it's more difficult for some, but I also think folks that are, you know, like to welcome people are just covered up, you know, they have a lot going on, "How do I do all this." But if you can get everybody tag teaming and everybody realizing it's important because they're going to continue to have a lot going on if they keep losing these people that a lot of time and money has been spent on trying to get them in the door, especially in this market. So it's a balancing act, but that makes sense. The administrators. So anything else that you've done to kind of make it fit in the organization or make it more of everybody's job that you can think of or it's just drip, drip, drip over time getting everybody on the same page?

Judy: Yeah. You know, it is an evolution and you learn. If you're observant, you'll learn all the time. The other thing that is interesting is that we have this steering committee, which is this young group of professionals that are working on these strategic plan process. They have come to me and said, "Gee, you know, here's what we've observed and here are some suggestions." And it's a grass roots evolution sometimes, and you know, as HR professionals we see what other firms do, we know what we've done in the past that works and what doesn't work, but it's being open to listen to suggestions and, you know, maybe changing our ways a little bit if we think it's appropriate and trying new things and we've just recently tried some new things that we think have improved our process. And some of that comes from...

Suzie: Which one of those things that comes from the steering committee, brought to you, that you said, "Okay, we haven't done that before, let's try it." Is there something you could share? I'm just curious.

Judy: Well for example, that steering committee just recently rolled out new mission, vision and values and they're, you know, like how do we integrate this into the orientation. And they had lots of suggestions on what they thought we could do to integrate that into our orientation and we've implemented some of those things immediately. They did a great video and we now open orientation with that video.

Suzie: Oh, that great.

Judy: And it ends, the video is neat and it talks about the mission, vision and values and how we implemented, and it also gives the new employee a visual of all three of our offices, so they can kind of see the work environment in our Washington, DC office and in our New York office. So they can say, "Okay, you know, there are people there and that's a pretty cool place too." And the last thing, the narrator says is, "We've got your back," and we do, you know, we're



ready to go. And the message is, you know, "Don't worry about it, we're here and we're gonna take care of you."

Suzie: That's awesome. And they put that video together?

Judy: They did.

Suzie: How many people are on the steering committee? A little off our topic, but it's interesting.

Judy: Oh wow. I don't know.

Suzie: 10-15

Judy: It's probably more like 15.

Suzie: Oh, okay.

Judy: Yeah, it's a nice group. Nice group.

Suzie: Are leaders or the executive team or any of the principals on that team?

Judy: They have one principle that is kind of the facilitator and helps them keep on track and just kind of the communication conduit to the partners, so that's how that works and the rest of them are all young emerging leaders.

Suzie: And how long have y'all been doing that?

Judy: Oh my gosh. I've been here over four years and it has been a part of our culture from day one.

Suzie: That whole time? Ok.

Judy: Yeah.

Suzie: That's great. That is great. Good information that you're sharing. Thank you. Let's do a touch on your career and some of your best and worst new hire experiences. What comes to mind when you think about, "Okay, I went and worked at certain places and these things went really well and these things did not." What can you share?

Judy: Well, you know, HR is my second career. So when I first started working I started out on the night shift, so I worked from 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM and I got very little training and I was in a very stressful environment. I dealt with life and death stuff.

Suzie: It was security?

Judy: I was in law enforcement.



Suzie: Law enforcement. Yeah.

Judy: Yeah, and you know, you never heard from or saw anyone from the management team or leadership unless there was something wrong and it was always an interesting dynamic and it wasn't an uncommon thing to happen because, you know, I understand leaders work all day and who wants to come back in at 10:00 at night to talk to the new person. But it leaves an impression and if 24-hour organizations can find a way to make sure that their night shift employees have a definite connection, it has to be worthwhile. And I think that's the huge lesson I learned from that. But on the flip side, you know, I've had really great experiences and making sure that, you know, I was welcomed and that people in the organization we're interested that I had what I needed to get the job done. And there was regular communication and regular touch base with leadership so that everyone knew and there was a good introduction and immediately brought into a lot of different initiatives. And that's the important thing is that getting people engaged early on, making sure they're challenged and making sure that they have a vision and that there's something they can contribute to you right away.

Suzie: When you compare that to winging it by yourself, in law enforcement at night, it's probably two different jobs you were doing. But the level of support on the flip side is huge.

Judy: Yeah. You know, and law enforcement is kind of a lonely place to be anyway. You're out by yourself, you know, you're on your own a lot. So it definitely is just a very different environment instead of being in an office or a work setting where you're surrounded by others.

Suzie: But I also go back to thinking the same thing about if you work by yourself or not, you need to help the new person. And I know you agree. So just restating it for anybody listening; Reduce their fear because everybody has it, if their tough or not, a senior or not, help them understand how they fit in, and like you said, get a contact, somebody they can touch base with when they do need something, and then help everybody be productive quickly. And if you can do those three things, no matter the role, you're going to be there longer and be more successful.

Judy: Absolutely. There's a whole body of work about engagement and a lot of assessments now to assess the engagement of individuals in your organization overall and knowing that that is so critical to an organization's success is half the battle of making sure you know right away that engagement's important. So how am I going to make sure my employees are engaged and productive and feeling fulfilled in the work that they do. If you can get there, you've made huge progress in making sure you can retain those folks that you've worked so hard to hire.

Suzie: So, if you could put a billboard anywhere with anything on it that relates to what we've been talking about today, talent management, retention. Where would you put it? What would it say?

Judy: You know, I don't know where I would put it, I would want it everywhere.

Suzie: Everywhere? Ok, I like that.

Judy: Maybe, can I put it like as a commercial during NFL games?



Suzie: Oh, I really like that, take it outside the box that way, because it's now like it's a very important message. So what is it?

Judy: You know, I think it's simple, it's leadership made simple, "Treat others as you want to be treated," and if you use that rule and if you think about how I'm treating everyone around me, is that the way I would like to be treated? It's the Golden Rule and it's, we all know it, but for some reason when we step over that threshold into the workplace, sometimes it just goes away and many times we end up alienating or at least pushing away the people that we need the most. So it's really important that we spend as much or more time with those people who are performing well, as we do those who are underperforming and sometimes the underperformers get more of our attention and those who are really making us a success. So it's making sure that we treat everyone the way we'd like to be treated in recognizing those who deserve recognition and helping those others make improvements.

Suzie: That's well said, and like you said, it's something we all know, but it seems like something we all need to be reminded of on a regular basis, relearn it, it is one thing to say it, another thing to live it. Yes, so we will remember that today. What advice would you give your 25 year-old self about your career and about being a leader? What would you say?

Judy: Oh my gosh, you know, early on I sweat the small stuff in such a big way and I've learned not to be over reactive, everything can be fixed, you know, treat people well, think about what you're going to do before you do it or say it, and you know, try to stay balanced, and my life is much, much better now than it used to be and it's probably much better for the people around me.

Suzie: A little less anxious, a little more at ease? So, what were the secrets to getting there? Because I know people are listening that are sweating the small stuff in a big way, as you said, things, experience obviously helped.

Judy: Experience helps. I had one CEO that would just really say, "This too shall pass. We'll get by it. It's going to be okay. We stumbled, we pick ourselves up and we go on," and if you hear that often enough and you say it to yourself often enough, eventually it just happens and you don't have to tell yourself that anymore and it's really true. Just about anything can be fixed. It's recognizing when there's a mistake and then learning from it and doing what it is you need to do to fix it. Failure is a great thing when you learn from it.

Suzie: Yup, and what a great advocate that CEO was and that's what a great advocate or mentor does or coach is, helps the people around them, you know, get it, that it's all going to be okay. He demonstrated that, or she demonstrated that for you and in enough ways and said it enough times and meant it, that you could take it on or within an avenue for which you could take it on, which is beautiful.

Judy: Right, spending some time learning about emotional intelligence and learning about the traits and the qualities that are advocated in developing emotional intelligence. It really will make your life much, much better.



Suzie: Great! And let's close with one last bit of advice or wisdom you'd like every leader to take away from our discussion today about new hires and retention and being a great leader, what would you say?

Judy: You know, one of the things I've learned as I've been in this organization is that leaders aren't always born, and that especially those in professions like architecture or something with a very, very strong focus on technical aspects in college they don't always help their students learn about leadership and probably architects don't become architects so that they can lead and manage people. They want to build buildings.

Suzie: Right.

Judy: So it's having that understanding that, you know, from my perspective is that not everyone has had an opportunity to have a great mentor or to have the training that they need to become a great leader and it's helping them find resources to do that. So my advice to leaders is read about things that might not be in your particular profession, build your Business Acumen, build your leadership development resource library and really do that, and if you can do those things, your life will be better. One of the things that I strongly advocate is that leaders do some research around stay interviews because I think that concept is very important to retention, asking employees what do you like, what would you change, how would you do things differently and listening to those things and then helping that employee find a way to implement as much of that as possible so that they are more engaged. And that whole concept of stay interviews gives you a platform on which to have those conversations so that it's easy to break the ice and it's easy to get those conversations going and keep that dialogue going on a long-term basis, and once you do that, once you initiate it and you start asking those questions, you make yourself more approachable for employees to come back to you and say, "Well, you know, I'm thinking about that and this is something I'd like to do or this is something I'd like to try." If you can get the retention things down, then the recruiting thing becomes way easier.

Suzie: It's a catch 22, right?

Judy: Right. You A, have a higher retention rate and B you have a built-in happy workforce that will help you in the recruiting process through referrals and inviting people into the organization and telling them you're going to love it here.

Suzie: Right, and your advice about the stay interviews is brilliant because if you are very technical, they are in technology or an architect your a builder, you're whatever, you're natural skill set that you've been trained on, you can very easily become a great leader by just doing stay interviews and if you do them well, I think by asking, listening and following up and encouraging action, that's a big piece of the puzzle. I mean, I know there's a lot more, but that's a big piece of people feeling like somebody's looking out for them. If somebody cares about them and somebody checking in on them and empowering, that's great.

Judy: That's a great way to start.

Suzie: Much better to do stay interviews as opposed to exit interviews.



Judy: You're so right.

Suzie: Those can be helpful because the chances are good you know what the problem is, or at least Human Resources does.

Judy: The stay interview gives you an opportunity to do something about it before it's too late.

Suzie: Before it's too late. Exactly. Awesome. Well, you're doing great things over there, Judy. Thank you for taking time to share your expertise.

Judy: You're welcome. I appreciate you asking me.

Suzie: Did you get some takeaways from Judy and our discussion for your onboarding process? They are doing some innovative things. I really do appreciate Judy's common sense, practical, and at the same time innovative ideas around keeping people engaged and committed to their organization and you can see that some of the things that they're doing are having a good impact, solid impact on the business because they are growing and they're getting recognized. They've always been a solid firm, but they continue to grow and be recognized for their expertise. So in the interview, one of the things that Judy talks about is the stay interview and that is so important. It's the checking-in and making sure "How are you doing, how are things going," and so I would encourage you to do that. I'm going to put in the show notes, a reference to an episode, number 16, where I did an interview with Cobb EMCs, Ron Younker, and we had a discussion about effective performance strategies and he talks about it, stay interviews, he just calls it "How's it going meetings," and so you know, how's it going, and he talks a little bit about how he does it, how often he does it to break that down and you can find that episode at pricelessprofessional.com/performance, and you'll see that in the show notes. We time all of our show notes, so if you scroll down and look at the notes, you'll be able to see approximately where it is in that discussion.

Suzie: Again, the show notes for today's episode with Judy is pricelessprofessional.com/newhire2, that's the number two. The other episode on new hires and onboarding is pricelessprofessional.com/newhire. If you want to check out all of the episodes in the Wake Up Eager Workforce podcast, you can check out our directory by going to wakeupeagerworkforce.com. I'll say it again, [wakeupeagerworkforce](http://wakeupeagerworkforce.com), all one word, .com. When you go to the directory page or any of the show notes pages, you will see a place where you can get the Apple app or the Android app. If you have that on your phone for our podcast, they'll automatically load. You won't have to go and do anything and if you're driving or doing errands or walking the dog or washing the clothes, or, you can just open that app and there'll be the latest episode, and so feel free to get that. If you get the app, you'll be able to leave us a review. People can find us more likely if there are more reviews on iTunes, so that would be great if you would do that. You can also share content. You can easily see the show notes when you have the app on your phone.

Suzie: So I appreciate you tuning in today. I want to remind you about one of our onboarding tools that we have that can help you quickly integrate new hires into your culture. It's an Onboarding Talent Report that you can use. It derives itself from the talent reports that people use for hiring, but if you didn't use a talent report in hiring, we can very easily create a report



that you can use that gives you development content and communication building information that you can use with your new hire team members. What it does is it gives you framework and content to talk about how you best work together more effectively. It demonstrates your commitment to their personal and professional growth, it gives you content for development. When you look at how they scored on the assessment, what the assessment is saying, how you're going to help them leverage their strengths, are there any blind spots that they want to work on and that are related to the job? So it's a very cost effective way to have some training and development and just show your commitment to their growth and your commitment to understanding who they are and how they best work, and it gives them more tools to be productive. We have a do-it-yourself, custom new hire coaching report and agenda that we can share with you so that you facilitate it, and we also over here at Priceless Professional Development can help facilitate those conversations and so we do that on a regular basis. So just want to remind you about this onboarding tool, it's a talent report for new hires. If you want to learn more about it, we can tailor it specifically to your needs, you can contact me at pricelessprofessional.com/Suzie, S-U-Z-I-E.

Suzie: I'm excited about our next episodes. We're going to go into the Wake Up Eager habits for leaders and I haven't talked a lot about those lately. Everything that we do relates to those habits, but now we're going to specifically talk about them. There are five habits and each habit is something that's crucial to being the best leader you can be. Being someone who gets up every day excited and eager about their work. What am I going to do, during each of the episodes is give you tools, talk to other experts, explain why these particular habits are important to your role as a leader, and I'll very quickly right here, go through the five habits.

Suzie: They spell out the word eager. So I like to use acronyms, as most of you know. E enter the zone, A activate greatness, G grow trust, E evaluate job fit, R recalibrate daily. So those will be the next episodes coming up. Enter the zone, will be the first. My goal is in the future to write a book for each. So, so far I've written a book for two, the evaluate job fit area and that's my "70 Best Practices, Strategies and Tips for Hiring Superior Performers." That's about evaluating job fit and how to really strengthen your ability to get the right people in the right seats, and describes specifically interview help and then the aspects of what you need to ask people when you're interviewing and what areas you need to be looking at with regard to job fit. The recalibrate daily book was the very first book that I did and it is about managing your mind, body and spirit and everyday checking in to make sure you're on track, recalibrate daily is what that's about, and that is about also the one percent exponential growth principle, which is check in every day, spend time everyday doing something for one percent of your day, which is 15 minutes of your day and you will more than likely stay on track, you have exponential growth. One percent a day and in 70 days or twice improved. The third book that I'm getting ready to start now is the activate greatness book. Like I said, I'll have books for every one of the Wake Up Eager habits.

Suzie: So I'm an eager to talk about those with you and introduce you to other experts and if you would like to stay in touch, you can see all of my links to social media on the PricelessProfessional.com website, it's up at the top right. On Twitter, I'm at [wakeupeager](https://twitter.com/wakeupeager), on Facebook, it's [Wake Up Eager](https://www.facebook.com/WakeUpEager), and on LinkedIn it's [Suzie Price](https://www.linkedin.com/in/suzieprice). So if you want to stay in touch, give me a shout there. We also do a monthly newsletter. But meanwhile, thank you for so much for tuning in and if this was helpful to you today, give me a shout, send us a note, leave us a review and think about the onboarding tool that I mentioned for new hires and the talent report.



So give me a shout, pricelessprofessional.com/suzie. And until the next episode, take care of yourself. Bye.

Outro: This episode of the Wake-Up Eager Work Force Podcast was brought to you by Priceless Professional Development. Thank you for tuning in. If you enjoyed today's show, head over to pricelessprofessional.com to gain access to more professional development resources.