

Courses offer tips on how to keep staff

Joanna Mather

The skills shortage issue is keeping many bosses up at night and, spying an opportunity, universities have launched short courses on recruitment and retention to help employers make wiser choices.

The courses, which are not designed to give exhaustive training, are pitched at general managers and team leaders rather than human resources specialists.

The International Training and Careers College, an arm of the University of Wollongong, will offer a two-day course on staff selection and retention for the first time in June.

KEY POINTS

- A shortage of skills has spawned new non-professional short courses in human resources management.
- Specialists are surprised at how few managers have any formal training.
- Recruitment and induction are vital.

Facilitator Jo Perkins, said many managers, even very experienced ones, had a lot of learn.

"Managers these days need to be trained to select, identify, guide, coach, reward and retain," she said.

"Gone are the days where you recruited a person, put them on the

line and they did what they were meant to do."

Of course, she would say that. But surveys suggest employers are more preoccupied with workforce shortages than any other issue. According to Bankwest research earlier this year, national job vacancies have climbed above 200,000 and skills shortages are affecting almost one in three businesses.

Ms Perkins said businesses had to get better at interviewing candidates and retaining employees. She was surprised how few bosses had any formal training in human resource management, so some were making poor recruitment choices over and over again.

"Often we learn these skills from sitting in on panels and listening to other people but that means we pick up bad habits," she said.

"It's costly when you get it wrong. It's inefficient, it impacts on productivity and it hurts your employer brand."

Swinburne University of Technology has hived off part of its diploma of management to provide existing and aspiring managers with a short course on recruiting, selecting and inducting staff.

Recruiting for Success, beginning in June, is aimed at people who don't necessarily want a full diploma but want to do a university-level subject, facilitator Frank Noonan said. He said too little attention was given to

formal training in recruitment-related activities.

"When it comes to recruitment it's taken seriously but not considered quite as rigorously in process terms as you would deal with, say, supply chain management," Mr Noonan said.

"But, effectively, the principles are the same. In this supply chain you're dealing with people rather than items.

"If you get things right in the recruitment process and the induction process that follows, then retention is so much easier because retention issues largely, although not always, arise because you've hired the wrong people for the wrong role or at the wrong time."