

## ***For Immediate Release***

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### **Speaker Addresses Challenges of Recruiting and Retaining Hourly Employees at NCILC**

A determined group of North Central Illinois Logistics Council (NCILC) members attended their January meeting in spite of the subzero wind chill factor and were rewarded for their efforts by Mike Neubauer, Regional Director for Human Resources for Advantage Logistics, who shared a number of successful best practices for recruiting and retaining hourly employees.

Neubauer began his presentation by acknowledging that it is not too difficult to retain employees in a down economy such as the one much of the country is now experiencing. However, in times of a good economy, companies must be able to present themselves as an “employer of choice” to a workforce that is looking for an attractive, stable place to work.

Such was the case when Neubauer first arrived at Advantage Logistics. The workforce there was quadrupling, and the company found itself in need of someone who could organize and address human resource issues related to recruiting and retaining quality warehouse associates. The North Central Illinois area was experiencing a huge growth in the logistics industry, but the growth in the population was flat. Demand for good workers was high and the competition was intense.

The company wanted to be sure that its policies and procedures in the key areas of employee Recruitment, Orientation, Training and Retention would be second to none. Therefore, it put together a task force and charged it with collecting best practices for attracting the best applicants (Recruitment); engaging them in the company’s culture from day one (Orientation); teaching them what they need to know in a timely, thorough manner (Training); and, winning their commitment and long-term employment (Retention).

The task force tapped a variety of available sources in order to obtain as much information as possible. For example, surveys were sent to other distribution centers within the company, as well as to a number of companies inside and outside the logistics industry, to learn what they were all doing. Articles that appeared in business and industry publications were researched for successful strategies and approaches. At the end of the project, the best practices for each topical area were assembled into individual one-page sheets and widely distributed throughout the company.

Neubauer then shared some of those Best Practices with the audience. In terms of *Recruitment*, companies should continuously review what they are doing and make sure it is working. If not, make appropriate changes and adjustments until it does. Use the internet to reach as wide a labor pool as possible. Participate in job fairs at colleges and community colleges. Use employee referrals as much as possible since they know company expectations and standards, and can therefore be a very reliable source for leads.

*Retention* is more likely to occur when accountability is assigned to supervisors. An important factor contributing to high retention rates is open communication and positive interaction with employees. Individuals are more productive and happier workers when they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, and how they should perform on the job. Peer-to-peer mentoring can work well to ensure this. Recognize the accomplishments of individuals and teams, and make your place of work somewhere they will want to stay.

*Orientation* should be as meaningful and “least boring” as possible. Employees have a lot to learn during orientation sessions, and employers should do whatever they can to make it a pleasant experience. Providing snacks and refreshments, changing presenters and allowing for breaks are good examples of what can be done to make the sessions go by faster.

The most important factor in good *Training* is to use a comprehensive program. This includes finding the right person to do the training, using a defined approach, setting objectives and measuring attainment. It is important to remember that employees are more likely to stick around if they know what they are doing and are recognized for doing it well.

After Neubauer’s presentation, the Council conducted its regular order of business before adjourning.

The next meeting of the NCILC will be Thursday, February 19 at 8:00 a.m. at IVCC in Room C-316. Mr. William Gahlberg will talk about the future of the logistics industry in the North Central Illinois area. To RSVP for this meeting, contact Jo Ann Johnson at (815) 224-7930.

The North Central Illinois Logistics Council includes individuals from businesses and industries representing various interests within the logistics industry. It was established through a collaborative effort of North Central Illinois Works (NCI Works), local economic development agencies and chambers of commerce, Illinois Valley Community College and Sauk Valley Community College. Its mission is “to create a professional, educational and informational logistics council, benefiting local businesses and communities”. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month from 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. at Illinois Valley Community College. For more information, call Ted Van Sickle (815) 440-5203, Ray Gatza of Advantage Logistics at (815) 883-5761 or Pam Furlan at (815) 224-7930. Information on the NCILC meetings can be found on the NCI Works’ website at [www.nciworks.org](http://www.nciworks.org).