

ARE YOU READY FOR THE HIRING CHALLENGES OF BROADBAND EXPANSION?

How one company is preparing for the future of Broadband.

Our historic moment of broadband funding opportunity means that, soon, the broadband industry will require a crop of new employees in roles from engineering to customer service, from marketing to service technicians, from billing to construction. A December 2022 [report](#) from the U.S. Government Accountability Office states that between 23,000 to 34,000 new workers will be needed in the peak years of funding, and an April Wall Street Journal [article](#) puts the estimate of workers needed in the next few years between 205,000 to 850,000.



Now is the time to ask yourself important questions about your human resources and recruitment strategies. Are your hiring processes robust enough to meet future needs? Are you prepared for the retirement of your longest-serving, most knowledgeable employees? Is your company culture likely to help you retain employees? Are there opportunities for growth within your company and, if so, do your employees know what they are?



Here are five recommendations to help ensure your team is ready to grow alongside the historic opportunities in our industry:



1. Keep an eye on the past, the present, and the future.

As you prepare to address this moment, it's important to keep the whole picture in mind—where you've been, where you are, and where you're going. Consider these key questions to help you meet current needs and prepare for the future.

- **The past:** Who are the people who have made the company what it is? What aspects of what your company has been in the past do you want to maintain, and what should you let go? Which of your employees—some of whom have, no doubt, been around for 20, 30, 40 years or more—are likely to retire soon?

- **The present:** What's the makeup of your current team? What are their unique skills and assets? What talents do you currently have on your team—especially among those likely to stay long-term—and what holes might you need to fill? What aspects of your current culture are serving you well? What aspects need to evolve or change?

- **The future:** If all your broadband projects were funded, and/or if every part of your five-year plan was achieved, what would that take from a staff perspective? How many new people would you need to hire? Those questions are difficult to answer, but you should at least be thinking about them and making those estimates now.

2. Use a variety of avenues for recruitment.

How do you find good people? At Finley, we've found that the most fruitful approach is to use multiple avenues for recruitment:

- **Incentivize your current employees** to recommend and recruit new employees. Your current team is, hopefully, full of the kind of people you'd be happy to hire again, and those people often know people like themselves.

• **Use LinkedIn ads** to attract more people to your job listings. They work. Finley recently listed a job on LinkedIn and had 90 applications by the next morning. Were they all qualified for the position? Of course not. But many of them were very strong candidates.

• **Use recruiting firms** when the position calls for it. For jobs that require specific expertise, calling on a professional firm can often give you the best results. Developing long-term partnerships with recruitment firms can lead to candidates who are a strong match for your company and ultimately more hires.

• **Create partnerships** with local universities and professional associations featuring the type of employees you're likely to need (e.g., associations of engineers). They can be a great source of experienced candidates as well as early career candidates you can hire to for current needs and to build a talent pipeline for future roles. You can also partner with educational institutions to help develop future talent (starting at the high school level). Most importantly, build relationships with long-term retention in mind. Finley's partnerships are relational, not transactional. Partnering with mutual, long-term benefits in mind is key to successful recruitment.

• **Don't limit your search.** If the place you're recruiting—whether it's a website, an association, a university, etc.—speaks mostly to a single type of person, that's the kind of applicants you'll attract. Trying to reach the entire labor pool gives you a better chance of finding a diversity of talent.

3. Understand the importance of connection and community.

We regularly hear people talk about the sense of family they feel working for Finley. That family feeling speaks strongly to our employees and influences their desire to stay with us. Our employees know we care about them and they appreciate the meaningful connections they have with their co-workers and the sense of community they feel with Finley.

“At Finley, we nurture a culture of respect, connection, and long-term partnership. As a result, both our clients and employees become an important part of our Finley family.”
Kjirsten Mickesh, Chief People Officer

• **Employees' families.** Make sure your employees know you will support them when managing family situations. If your employees need to take some time because of a family emergency or they need some leeway during the day for family logistics, give them the space they need. Offer your employees the same consideration you want when family situations arise. This ultimately builds trust and loyalty.

• **The “family” of your company.** Many companies say they’re like one big family, but only some can support that statement. On your employee surveys, pay particular attention to the how strongly your employees agree with this statement: “My supervisor or someone at work cares about me”. Successfully supporting employees’ personal lives outside of work and creating a community of support at work are both vital to employee retention.

4. Make sure paths for growth are clearly defined.

Can the average employee in your company explain what the paths for growth look like? Younger employees, especially, are looking for employment that helps them learn and grow. It is important to create and publicize a clearly defined process for people to move from one job to another (whether they are steps up or lateral moves between departments). And remember that job growth isn’t just for junior employees. Even employees who have been with you for decades and are near retirement are looking for ways to grow and learn. At Finley, we’ve had success encouraging our seasoned team members to become mentors to less experienced employees. In doing so, they get to share their expertise and make a connection with someone who will, hopefully, also be around a long time.



5. Understand your role in creating and promoting equity.

One driving purpose of the nationwide project of broadband expansion is to promote equity among disparate communities so everyone has access to a high-speed internet connection. As a society, we've recognized that access to the internet is critically important in people's lives. Those of us in the broadband industry are in the equity business. Let that shine through in your hiring practices. Your ability to attract and retain the best talent from the full talent pool - a diverse talent pool - will depend on your openness and ability to effectively connect with others who are both similar and different than you. This will ensure they feel a strong sense of inclusion and belonging throughout the recruitment process and once they have been hired.

Summary

In this historic moment for network expansion and funding, the only way for broadband providers to thrive is to be prepared for the human resources demands of the future. Focusing on what you do well, smart recruiting practices, corporate cultures that support family and community, clear paths for growth, and equity will keep your company strong as you help meet the connectivity needs of underserved and unserved communities. What you're doing is vital work. Make sure you have the resources to get it done.

About the author:



Kjirsten Mickesh, Chief People Officer for Finley is a strategic business leader and trusted advisor with expertise in aligning people and organizational solutions to business strategy.

She has led all aspects of Human Resources and has expertise in developing and delivering talent strategies and programs that attract, develop, engage, and retain high-performing employees. She has extensive experience leading transformational initiatives and is known for creating collaborative partnerships to solve complex problems and optimize performance.

For more information on how to become a Finley employee visit our website

www.FinleyUSA.com/careers or to contact Kjirsten, email k.mickesh@finleyusa.com.

