

Episode 24 - Mike Ritter - Recruiting Events - [00:12:41]

Intro: Welcome to Profiles In Prosperity with your host David Heimer.

David Heimer: Hi everybody, this is David Heimer, welcome to Profiles In Prosperity. Mike Ritter is the president and owner of Great Lakes, Heating Air Conditioning, Electrical, and Plumbing, in South Bend Indiana. Great lakes is well known for tremendous growth for their commitment to ethical business practices and for being a great place to work. One of the many things I particularly enjoy about Mike is that he's an out-of-the-box thinker, always willing to consider and try new things. So about 18 months ago, I was particularly interested when Mike told me that he was doing his own recruiting event. So this was going to be a multi-hour event, held at their offices, promoted heavily in local media, including radio and TV. So the idea was to get as many people in there as possible and allow them to meet and be recruited by Mike and his team in person. So since Mike has had the Service Nation International Roundtable in New Orleans, as I am this week, I thought it'd be great to sit down with him, have him tell us more about his recruiting event, what the results were and what he learned. So Mike Ritter, welcome to Profiles In Prosperity. And thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

Mike Ritter: Well, first off here we are a year later and I still have results rolling in from that single event I did at the end of March, 2017. So what I wanted to do is I want to be able to show the community what we're doing and who we were about. So it was all about the culture and we set up four different stations and the people that came in would rotate, they'd spend 15 minutes at each station. Of course, I had to have my team involved and you know what? They're getting to have a say in who they work with. So that also built my culture, reinforced what I wanted. So they would go from one station to the next. They had planned an hour for that. We had so many people show up for the

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event. I actually had to do an impromptu to an additional fifth station. We did stuff like shoot paintball guns, makeup sheet metal, dust pans. We played charades and anything that we had done in the last year in our training classes that we have every Tuesday and they all had a point behind them. Paintball for example, we shoot at, play pigeons. You never hit it the first time. Kind of like when you go into the customer and you offer them something, they might say no, but you don't start shooting. You don't stop asking for that.

Then we had a stand-up presentation where I told them about the company, showed them what we're about, showed them the newer technology that we're utilizing. At the very beginning, when everybody came in, they were given an envelope. That envelope had something in it. And I told them, this is your gift for coming. There's up to a \$200 gift card in one of these, the lowest is 25. If you decide this isn't the place for you, go ahead and take it and leave. But otherwise, wait until the end to open it. So when we're all done, I told everybody to take out your envelopes. Don't open them yet. But if you want a guaranteed face to face interview with me, because I can't interview everybody, but we'll schedule it next week. Turn that envelope back in and it'll guarantee a slot. Now they didn't know if they had \$25 in there or \$200 in there, but the event ended at 9:30 on a weeknight. And at 10:30, I still had people waiting in line to talk to me, to give me their envelope back. Of course, I let them keep the envelope. It was just seeing how much of a buy-in I got and how much they really wanted to be part of my team. To back it all up though, you really have to, when you're advertising and marketing it, you have to think about who you're marketing to.

David Heimer: Step back one step before that. So this was an event and it was an

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event just for you guys and it started in the evening. What time did it start?

Mike Ritter: Start at 6:30.

David Heimer: 6:30 to 9:30 was the plan?

Mike Ritter: Right.

David Heimer: Okay. And it was during the week?

Mike Ritter: We purposefully did it during the week. Yes.

David Heimer: And the idea was just one, let people know who we are. Two, let's get some great employees. Was that the plan?

Mike Ritter: The plan was for growth and we knew we couldn't grow without more employees. And the icing on the cake was our customers also heard all of our advertising and marketing for it and we got residual business off of that.

David Heimer: Right.

Mike Ritter: We did it during our slower time. So we had time to train and we really focused on who we wanted to hit. And we didn't go to our normal media or normal TV shows or TV commercials on certain shows like the news because we're trying to hit a certain target audience. But I did these in the prime time. I cowboied up and I laid down

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the money for some prime times spots and I was really nervous about it. But in the end, the people we wanted to bring on to our team that's what they were watching. We totally looked at it from a different angle as to what they wanted to hear. When we have somebody come in and we're interviewing them, we're thinking about us and what they will bring to the team. We got to remember, they're sitting there thinking about what they're going to get from us. So we tried to look at it from their angle and we totally redid our normal marketing. And of course you had the radio commercial that we ran as well.

David Heimer: Let's play it now.

Mike Ritter: Thanks for coming. John, have a seat. So what brings you here today? And why should we hire you?

John: Wait? What are you kidding me? Why should you hire me? How about, why should I work for you? Let's face it. Nobody wants to work. So I want to know why I should work for you. You've got about 30 seconds to win me over.

Mike Ritter: Now that's what I'm talking about. Hi, Mike Ritter from Great Lakes Heating here at Great Lakes we believe in a few core things. First, we believe in serving and not just selling. Second, we believe in having fun as a team. We also believe action speaks louder than words. So we challenge you, no, we dare you to come to our hiring event on March 30th, starting at 6:00 PM and try not to have fun. You better bring your spouse because they won't believe how we do things. Just like it takes hard work and determination to win the big game. It takes hard work and determination to be part of the Great Lakes team you're already working hard. So there's no excuse for missing our March 30th event and see what it's like to be on a winning team that has fun.

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David Heimer: Wow. Very cool. So, that was one of the pieces. What other advertising did you do?

Mike Ritter: We did something very similar, to that on TV, of course. Really that was it. We did radio, we targeted the programming and the times of the day that our current employees were listening to and watching. So we use similar ones. We had a lot posted on Facebook and it just spread out like wildfire, a lot of shares and likes. And, I already said we got a lot of business, that particular radio commercial brought us a lot of leads coming in for new equipment because they're like, Hey, people are happy and having fun. They're going to do a better job for us. Their spouses came, a lot of spouses were there, which was wonderful because Ashley had a couple come up. The husband was the one that came in for the hiring event. But the wife wanted to know if she could possibly put her name in too because she didn't sign in originally. So that worked out well for us also.

David Heimer: Very cool. How far in advance did you plan this out?

Mike Ritter: We started about two weeks after the first of the year and of course that one was around the super bowl and we constantly hit it. So we made sure we were on a primetime show at least once a week, right before the event, we hit it every night. So we were on all five nights that time.

David Heimer: And so I should have picked up on this in the ad. Did people call in and make a reservation to attend or was it just a show-up sort of event?

Mike Ritter: It was a show-up sort of event. We ran out of parking. So we had to go

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outside and start moving, shuffling some cars around. Some of the team members that were there helping interview and stuff, had to go off and park elsewhere and walk back. Yeah, next time we're going to have to do it a little bit differently because being the first time we did it, we weren't expecting that much of a turnout.

David Heimer: Sure.

Mike Ritter: But the residual was, I got three service technicians that had over 15 years experience after this event because they heard about the event and they were skeptical so they didn't come because technicians have bounced around, extra in the field for that long. It's all the same, so they think, but if you really have that atmosphere and that culture, the word will spread and that event really helps spread that word. So I got those three and then I also had another individual come on about two months ago that has 17 years of experience because of that hiring event.

David Heimer: Wow. So how many people in total showed up?

Mike Ritter: We had about 69 that showed up.

David Heimer: Very nice and step me through a little bit. So 69 people showed up, ran out of space, played games with them, and talked to them at the different stations. A bunch of them came in, returned the envelopes to you and scheduled interviews. So how many interviews did you have after that?

Mike Ritter: Well, out of the 69 not everybody felt that they would be a good fit. Of course, naturally we are a little weird because we have a lot of fun. Some of them just

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walked out. So didn't count, I'm going to say maybe eight people left right at the very end, everybody else kind of stuck around. And I hired seven people pretty much right out of the gate. I went back and forth on another individual. I did end up bringing him on at the persistence of my assistant. I'm glad that I did. And out of those eight, I have six of them still there. And then I also got the three technicians in addition to that afterward and then the one here just recently.

David Heimer: Wow. That's fabulous. So I think that says a total of 11 hires. And out of those 11, you have nine still. Is that right?

Mike Ritter: That sounds correct. Yes.

David Heimer: I should be able to do this math in my head. But if you think about hiring a recruiter to do it, I'm guessing that this costs you a heck of a lot less than a recruiter and you got really good people. Does that seem right to you? Or what do you think expense-wise?

Mike Ritter: Expense-wise? I would definitely say it was cheaper and it was a lot of fun. That's the thing. It was a lot of fun. I got to meet a lot of new people, even the people I didn't hire were still new people and they put comments on Facebook and I got business from that.

David Heimer: I was just going to say some of those people that you didn't hire or chose not to, are probably potential customers.

Mike Ritter: So one of the things was I had them take their picture, all of my interviews are point-based, but to get an extra point on their interview, they were to take their

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picture and post it on Facebook and tag us. So we had a little photo booth there with the paintball gun, where they could do it in front of our van and then tag us.

David Heimer: So, great results, really innovative idea. I mean, hats off to you. Great participation, I mean your own team, like you said, got into it, they got to play along. They had fun, but they also got a say in picking who they get to work with, which I think is really really nice and worth it. And so if you were going to do it again and it sounds like you think you will do it again, what would you do differently?

Mike Ritter: RSVP Like you said, I can't run out of parking. I know that next time I do it I'll have even more because people are already calling and asking, Hey, when are you doing that again? I heard about it. Well, I wouldn't have had the growth financially in 2017. Had I not done this hiring in March? Because I wouldn't have had the manpower to take all the call volume that we had. So I do have one regret though that I didn't do it again this March.

David Heimer: Would that be sort of the model? Do you think you'd like every March to just do it routinely? Is that what you're thinking?

Mike Ritter: That is definitely what I am planning on doing.

David Heimer: Cool, man. This was so great. Thank you for doing this. Agreeing to sit down and talk with me about it. I think it's really an innovative idea. Kudos to you for coming up with it and executing it. We'll need to have a follow-up at some point in time and hear what happens with the next one.

Mike Ritter: We'll do that. Involve your team though, because my team had a lot to say

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my team is who actually made the event. They came up with a lot of the different stations.

David Heimer: Maybe we'll bring another person in with you, then.

Mike Ritter: We can do that.

David Heimer: Okay. Cool. All right. Thanks a lot.

Mike Ritter: Thank you.

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