

Transforming turnover rates & hiring for Red Wing Shoes



Red Wing Shoes (RWS) is one of the most recognizable footwear brands in North America and beyond. With a global presence, hundreds of stores, thousands of employees, and a heritage stretching back more than a century, it's a truly iconic brand synonymous with quality.

When the company was experiencing a high turnover of retail associates – the company's hourly workforce – and needed to expand its talent acquisition capacity, it turned to Cielo's dedicated Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) team for help. From the get-go, RWS and Cielo had strong cultural alignment and shared vision, resulting in a natural partnership that eased the store managers' pressures of retail recruitment and allowed them more time to engage with their teams and connect more closely with consumers.



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Giving the boot to high turnover: Slashing new hire employee turnover

In RWS' staffing model, retail store managers handled the sourcing, interviewing, and hiring for retail positions, from part-time retail associates to route associates who bring safety footwear via a customized mobile store experience right to commercial customer workplaces. This took store leadership time away from their core responsibilities – the sales floor, store operations, and employee engagement. It also meant they couldn't drive the recruitment process in the way that a dedicated recruiter could. In turn, this contributed to high associate turnover and compounding issues that impacted the wider organization.

The company recognized this challenge and showed a strong interest in evolving practices to correct its course. This willingness to try new approaches and enlist Cielo's expertise helped the project get off the ground and start producing results rapidly.

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A growing footprint: Scaling for growth

Cielo's approach centered around providing scalable TA expertise to address the issue at the heart of RWS' turnover challenges: no dedicated TA function for retail.

RWS gained end-to-end support, with Cielo handling everything from analysis of the local talent market to initial interview, through to the candidate background screen process. This included support functions like reporting and dashboard analytics to give leadership a wide-angle lens of happenings in their regions, without overwhelming with day-to-day management and monitoring.

Cielo helped optimize the store managers' time and improved efficiency leading to an increase in hiring rates and more time for managers to focus on their business-critical sales and employee engagement. The RPO solution built for RWS filled several hundred retail positions, playing a significant role in powering the organization's growth.



Tailored fit: A customized approach to support a unique brand

RWS has a unique retail environment, with a specially educated fit specialists, to reflect the unique consumer needs for purposeful footwear. Finding talent with the necessary qualities for this requires in-depth screening at the onset of the hiring process – something far too time-consuming for store managers to handle alone.

This challenge – specific to RWS – and the absence of a dedicated internal retail TA team, played a big part in the company's choice to partner with Cielo.

The collaboration gave RWS access to Cielo's extensive expertise and global TA infrastructure. Together, they custom-built a team around the requirement of a heavy screening phase prior to manager engagement and equipped it with the necessary resources to find niche, specialized talent quickly.

The team also prioritized developing the ability to indirectly source candidates in hard-to-fill markets, reaching candidates who were previously unaware of the brand but possessed either direct experience in the industry or strong transferable skills. This not only filled the demand for talent, but also helped to prepare RWS for emerging skills gaps and the future of hiring.

Prior to the RPO solution, RWS' managers simply didn't have the time, tools, or training to conduct this level of in-depth talent acquisition. With the new Cielo-driven approach, 51% of hires came from indirect sources, helping RWS reach into previously untapped talent pools.

The partnership is an ongoing success, with Cielo supporting hiring for all retail positions across corporate- owned stores. Future scope involves harmonizing the recruitment process and continuing to help RWS earn the best retail talent to build on its long-standing legacy.

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