

## **Talk CNY S1Q1**

Andrew Fish 0:06

Welcome to a special expert mini series for CenterState CEOs podcast Talk CNY, presented by NBT Bank. In this series, we'll feature experts from across Central New York and beyond to dig into our memberships' most requested topics. You'll also hear stories of successful collaborations between a few of our long standing members and CenterState CEO that could inspire your next big move.

Kate Hammer 0:25

Take a moment right now to subscribe and your listening app or reminders every other Wednesday for our main podcast series. And be sure to catch the rest of the expert mini series as well.

Kate Hammer 0:37

Today we are joined by CenterState CEO member Susan Crossett, CEO and owner of CPS Recruitment, CPS Recruitment delivers customized recruiting solutions and staffing services to businesses throughout the Northeast. Susan is a well known civic leader in CNY and currently serves as treasurer on the Board of Directors of CenterState CEO. Today Susan will share with us her expertise around talent attraction, and what companies can do to find the people they need and an ever tightening labor market.

Andrew Fish 1:07

I'm Andrew Fish, Senior Vice President of Member and Business Experience at CenterState CEO.

Kate Hammer 1:13

I'm Kate Hammer, business coach and member CenterState CEO. We are your hosts for Talk CNY.

Andrew Fish 1:19

Susan, thank you so much for joining us today. Really delighted to have you and look forward to the conversation.

Susan Crossett 1:23

Thank you. I'm excited to be here.

Kate Hammer 1:25

Yeah. Can you tell us a little bit about what you do and what CPS Recruitment does?

Susan Crossett 1:31

Ah well, so CPS Recruitment has been in business for 34 years in Central New York. I bought the company in January of 2020. So my timing was perfect.

Andrew Fish 1:41

Yeah, absolutely!

Susan Crossett 1:43

But what we do is we help our clients find talent, whether it's on a professional level or direct hire, long term contract or temporary needs. So we have been established in this community, as I said, for a long time. We specialize in areas of on the direct hires IT technology, accounting, C suite things, typical things for administration, whether its supply chain, that sort of thing. On the temporary side, we also find we really specialize in finding talent for call centers, light industrial and warehouses. So we just opened an office in Buffalo, Rochester, we are in New Hartford. And of course, we're here. And then we also operate in six other states.

Andrew Fish 2:29

Fantastic.

Kate Hammer 2:30

And thank goodness,

Andrew Fish 2:30

Right?

Kate Hammer 2:31

Because, wow, the demand.

Andrew Fish 2:32

It's unusual right now, isn't it?

Susan Crossett 2:34

It's exceedingly unusual. But if you take a step back and look at some of the data that we've been studying, in the last couple of years, we've had a couple of things. 3 million people retired more than ever before. So that's above and beyond the normal retirement numbers. We have very, very low immigration rates. And that's always been an opportunity for us to have growth and people filling the jobs that we are currently not filling. And we have low birth rates. So we're in this-

Andrew Fish 3:08

perfect storm

Susan Crossett 3:09

- bubble here where we have many, many more jobs open than people to fill them.

Andrew Fish 3:15

That's nationally right?

Susan Crossett 3:16

I mean, it's nationally, it's not just here, but we feel the effects of it here is as any other place does.

Andrew Fish 3:23

Well, in particularly now is we're starting to move into a season of growth here, that makes it even more challenging. So you know, you're very familiar with the Good Life CNY initiative that we've worked on. And CPS Recruitment is a partner in that initiative. I checked the job board before we got on- 5,500 openings on the job board right now.

Susan Crossett 3:41

Isn't it exciting? It is exciting, but it's also very challenging, right- So one of the things that we help our clients do is figure out a number of things- are they're paying the right salary for the position that's required. Salaries have gone up. Actually, the statistics I looked at yesterday, 76% of our clients nationwide in our industry have raised their salaries. And that's in recognition of everybody's, you know, looking for the same talent pool. And wages go up because of that. Then, so we help our clients figure out what's the right salary range for the particular job? What are other companies paying? What is the availability of that job? Can you look at different requirements? For instance, you know, "well, you need a four year degree and 10 years of experience to do this particular task." Do you really, do you really? I mean, think about it. If there's an opportunity to train someone who has the aptitude and the attitude. Isn't that so much better? Because then you can say this is how we like it to do the business, your work. So, those are some of the things we work on.

Andrew Fish 4:50

Excellent. You had mentioned the evaluation of the salary. Right? And I think you coming into this work in January of 12 came back to this work-

Susan Crossett 4:59

I did. I did.

Andrew Fish 5:00

You started out in staffing? And some of those things haven't changed. But one of the things that has, I think, is that, you know, some of those industries that you mentioned, people aren't just competing with the company down the street on these jobs anymore, are they talking about remote work possibilities.

Susan Crossett 5:17

Huge remote work possibilities. So in fact, one of our clients that I was talking to this morning, we just staffed up a call center rep for him. And they're in Fort Lauderdale. So it doesn't really matter. Sure, if it's a remote job, the thing you lose, though, is the culture. Yeah. So you have to be very mindful of how do you build a culture with remote people all over the country. And that's a big focus right now to make sure that you've got a welcoming open culture that you've got opportunities for people to grow, because when you don't see someone in there out of sight, you just don't think about them as a possibility for growth, and maybe the next, Andrew. So that's really important culture and how you address it. Everyone wants to understand what your culture is, what's your mission? What are you about? Even if you make widgets? Are you making the best possible widgets you possibly can? What are you giving back to the community, that people have opportunities for training? Training is really a big hot button right? Now. They want to know that you're going to invest in them as they grow their careers. Sure. So that's, that's a neat thing is I'm starting to hear you pull on some threads about what companies should be doing to make themselves to make themselves more attractive apart. Yeah. set them apart from everybody else. Some of the other things that we help people figure out is, you know, just because you've got three shifts, for instance, not everybody can be remote. And we recognize that-

Andrew Fish 6:47

Sure- you mentioned warehousing,

Susan Crossett 6:49

Warehousing, difficult place to do that. But do you have to start at eight o'clock and end at five? Could you do something that matches the bus schedule?

Kate Hammer 6:58

Whoa, preach? Yes.

Susan Crossett 7:00

Right? Because not everyone has a car, lot of people that want to work don't have the ability to work because of transportation. So that's a big challenge. Can you do four day workweeks? That's becoming a very attractive opportunity for people, maybe it's even 35 hours a week, four days a week, right? There's been studies and I know this is really hard

for some of us who are, you know, you got to put your 40s in kind of people- 40 hours in. But the latest study shows that 32 hours, 4 days a week gets you more productivity than a traditional five day, 40 hour week.

Andrew Fish 7:39

Wow. That's significant.

Susan Crossett 7:41

Nobody would have thought that. But you know, you get rid of the extra chitchat., long lunch, you know, you've got people, "Well, I'm only here for days, let me get my job done".

Andrew Fish 7:50

Right. That makes a difference.

Kate Hammer 7:52

We have that tendency to fill the amount of time that we have with whatever we're doing. So pace.

Susan Crossett 7:58

That's a great point. That is a really good point. Yeah.

Kate Hammer 8:01

I love that stat. I love that it's something real. It's not theoretical, it's real, And so it needs consideration. And I love that, like, you can present that very real, tangible information to your clients to help them make better decisions.

Susan Crossett 8:13

We spend a lot, we spend some time on that. And then, you know, people don't know what particular jobs are. So one of the things that we've suggested is, take a video of your plant floor, what does it look like? Talk to some of the people on it. It doesn't have to be, you know, a high level production, it's just gives you a sense of the company, what you do, what's it look like to work there? You know, today's foundry doesn't look like yesterday's.

Andrew Fish 8:39

Certainly not.

Susan Crossett 8:40

If people really don't get exposure to what looks like in a factory, right? Unless you watch the Discovery Channel.

Andrew Fish 8:47

So a lot of the things that you're talking about here, and I just want to make sure folks know. I want to make sure folks know that in our second March episode of Talk CNY we had our Senior Vice President of Inclusive Growth, Dominic Robinson and our VP of Workforce Innovation, Aimee Durfee on and they talked about a lot of these things right about how companies need to be thinking differently about this, how they need to be, you know, thinking about shifts differently, how they need to be understanding that what people think about when they hear manufacturing, isn't there. So I encourage folks to go listen to that. But I'm really excited to talking to you because you're in the trenches with these companies, too. And you're seeing it and you're actively working with them on it.

Susan Crossett 9:21

And the successful companies are doing that. Yeah, it really makes a big difference. You know, yeah, it's not all about the pay. It's it's about a whole host of things, especially people coming into the market today, you know, just out of school or just out of college. What are they looking for? They want meaningful work. Even if it is building a widget, it's okay, but what else is there? You know, what's the culture like? What what are my opportunities?

Andrew Fish 9:47

We also have a great resource on the resource library for Click that we worked on with you about Gen Z workforce.

Susan Crossett 9:54

Yes, yeah.

Andrew Fish 9:54

And some of the some of the opportunities that are presented with working with Gen Z so encourage people to go check that out, too.

Kate Hammer 10:00

Ooo. Can we just hear like, one? Do you remember one?

Andrew Fish 10:03

One of the one of the things, and the Gen Z workforce and the opportunities there?

Kate Hammer 10:07

Yeah!

Susan Crossett 10:08

So, I think that they come with a different set of social obligations, they feel very connected to wanting to do the right thing. So if you've got a program where you, you know, reward, or encourage employees to do volunteerism, that group is going to do it. That's gonna make, and that makes a difference for your company. You know, your vendors and your customers want to know, what do you do? It's not just the people working for you. Yeah, your customers want to know, how are you giving back? So, that's a great opportunity with the Gen Zs. We can't let the USA Today report go unmentioned-

Andrew Fish 10:45

Right?

Susan Crossett 10:45

We can't.

Andrew Fish 10:45

I love it so much. So, what Susan's referring to is that that recently, Syracuse was named as the seventh best city, seventh highest city for in-migration of Gen Z population, which means when you take those leaving, and those coming in Syracuse was the seventh. And what's amazing is that you look at the six in front of us and it's like Atlanta and DC and Nashville. It's large metros, and here's Syracuse, sitting at number seven, which is fantastic, and hopefully will help us as we start thinking about that tightening labor market and bringing folks in.

Susan Crossett 11:19

Attracting people to Central New York.

Andrew Fish 11:20

Yes.

Susan Crossett 11:21

We've worked on that through The Good Life for a couple of years now. But I think, you know, recognizing small cities have a lot to offer. We have everything you could possibly want. We have theater, we have parks, we have great waterways, we have wonderful skiing, especially this last week.

Andrew Fish 11:37

Yeah, right?

Susan Crossett 11:41

But you know, the seasons are really important. And it gives you a great outdoor life because of that. So and I think people are looking for that. It takes us 20 minutes to get anywhere, anywhere, cost of housing is really pretty reasonable. school systems are great. We have a lot to offer.

Andrew Fish 11:58

For sure.

Kate Hammer 11:59

20 minutes to get anywhere! It's just enough time to listen to one of these episodes.

Andrew Fish 12:02

Absolutely, it's a good plug.

Kate Hammer 12:04

What are some of the red flags that you see, when you're starting to work with a client and you're starting to get understanding of what they've been doing that hasn't been working for them.

Susan Crossett 12:14

So, they start with a job description that is this long. So they really have a-

Kate Hammer 12:23

So very long?

Susan Crossett 12:24

Very long, with another really long list of you must have these qualifications. I think that's a huge red flag, because you're not going to find that person. Today, it's just impossible. And you're going to if you are, you're going to steal from one of your competitors, which maybe that's what they want to do. But we don't do that. So it's really, really defining exactly what the job is, and what do you really need to help get that job done. So putting, putting the job description in a different way, you know, really trying to sell the company about, here's why it's a great place to work. So if they come in, and say "this is what we've always paid, we're not going to go any higher," you know, someone willing to put in that extra effort for here's what the job does. And yes, there's room for growth, maybe you do have a starting salary that's closer to the minimum wage, but you're willing to say "after six months, you know, we're gonna give you an opportunity to prove yourself and get more." Hey, so yeah, it's the, it's the rigidness about a job description is probably the biggest red flag.

Andrew Fish 13:29



So just had a thought about that. And is it? Is it thinking more about the attributes somebody has versus the activities they've undertaken?

Susan Crossett 13:38

Yes. And that's one of the things that we can help you with. If you go and list your job on Indeed, you're going to get whatever the AI sends you. So it's picking out the words that match the words in your job description, you're not going to get someone to really filter through and say, Okay, look at what this person's done. This could be easily transferred to this other business. Sure. I mean, I think that's where you have the advantage when you're working with a talented pool of recruiters like at my company, they've got decades in some cases of experience, and they kind of really configure out which person might be best suited. So they use those sources in the beginning to kind of get a pool, yes. But they also take the time to look through and say, "Okay, this candidate sounds like sure, they might have the attributes that they're looking for." And then it's up to us to say to the candidate, "here's why this company is good", and then say to the company, "that's why this person is worth looking at" and trying to make that match.

Andrew Fish 14:43

Personal experience- I've done a lot of hiring and I know that the ability to take the time and look at those resumes and really understand, okay, what have they done and is that transferable makes a huge difference and having if you're doing that at scale, I mean, when I'm hiring one person at a time, that's one thing but if you're a company looking at 10 to 15 hires, having a company that can come in and do that for you is really helpful.

Kate Hammer 15:03

Oh, yeah, incredibly time consuming. Yeah.

Susan Crossett 15:06

Well, and that's where we're really we really consider ourselves partners with our clients. So we're not going to say, Okay, you need 100 people to work in a call center, we're going to send you the first 150 resumes that we come across. That's not how we work. I mean, other people do, that's okay, that's filling an order. Sure. We think it's better if we can say, do you need this 100? And can you can you switch it around? Do you need it really being more of a partner in figuring out what their needs are first and then working towards helping them fill their, their open positions?

Andrew Fish 15:39

It's great. So, as you think about, we've talked a lot about both red flags and challenges that companies put themselves in, self inflicted wounds, right? We've talked about some of the best practices or things that people should be considering. As we are about to experience

some really significant growth that we've talked about in this region, is there anything else that companies should be thinking about to differentiate themselves besides pay, besides culture, you know, is there any other aspect of what they should be thinking about differently?

Susan Crossett 16:08

I think a lot of companies sporadically make, make relationships with colleges, it's kind of when you have the need. So, I think that you could start to have a longer term relationship with the colleges that are producing the candidates that you're seeking. So, for instance, you might have a great relationship with LeMoyne. But you only go there every three or four years, when you need someone. You should be talking to the students there, and the faculty about what your company does on a regular basis, bring them in for tours, bring them into meet some of the people that work there, you know, this is what we're about, and give them an opportunity to look at it and think about it as they're choosing their courses. You know, what, what are they thinking might fit for a job at XYZ company, you know, those those kinds of long term forward thinking relationships are going to really pay off, especially when we're bringing a lot of new companies in, and we're going to be competing for a lot of talent.

Andrew Fish 17:06

Yeah.

Susan Crossett 17:06

More so than we already are.

Andrew Fish 17:08

And the colleges are hungry for that, right? I mean, their job is to find placements for their graduates. And so the more relationships they can develop with local companies, the better off.

Susan Crossett 17:16

Yeah, and they also are looking for, what is my product need to look like?

Andrew Fish 17:20

Yeah,.

Susan Crossett 17:21

Obviously, the students are a product, they wouldn't want to be called that. But are we producing all kinds of candidates that they need for today's jobs? And that's the other thing

you can really spend some time. I know, OCC is great at this, developing programs for employers that are going to help them. For instance, the one they did with -.

Andrew Fish 17:40

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, they definitely put that together and say, Hey, we know that you're looking for the certified nurses assistants, and we're gonna make this program work. So it's exciting.

Kate Hammer 17:48

It is exciting.

Susan Crossett 17:49

It's really exciting to be in Central New York right now. I mean, to feel the difference of everybody's attitude. It's, it's awesome.

Andrew Fish 17:59

It's palpable.

Susan Crossett 17:59

It is it.

Andrew Fish 18:00

Yeah.

Susan Crossett 18:00

It really is.

Andrew Fish 18:01

Well, Susan, you're absolutely right. It is an amazing time to be here. I love the enthusiasm you bring. And I think, you know, we've got a lot of great information that our members can listen to and some great resources even beyond that we've worked collaboratively with you on to build and so thank you so much for your time and your partnership.

Andrew Fish 18:18

I'm so happy to do this. Thank you.

Kate Hammer 18:19

Yeah, thanks for being here.

Susan Crossett 18:20

It's fun.

Andrew Fish 18:21

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