

# COATING

## INSIGHTS



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**General Manager – Hentzen Coatings – Part II**

Interview by Connor | Caitlin Talent Solutions



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**At the beginning of 2019, the Managing Partners of Connor | Caitlin sat down with Kirk Pigatto, General Manager of Hentzen Coatings for a discussion on the current talent issues facing the industry and what Hentzen is doing to keep people at the forefront of their success. This is the conclusion of our two-part industry insight series.**

## Impact on the Coatings Industry

In our first issue, the partners of Connor|Caitlin discussed with Kirk the perceived stagnation of organic growth within our industry and how many companies, including Hentzen, have addressed this. Kirk gave us a peek into Hentzen’s secret sauce surrounding talent, the premium they place on technical competencies with the balance of cultural fit in their effort to grow their workforce. Hentzen is not shy about empowerment and creating an environment that encourages innovation as a major factor in the success of the company. Finally, Kirk highlighted some of the challenges and solutions that face our industry and the thoughtfulness that Hentzen takes to develop their people especially with the anticipated exodus of leaders due to retirement and what might some view as a shallow pipeline of incoming ‘A’ players, acknowledging that great companies like Hentzen take much of the burden towards career mapping and development for their associates “in-house” to continue to create the best possible team.

**“Many companies have also identified a skill gap in the next generation of workers entering the coatings industry. Critical thinking,**

**problem solving, and adaptability to change are just some of the areas we have heard that might need refinement,” Connor | Caitlin pointed out. “Do you see these challenges for the next level of leaders? If so, what does Hentzen do to make sure that critical skills are developed and toned to meet the demands of the business?”**

**“Culture empowers employees to be a difference maker.”**

“I’ve been a part of many industry roundtable discussions highlighting this very topic,” Kirk reflected. “While Hentzen is not immune to these challenges, I must say I’ve been extremely impressed with some of the younger talent we have here. We discussed Hentzen’s culture earlier in the interview, and I believe our culture empowers the employees to be a difference maker. I believe the younger generation employees have largely bought into the idea that they can make a difference. So, to answer your question, I haven’t really bought into those stereotypes to be quite honest with you. There are certainly some very talented and ambitious people across all generations.”

**A** ccording to the 2018 MRI Network Performance Management Study, nearly 80% of the employers surveyed agree or strongly agree that finding Quality industry-experienced talent is more difficult than ever, and that their companies are more likely to hire people who have transferable skills, but lack industry experience.

**80%**  
**EMPLOYERS SURVEYED AGREE**

- ✓ **Keep An Open Mind**
- ✓ **Expand Your Talent Pool**
- ✓ **Offer Sign-On Perks That Attract Candidates**

“I did see on your website that Hentzen developed a robust internship program. Is that part of the strategy to attract younger generations to the coatings industry?” Connor | Caitlin asked.

“Yes,” Kirk confirmed. “Our internship program has grown over the last couple of years. We certainly view it as an opportunity to attract younger talent, but we also view it as an employee outreach and benefit program. Being a family-owned company with strong family values, we often seek the young family members of our employees to fill those intern positions. In some cases, we have been able to pull employees from other networks and that’s been highly successful for us. But there’s definitely a sense of pride in being able to share the Hentzen experience with younger family members.”

**“Expansion of the talent pool is something that many companies are exploring beyond the traditional schools and universities they have grown accustomed to recruiting from,” Connor | Caitlin**

**pointed out. “What has Hentzen done to grow the pool of potential candidates?”**

“I can’t say that we’ve necessarily adopted any unconventional methods. We still find value in our alignment with some specific universities. However, with the limited pool of qualified candidates, we are willing to consider candidates with varying or similar backgrounds to the coatings field, perhaps not as specific to prior coatings experience. **Culture and character**, which also plays a role in our recruiting process, **are of high importance to us.**”

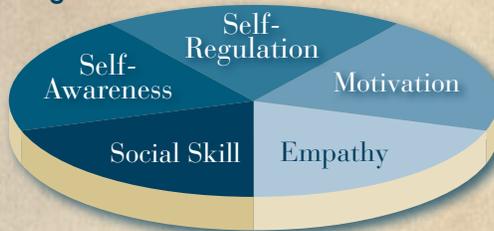
**Trade schools and universities can play an impact on developing future talent for the coatings industry or for someone interested in entering the coatings field. Out of the many technical schools for Chemistry, only a small handful focus on developing potential talent in the coatings industry on the commercial side, the sales side, or the general management side. Expanding such offerings to other schools would be beneficial to the industry. When asked about how to make this possible, Kirk offered advice to those institutions.**

**“The most successful formulators in the industry possess the ability to troubleshoot and solve problems.”**

“I would encourage them to align with coatings companies to provide the students as much exposure to the industry as possible. I would also encourage them to maintain a curriculum that emphasizes problem solving. In my experience, the most successful formulators in the industry possess the ability to troubleshoot and solve problems. I think that’s probably the number one focus that I would offer to them.”

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Daniel Goleman wrote in the Harvard Business Review article “What makes a leader” that the most effective leaders have a high degree of emotional intelligence.



## 1. SELF-AWARENESS

The ability to accurately recognize one’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as one’s emotions and what drives them.

## 2. SELF-REGULATION

The capacity to reflect on and to react rationally to situations rather than jump into action based entirely on one’s emotions.

## 3. MOTIVATION

A deep understanding of one’s motivations and its sources.

## 4. EMPATHY

An awareness of others’ feelings and the ability to take them into account in interactions.

## 5. SOCIAL SKILL

The ability to relate and to find common ground with a wide range of people, enabling you to build networks and alliances inside and outside your organization.

**Mike Muczyk at Connor | Caitlin recalled a prior talk with Kirk on the Hentzen culture and invited him to share more. “A while back,” Mike stated, “you and I were taking a stroll through the Milwaukee facilities and we had a conversation about the employment culture at Hentzen and how it originates from the Hentzen family. We’ve touched on that already. Employment culture—I’ll use the term, “employer choice”—seemed an important part of the hiring/retention strategy. Can you elaborate on how Hentzen keeps this at the forefront of their**

**mission? Is there anything else that you can add about the importance of the Hentzen culture to retain the talent that you have?”**

“Hentzen keeps things simple,” Kirk stated. “Our customers are truly at the center of our universe and every employee is working towards a common goal. There’s also a tremendous amount of trust granted to each employee to do their job. As a result, I believe our employees are empowered to do their job and deliver results.”

**“Is it fair to say that’s what you expect out of your leaders in your organization when it comes to hiring, retaining, and developing talent? Do you give them a lot of leeway to make those decisions?” Connor Caitlin asked.**

“We do. As I mentioned, we empower our employees at all levels of the organization. But it’s certainly engrained in our managers to value character equal to competency. When it comes to hiring, again, this is a critical component of maintaining our culture and we take that very seriously. Our leaders are expected to set expectations, communicate, and listen with a level of empathy—to be fully engaged with their teams. Again, we consider ourselves a large family, so our value system and principles of management are straightforward as it relates to family.”

**Connor | Caitlin asked, “If you think about growth from that vantage point...trust, character, family...how do you maintain or emphasize that when you have plans for expansion? It’s easy to do when you have 50 people, but it’s a lot harder to do when you have 300 or 3,000 employees. How do you make that a priority for your leaders?”**

# 5 TOP TIPS TO PROACTIVELY RETAIN TALENT

## 1. ENSURE THE FUNDAMENTALS STACK UP

Compensation benchmarks, long-term incentives and benefits.

## 2. FOCUS ON CULTURE AND VALUES

Build a team of like-minded people with a strong culture and shared values.

## 3. TRACK VENERABLE EMPLOYEES

Keep your ear to the ground to spot high potentials that may be susceptible to poaching.

## 4. FOSTER MENTORING TO UNCOVER PROBLEMS

Provide a regular forum for key personnel to vent frustrations.

## 5. SUCCESSION PLANNING AND PIPELINING

Its inevitable that key talent will leave at some point, so be prepared.



“Good questions. At the risk of sounding redundant, it all comes back to communication and people. The type of environment we set for our team is critical. It certainly does become harder to manage as the company scale increases. But I can honestly say that where we are today in terms of how Hentzen treats its employees, the way we communicate, we haven’t really varied from what’s worked for us. With where we are in the industry, it’s certainly more of a challenge every day. But we have a lot of touchpoints, a lot of teambuilding activities that the company participates in. Whether it be company picnics or the Christmas party, the way we treat our employees at that time and the feeling they get. Those are all just critical components to maintaining culture.”

**“What challenges does Hentzen foresee in the coatings industry for 2019 and beyond? What does Hentzen plan to do to mitigate these challenges?”**

“For starters, our industry is facing challenges not seen since 2011 or 2012. Supply shortages, rising costs, transportation shortages and many other challenges... I think there are challenges in any business in our current economy. As discussed earlier, I believe consolidation will continue. This alone necessitates the need for us to continuously innovate and provide value and solutions to our customers. We also continue to escalate our strategic sourcing initiatives to help drive these innovations and stabilize our supply chain. Of course, it goes without saying that the investment and development in our people is the most critical part of our future success. I don’t think any business can survive without great people at all levels of the organization.”

**“Last question...  
What keeps you up at night?”**

“I’m a pretty sound sleeper,” Kirk chuckled, “but for me, a growing company like Hentzen brings on new challenges every day. Recruiting and retention of our talent pool is at the top of the list. Also, as we grow and make investments in people and infrastructure, it’s inherent that Hentzen maintains focus on our customers in the core principles that have earned us their trust and loyalty. It’s really an exciting time. So, any restless nights are generally driven by so-called good problems.” ■

# UP SKILLING

According to Korn Ferry Survey, nearly two-thirds (61%) of the talent professionals said they invest more in Upskilling existing talent than recruiting externally, and nearly half (47%) said they have formal retraining programs for workers whose jobs have evolved.

# 61%

Invest in Upskilling existing talent than recruiting externally.

# 47%

Said they have formal retraining programs for evolving jobs.

## About Hentzen Coatings, Inc.

Headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, since 1923 Hentzen has specialized in the development, engineering and manufacturing of liquid and powder coatings, primarily for aerospace, military and general industrial (GI) applications. Hentzen Coatings are custom engineered to perform in extreme conditions and are continually improved to meet exacting customer and exceed market-driven specifications. Hentzen stock and custom products are manufactured in its state-of-the-art laboratory and testing facilities in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Batavia, Illinois, Greenville, South Carolina, and Clearwater, Florida.

## About Connor | Caitlin

Connor | Caitlin was founded on the principle that great business integrates a world-class People Strategy into its core philosophies. Our team delivers Talent, Leadership and Human Capital solutions that meet the ever-changing dynamics of your business.

**At Connor | Caitlin** we understand distinction in talent is at the core of your business advantage. What you do different from the competition is the lifeblood of your company.

**Our success** is paramount in the Talent we help you source, hire and develop. It's with this in mind that our relationship-driven partnership lasts far beyond the assignment and fee, in fact our goal is not to replace your Recruitment, Leadership Development and Human Capital efforts, but to speed-up and grow your talent initiatives with our best-in-class techniques dedicated to locating and placing Difference Makers with you. We pride ourselves on providing an exceptional level of service to every client and candidate.

**We believe** – The greatest products, the best service and the most complex business problems are solved through people. We will help you find, develop and lead that Talent.

**Contact us for all your talent solutions:**

**Connor | Caitlin**  
44 Public Square #200  
Medina, Ohio 44256  
**330.619.4450**  
**info@connorcaitlin.com**

Connor|Caitlin is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

## Endnotes

Hunt Scanlon-  
article 2018 The Prevalence of Talent Raids Amongst US Corporations and the Implications for Talent Retention Strategies (M. Oppenheimer and S. Scanlon)

Korn Ferry-  
article 2019 Companies hiring on the Basis of Skills Rather than Open Positions

Harvard Business Review-  
article 2004 What Makes a Leader (D. Goleman)

MRI Publications:-  
November 2018 MRINetwork Performance Management Study

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