

It is not just you; it is getting harder to find talent.



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Adaptable, creative, talented people are getting harder and harder to find

I'm doing a recruitment for a fast-growing, boutique consulting firm. Like many small firms, the entrepreneur owner is looking for a creative, self starting individual who can do a number of things. Smaller, entrepreneurial organizations often bring a couple of roles together to make up a job. Finding people who have the skill and personality mix to do more than one role is difficult. Recruiting for a 'one' role job in a well-established organization is much more straight forward.

We have reposted the role three times on Indeed and LinkedIn. Each time, we altered the title and the key words slightly, looking to attract the right candidates. But, other than the usual slurry of irrelevant applications, we had a tough time finding really great final candidates. The entrepreneur owner 'upped' the compensation package, adding a really generous results based bonus component. That did not make a difference. We still got flooded with inappropriate resumes – that is, resume spam. Unfortunately, the Easy Apply Buttons on these posting sites mean that people don't even need to read the posting before they hit the apply button.

Why did this happen? There are two main reasons.

Why? The first has to do with the employer

His sense of what he's looking for has become more and more specific as he has interviewed candidates. The culture fit profile I now have is very different from the one with which we started. My client's sense of just what **kind of personality** he is looking has become clearer and clearer as we have moved through candidates who did fit the performance aspects of the role.

My recruiting assignment has moved from 'find me a person with this talent' to "find me a person who has this talent but who more importantly, find me a person who fits my inner sense of who I want - which oh by the way I'm only getting clear on as I see candidates - of the type of person / personality I want in this job'.

Such a shift in the implicit recruiting profile is not unusual during a recruitment. Hiring managers often don't really develop a clear sense of who they actually want until they start to see candidates.

Why? The second has to do with the even more critical change in the nature of talent pool.

The competition for talent is growing exponentially. At the same time, the number of people making up the talent pool is decreasing.

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At the highest level, the talent pool breaks into two sub-sets;

- ‘those who are currently looking’.
- ‘those who are currently employed’.

Who makes up the ‘those who are currently looking’ sub-pool?

The available individuals in the ‘**those who are looking**’ sub-set breaks down further into 5 sub-groups.

- 1) **Enthusiastic recent graduates** with a little experience who are anxious to find some job.
- 2) **Younger professionals** with some experience who are now **looking for jobs with income and benefit stability as they take on the challenge of raising children.**
- 3) **Recent immigrants** who may have lots of experience, have gained most of it in **working cultures very different from our own.**
- 4) **Retirement age professionals** who for economic or personal reasons want to remain in the work force.

Just as an aside.

Very few employers and recruiters mine this part of the available talent pool group seriously. Younger recruiters and hiring managers are psychologically unable to be objective about people who remind them of their parents and grandparents.

- 5) **Recently unemployed individuals** in any of these groups who have lost their current employment (or contract engagement) because:
 - Their job or contract disappeared because of employer economics or other reason (e.g. contract work at an end).
 - They had performance or personality “fit with their boss” issues.

Who makes up the ‘those who are currently employed’ sub-pool?

- 1) Those **currently content** with their work situation and therefore **not open to offers of new positions.**
- 2) Those **dissatisfied** with their current work situation and therefore **open to enticement** to a new situation. They are dissatisfied because:

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- They sense their **economic security is at risk** because of economic downsizing or their employer's poor business prospects or because their role is coming to an end.
- Their job just does not have the **inherent challenge** or future career possibility they want.
- Their **immediate working relationship with their current 'boss'** is poor for whatever reason.

One of the first things a recruiter needs to determine about a potential candidate is where this person fits in these sub-pools. Accurately assessing this is essential to the way the recruiter goes about assessing the performance fit of the person. The recruiter also needs to accurately place a potential candidate, in order to be able first sell the candidate on the possibility, and then brief the hiring manager about how to motivate the candidate to be interested in the posting.

Many executives' recruiting mindset still basks in the 'glow' of recruiting during the baby-boom era

My entrepreneur owner could not get past the stereotype created by this past demographic reality. He basically believed that people 'were lucky' that he was offering them this great opportunity. But those days are over. Then, the sheer number of baby boomers in the workforce made recruiting relatively simple. Just post, and resumes will come to you in numbers so large you need resume scanning software to cut down the numbers.

This mindset has lingered on in the last decade because of the 2008 2009 recession. Many baby boomers did not leave the workforce due to the economic impact of that recession. **They now are.**

The result is one simple inevitable conclusion – **Finding the talent you need to grow your business is no longer easy and will get tougher.**

How do you respond to this as a leader seeking to drive the future?

You need to align your talent development and acquisition strategy with your business growth strategy, if you want to succeed at the growth. Here are the options you need to consider at part of your talent plan.

1. Growing talent internally.

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More than ever, if you are a growing firm you need to add a talent development acquisition component to your strategic thinking. That is easier said than done. Most human resource professionals have not had to think strategically for decades. More on this in a subsequent blog.

2. Choose your recruiting tactics carefully.

You can recruit talent in 1 of 2 ways.

The first is a ‘post and have them come to you’ tactic. It’s worked for decades. If you have a well-established job, and there are lots of people with relevant skills looking for work in your immediate geographic talent pool, it will still work.

But if you’ve tried it, and it’s not sourcing the candidates you need you need to think very seriously about moving to the next recruiting tactic.

The second is a ‘find them and reach out to sell them on the opportunity’ tactic.

With resources like Linked In, and now Indeed’s resume search facility, you can find potential candidates much more easily than ever before. However, that’s only the first step. You need to reach out to them and find the ones who are interested in your opportunity. When you do find such an individual, they are likely to be currently employed.

Persuading people who are already employed is very different from assessing people who are looking for work. You will have an **employment brand** - an attraction approach which convinces them that they will be better off with you than in their current employment.

You need an employment brand as much as you need a company brand.

To do this, you need to do a number of things.

1) You need to create a first-rate ‘work with us’ brand.

Your website needs to contain stories about the people who are currently working for you, and how they are benefiting from that work. You need to demonstrate the challenge they find in their jobs, the professional development they are undergoing, and the job satisfaction they have.

The only credible way to do this is by having them tell the stories, preferably in short video clips taken in their work environments.

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2) You need to compete economically.

With resources like Glassdoor and Indeed, you can rapidly research what people are currently paying for the kinds of jobs for which you are recruiting in your local area. Do the research and be prepared to pay at the top of that range to attract candidates who are already employed. The best candidates do this research using these resources. If you are not as aware as they are about compensation levels in your area, you will never attract them.

More importantly, introduce some flexibility into your compensation and benefit package. Give people some choices. Allow them to contribute to retirement plans which they directly own, either through matching contributions to RRSPs or another such mechanism. Create flexibility around their vacation choices.

3) Involve your best performers in recruiting this talent, and in onboarding it.

Once you find a few final candidates, get your 'best people' engaged in talking to them. People who are enthusiastic about what they are doing are going to be your best 'attract new talent' salespeople. Motivate your best folks, and train them, to be **recruiting ambassadors** for you.

Once you hire in a new person, get one of these recruiting ambassadors to act as a mentoring and 'make things happen' advisor to that new person for the first two months. The payoff in productivity and long term retention will more than make up the cost of doing this.

4) Make sure that your recruiters understand the difference between the 'post and have them come to you' and 'find them and persuade them to work for you' recruiting tactics.

Engage out-house recruiters who understand this difference. You need to have be sure that they will rapidly advise you to shift from a 'post' recruiting tactic if it is not working. An outreach tactic may cost more initially but will save you more in the long run once the new talent starts to perform.

If you have in-house recruiters, engage a recruiting consultant / trainer of recruiters who train your recruiters in the difference. Be aware that an outreach recruiting tactic is much more demanding on recruiter skill levels than a post recruiting tactic. Outreach recruiters needs to be salespeople and accurate predictors of 'future on-the-job performance'. They need to be able to place candidates in the correct talent sub-pool, so that they adapt their conversation with candidates to fit each type of candidate's needs. Many 'post recruiters' will have a great deal of difficulty making this skill upgrade shift.

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The Most Adaptable Will Succeed, the Most Rigid May Not

You can find the talent you need to grow in this current talent pool reality. But only if you are realistic about the new dynamics coming from these shifts.

You may get by with 'post the role' based recruiting if you are a well-established organization with well-defined roles.

But if you are a growing organization with rapidly evolving roles, the sooner you master 'reach out and convince them' recruiting, the more likely you will be to succeed in the competition for available talent.

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Surf to the web site to find out more about Performance Challenge Recruiting ...

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