

Recruiting is Becoming A “Sales” Job



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A Sea Change in the Talent Pool

In the last weeks, I have looked at endless resumes, Linked In profiles, and people’s social media presence. I have talked to many candidates, in all 5 of the generations, either over the phone, or over Internet based video conferencing. I have reached out to about a hundred candidates as part of the searches that I am doing for a fast-growing, boutique consulting firm.

There is a sea change happening in the way that these candidates respond to job opportunities. The implications of this change are profound.

The Baby Boomer Mindset Approach Behind Much of Today’s Recruiting

Many recruiters and hiring managers still have a recruiting mindset that developed during the baby boom era. Candidates were plentiful. Just post the job and the resumes flowed in. Once organizations began using Internet job boards as the main way to post jobs, resume scan also became the norm. So the Applicant Tracking System software used by most large companies selects out a manageable number of resumes from the flood based on how the words in the resumes match the keywords set up by the recruiter.

All of this change has largely been driven by the baby boom mindset about the nature of the talent pool. But the composition of the talent pool is changing dramatically. Although posting still produces piles of resumes, the number of great candidates in those resumes is steadily decreasing.

Recruiting for Well-Defined Jobs in Well-Established Organizations

Standard recruiting - searching for people to fill well-defined jobs in well-established organizations - still seems to more or less work using the on-line job posting and resume review recruiting approach.

The key to this type of recruiting is to find a short list of people who have done a similar or close-to-similar job before. Key word scanning algorithms work reasonably well at this. The software picks out a number of such candidates’ resumes. Recruiters then screen those candidates in either face to face or phone or Internet video conferencing interviews. Their primary concern is to ensure that ‘the resume equals the person.

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Once 5 to 7 relevant candidates are identified on the based of such resume review interviews, the resumes are passed onto the hiring manager. The hiring manager tells the recruiters who she or he wants to interview. In most cases, one of these people got the job.

When ‘Post and They will Come to You’ Recruiting Works

Because the new hire had done a similar job in the past, the new hire’s performance on-the-job generally is highly likely to be good enough. All it takes the new person to come up to at least an average level of performance was some time to learn the particular software which structures the work flow in his job. The new hire will also get to know the people with whom the new hire will interact at the same time.

Automated business software now defines he day-to-day flow of most operational level jobs in well-established organizations. Organizations have been investing in business automation software, designed to manage the flow of work from step to step and from person to person for over 50 years now. As well, in the last 20 years, this type of investment has also hit the manufacturing floor, with computer controlled machinery does similar things. Under these conditions, a ‘post and review resumes’ recruiting process can produce result hiring results.

Who Needs A More Dynamic Performance Based Recruiting Process

If you recruit for roles in

- rapidly changing,
- dramatically growing,
- or highly entrepreneurial,
- or problem-solving,
- or product-creating

organizations, this type of recruiting approach does not work. Accurately predicting future performance on-the-job takes more than ensuring that the candidate has done the job before. As well, good enough performance on-the-job is often not enough in these organizations. The work in these roles is far less structured than that of well-defined roles in well-established organizations.

One or more of the following abilities -

- to create structure or to define new processes,
- to solve problems in innovative ways that move beyond past solutions,
- to work with others under conditions of creative stress, conflict, and pressure,

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- to interact with client staff in ways that require listening to what is being said below the surface layer,

- is often the key to successful performance on-the-job on the part of candidates.

As well as past relevant experience, recruiters and hiring managers need to evaluate such needed aspects of a candidate’s personality and behavior. Most recruiters are simply not equipped, either by experience or training, to do this.

The ‘silver bullet vendors who offer on-line forms of psychological testing cannot really help recruiters with this. The correlations between the personality traits measured by such tools and actual behavior on-the-job is not well demonstrated one.

Recruiters as Recruiting Process Facilitators

The underlying reality is that “in-the-moment’ demonstrated performance on the part of a candidate is the only valid basis on which to predict an individual’s future performance on-the-job in such roles. Recruiters who evaluate candidates for in these organizations must ‘create’ opportunities for final candidates to demonstrate what they can do. The recruiters themselves are often not capable of evaluating this type of performance behavior accurately, since it often involves technical elements beyond the recruiter’s personal competencies.

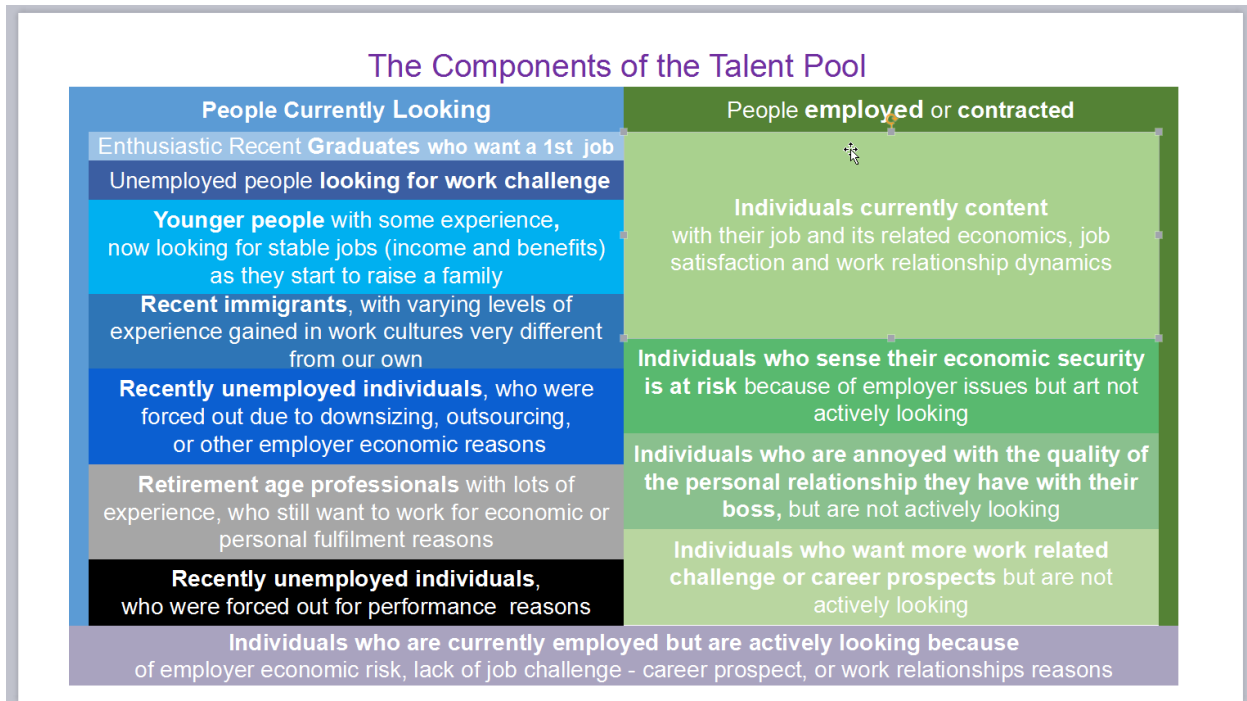
Recruiters for roles in these organizations need to ‘facilitate’ candidate evaluation processes which involve future peers and hiring managers. The recruiters must work with them to identify typical work assignments, role plays, and case assignments that these candidates can complete as part of the recruiting processes

The recruiters then must facilitate the interaction between the final candidates and the future potential peers and hiring managers, as the final candidates demonstrate what they will do once they get into the role. A recruiter working for one of these organizations needs interpersonal and analytical skills that exceed those of the recruiters who find candidates for well-defined jobs in well-established organizations.

The Change in Talent Pool will make All Recruiting More Difficult

Demographics tell us that the absolute number of people making up the talent pool is decreasing. In order to understand how this complicates the recruiting situation, we need a picture of the composition of the talent pool. Baby boomers are finally leaving it. Recent immigrants, although increasing, will not make up the raw numbers.

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Organization Leaders Need to Respond to The Changes First.

Organizational leaders are the people who must respond to these changes first. In the long run, every CEO, whether or a well-established or innovative organization, must ensure that the organization has the talent it needs to succeed.

The first thing that CEO must do is lead their organizations out of the Baby Boomer mindset to recruiting to the one based on the new talent pool reality depicted in the schematic above. The most important group that must drop this no longer mindset is hiring managers. They will not change unless the CEO and other C-level leaders do. Recruiters, no matter how aware they are of this changing talent pool dynamic, cannot do this by themselves. It is not really their job. It is the responsibility of an organizations' C-level leadership.

Recruiters As Job Opportunity and Recruiting Process Salespeople

Recruiters, even the ones in well-established, organizations will have “sell” their job opportunities first in future. They need to be experts at consultative selling. Once they identify a candidate through an “find them” search approach, or even if start to interact with a person responds to job post, they must first listen to that person. Their selling of the job must then take that person’s motivation into account. Only then will the recruit can put this job opportunity into the context of this specific candidate’s (i.e. the job opportunity buyer’s) need.

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A good recruiter will quickly identify into which talent sub-pool a potential candidate falls. That recruiter will begin by shaping communication with that candidate to take into account the typical motivations of such a candidate.

The recruiter will quickly move from the ‘typical’ to the ‘personal’, treating the candidate as a person to be sold on the opportunity, and on the steps that candidate needs to go through to participate in the evaluation process, whatever it might involve.

Organization Leaders Must Accept What They Need to Do to Compete for Talent

C-level leaders in all types of organization will need to take steps to change their approach to talent acquisition. Let’s make this personal. Assume you are such a leader, particularly if you are a leader of one of the following kinds of organization:

- rapidly changing,
- dramatically growing,
- or highly entrepreneurial,
- or problem-solving,
- or product-creating.

You will 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.

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.

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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.

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

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

4. Compete economically for candidates.

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.

5. Involve your best performers in recruiting new talent, and in on-boarding 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

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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” adviser 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.

6. Pick recruiters with the skills needed, or upgrade your requirers’ skills

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 the open role” recruiters will have a great deal of difficulty making this skill upgrade shift.

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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