

Attraction strategies for success

One of the most important goals for a successful company is to attract and retain quality employees. Many HR Managers are finding themselves in a position of constantly recruiting, even when they may not have a position available. Experienced recruiters have seen this market before – most recently just prior to the 2000 Olympic Games when quality candidates were in short supply. Rest assured that we will see this market again! The important thing for a recruiter to remember is that as soon as the market starts to change, so to, the recruiter should change the way he/she works. In this climate, quality candidates are like gold and should not be sitting on agency databases – they should be pro-actively marketed until placed if you don't have an immediate suitable opportunity.

I have heard many recruiters say to me in the past few months that advertising just isn't working for them anymore. No wonder when you consider the competition for quality people. To be successful in this marketplace, you must first of all start with a "fill-able" role. That is, when taking a job brief, it is your responsibility to educate your clients on how realistic their requirements are. Always start with the outcome of the role and work backwards, filling in the blanks and use your consulting skills to consult to your clients on how difficult it will be to find their "perfect" candidate. Having come from the accounting recruitment space, I have always been acutely aware of the shortage of quality candidates. Quite often I was only able to put forward one candidate for the role and on most occasions, that candidate was selected because I had spent time "educating" my clients on how many people they could expect to see for the role.

Other than advertising, how can you attract quality candidates so that you can fill your jobs? Firstly, you need to consider more passive methods of attraction. Where do your candidates hang out? What do they do in their spare time? How can you tap into their networks? For example, when I was an accounting recruiter working for a small

firm I approached the National Institute of Accountants in Sydney and offered my services to assist their part time students in changing roles. The NIA office organized for me to speak to the part time students on preparing a resume and interview tips. I gave up a couple of hours of my time and in return was able to tap into over 60 potential candidates – but not just those that were present for the lectures, the networks of those that were present as well. I enjoyed referrals for a long time after the events. The point being that to have access to quality people, you have to hang out with them. Join their professional bodies; attend their events and network, network and NETWORK.

If you rely on backpackers to make your living (that is, you run a temporary or contract desk) then get to know the hostels and who runs them. Don't just fax an advert and hope they do something with it – hand deliver it! Same goes if you rely on universities to supply your candidates, build relationships with those people that can help you tap into your candidate base.

I recently caught the Greyhound bus from Sydney to Melbourne and on arrival noticed the number of backpacker hostel representatives awaiting the arrival of the bus (it was 7.00am) to tout for business. If I wanted to access the backpacker market before anyone else, I would be waiting for that arrival of the bus as well!

The point is that if you keep doing the same thing, then nothing will change. Think about innovative ways to reach your candidate base. Don't just rely on advertising. Treat EVERY single candidate (whether you can help them nor not) with respect. It may sound very basic, but you would be surprised how long an individual remembers a bad experience (and tells anyone who will listen!). People look for little things, like returning phone calls promptly and judge you accordingly. Remember that if you want a long term career in this business then how you behave towards every single person creates your reputation. The recruitment mar-

ket, like the economy runs in cycles and if you want to be successful into the future, then you need to develop candidate attraction strategies that will work in any market.

In summary, consider the following attraction strategies and add to them depending on your business:

- Industry networking
- Join relevant professional bodies and attend their functions
- Trade shows – if not as a contributor, just attend and network
- Graduate schools, universities, TAFE Colleges
- General branding of your business
- E-mail campaigns to your candidate database
- In-direct headhunting
- Working your personal and family networks
- Backpacker hostels and magazines
- Ensure that every single interaction with every single candidate is positive

Finally, remember that without quality candidates to place, you won't have a business, so spend time brainstorming effective ways to reach your candidate base. ■



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