

Uncovering Talent Inside and Outside

You should constantly be looking for quality talent. Expecting the right person to quickly find you at the moment you need them—especially among a mountain of competing ads and opportunities—is a huge gamble. When positions open at your organization, you should already have a talent pipeline flowing with leads to tap. By continuously seeking or sourcing talent, you create a supply line of viable candidates allowing you to avoid long delays in filling your open positions. After all, open positions are extremely costly.

Grow Your Talent

Sourcing your talent pool should always begin with a review of the current talent within your own organization. If you evaluate, assess and re-review your current talent base regularly, you will avoid the knee-jerk reaction of placing an advertisement on Monster.com the second after your best employee turns in her two weeks' notice. There are huge benefits to hiring from within.

Internal candidates possess an understanding of your organization's culture,



mission and goals. Top that with the fact that opportunities for advancement and skill development are two key aspects of building job satisfaction with employees. In other words, if they know there is room for them to grow and advance within your organization, they'll be happier and stick with your company. But you must learn to assess their potential for advancement.

Who's ready for promotion? Who could soon be ready for promotion with a little training? A well-thought-out assessment process allows leaders and hiring teams to set aside emotions and preconceived notions, both good and bad, and hire from within based solely on a candidate's skill set and other qualifications. It also lets your employees know they were at least considered and properly evaluated before you went outside the company to fill the position. If you start looking outside for talent the minute you have a new position open, and overlook the relationships you have with current employees, loyalty drops... fast! When your in-house talent knows you are fair and balanced in your final selection, they are much more likely to respect and support the hiring decision.

The bottom line is that talent must be assessed on a person-by-person basis. Each prospect should be evaluated on their own individual merits, no matter where they are coming from. As a hiring super-

visor, manager or human resources person tasked with hiring responsibilities, you are the talent scout. It's ultimately your responsibility to always keep your eyes and mind wide open to talent.

To become a pro at talent scouting, you should maximize your time spent at activities, clubs and events by putting an extra focus on sourcing while you're there. There's a word for this active networking sourcing technique: narrowcasting.

The intention of narrowcasting is not necessarily to find someone with previous experience in a job or position or even someone who already has all of the knowledge and skills required, but rather to find someone who thinks and acts like those who are most successful in the respective job or position. For example, recruiters looking for sales professionals might look into populations that routinely exhibit enthusiasm and an ability to perform consistently under volatile conditions. Recruiters looking for nurses might evaluate interpersonal attributes such as risk avoidance or patience and tolerance for elementary school teachers. As competition for talent has increased, organizations have turned to narrowcasting to fill their ranks. Home Depot and GE have targeted former soldiers because of their discipline, while Walmart has emphasized hiring retirees because of their maturity and perceived genuineness. The best way to identify narrowcasting talent pools for skills and attributes specific to your needs is to approach individuals in your own organization who have the skill sets, work ethic, and personality traits that you want more of in your organization. Ask them, "How would I find you again?"

Make Networking a Breeze

Most of us are familiar with the global storehouse of knowledge and the ability to find it, sort it and manage it on the web. We even go online to fill our need



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for a sense of community. As a result, networking has emerged as a natural and powerful offshoot of the internet's evolution.

Social networking, in the past, meant going to the PTA, asking for referrals at church on Sunday, going to a rotary meeting or hanging out at your kid's sporting events or even at the country club. Today social networking is global in scope, can be very specialized, and continues to rapidly evolve. It's important to learn how to use social networking tools and websites as another source for prospects.

Below is a sample of social networking sites.

With review and frequent use, you'll figure out which ones are best for reaching the people that best fit your talent needs.

LinkedIn:

network through colleagues, classmates and clients.

Plaxo:

An online address book and social networking service that provides automatic updating of contact information.

Facebook:

Users can join networks organized by city, workplace, school, and region to connect and interact with others.

MySpace:

A social networking website with an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music and more.

Eons:

An online community for spirited Baby Boomers who want to explore their passions, keep in touch with friends, and connect with interesting people.

Twitter:

A social messaging utility for staying connected in real-time through text-based posts of up to 140 characters.

Although the internet is chock full of exciting networking opportunities, it's

important to remember that some of the best networking is still done face-to-face or over the phone. Social networking tools are no substitute for traditional networking and in-person communication.

There's no substitute for calling, or better yet, scheduling an appointment for lunch with someone whom you're trying to convince to interview with and/or join your organization.

Recruiters: Pros and Cons

The right talent is critical to the success of any organization. But in the world of search, talent is only half the story. The ability to identify talent also requires resources. Recruiters can play an invaluable role in helping you find, organize and manage sources of talent. Whether you use internal researchers and recruiters (within your HR department) or you outsource to the many available external search consultants who provide these services, it's important to understand how to partner productively.

Recruiters are an investment, not a transaction. The key to successfully working with an executive search firm is finding someone who understands your industry and niche. Take time to find those who really understand your marketplace and the positions you need to fill. Be loyal to a select group of recruiters and watch your efficiencies rise. Turn a few researchers and recruiters into your personal disciples and your organization's greatest evangelists.

Now, with an understanding of sources and techniques for sourcing prospective candidates, make sure to organize your computer and your desk to effectively collect the inflow of prospective resumes that are sure to come! My next column will explain how to screen these resumes.