

Using narrowcasting to focus your sourcing process

Finding the top talent your organization needs to fill employee gaps requires that you use different methods of searching for them.

The greater your own flexibility to use different techniques to search for candidates the greater you will be enabled to discover great talent in more and unique places.

When you need to become a real pro at scouting for talent, you should maximize spending your time at places where the type of talent you're searching for goes. This includes places such as various activities, clubs, sports events, theaters, art shows, and other related types of events. While you are attending these events, you want to place extra focus and effort into sourcing while you are there. This approach to sourcing is called narrowcasting.

NARROWCASTING FOCUSES ON TRAITS RATHER THAN SKILLS

One expert on narrowcasting, Dr. John Sullivan, says that the approach to narrowcasting makes it unique in that it



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does not focus on looking for specific degrees or prior experience. In place of those requirements, you want to look for people who have the right traits to fit the needs of your organization. This will enable them to be highly suited to the organization's culture, or will qualify them for specific tasks such as nursing, sales, or customer service.

You will get the best results from narrowcasting if you emphasize active networking at social and public events, and also at activity clubs. Focus your sourcing activities on people groups who exhibit the attributes of those who are proven to be successful within your own company at specific jobs. When you are seeking to find such people, you do not want to look necessarily just for people who have previous experience in the field. You do not want to look for people who already have the knowledge or skills, either. The goal is to find people who have the right mindset and actions that will enable them to be successful in the job position. By way of example, when you are looking for people to fill a sales position, you want to look for groups of people who regularly are enthusiastic and have the ability to continue to perform under volatile conditions.

Another example would be that when looking for nursing candidates, you want to find someone who understands risk avoidance, or, when seeking to fill an elementary teacher position you would focus on groups of people who

are patient and who enjoy developing personalities.

NARROWCASTING IS ALREADY WIDELY USED TODAY BY MAJOR CORPORATIONS

The practicality of narrowcasting can be seen by the many large corporations that are actively using it now to fill their ranks. Competition for finding and attracting new talent is getting tougher.

Companies that have successfully used narrowcasting include Home Depot and GE, who have focused on attracting veterans because of their discipline. Most everyone knows that Wal-Mart has sought seniors, and this is because of their maturity and genuineness. Companies that manufacture network equipment have targeted those who monitor traffic situations because they are good at finding their way around roadblocks. Software firms such as Microsoft and EDS have targeted music majors and mathematicians for the main reason that they can identify patterns on sheet music or in mathematical models.

The key to using narrowcasting successfully is rather simple. Just identify the main attribute of the type of successful people you need to fill your position. Once you have accomplished that, then identify the type of people who would have that ability in a highly developed form in other professions or activities. This would mean, for instance, if you were looking for someone who had lasting endurance and could stay the course come thick or thin, then you might look to recruit people who had just finished the Iron-Man/Iron-Woman triathlon.

In order to identify the various talent pools from which to start looking for such qualified talent, the best way is to get your highly skilled employees with the right work ethic and personality traits that you already have together. Then ask them, "How would I find you again?"

POSSIBLE NARROWCASTING TALENT POOLS

When narrowcasting, here are some places where you can look for great talent:

- Internal high performers. Look to those already exceeding expectations at your organization.
- Local or national clubs. Consider clubs that support rock climbing, skydiving, Ultimate Frisbee, book reviews, restaurant/wine reviews, or public speaking.
- Organizations that attract people with similar interests or values. These might include religious, political, social, or lifestyle groups. For example, senior citizen clubs and volunteer activities at local charities attract individuals with strong values. (Also, keep in mind, it is not illegal to recruit at churches or age-specific organizations if you are looking for skills rather than a particular religious belief, and you recruit at a variety of them across a broad spectrum.)
- Internet sites where people with common interests gather. Websites, chat rooms, and blogs that people with similar skills frequent should also be targeted— for example, a nurse’s forum on MySpace.
- Sporting and social events. These might include athletic events open to the public, college athletic events, wine festivals, and home shows.
- “ Value” events. If you’re looking for individuals with strong ethics or values, you might consider patriotic, charitable, environmental, and political events that support the values and ethical standards you require.

POSSIBLE POOLS BY ATTRIBUTE

- Discipline. Military organizations, math societies, musical groups, athletic organizations, and library clubs.
- Calculated risk-taking. Rock climbing clubs, mountain climbing groups, and casinos.

– Handles high pressure well. Pilot associations, cheerleading groups, competitive athletes, and event-planning organizations.

– Perseverance. Marathons, triathlons, and video-gaming contests.

– Caring. Volunteers at schools, charity events, social events, and hospitals.

– Team player. Athletes on successful amateur and college teams, as well as teams that build floats and organize public events.

– Leadership. Leaders of clubs and associations, military officers, and coaches.

– Politically savvy. Former politicians, political parties, volunteer lobbyists, and political fund-raisers.

– Customer service. Individuals who staff the return counter or complaint line at public events as well as great wait staff, flight attendants, and maître d’s.

– Ethical. Current or former ministers, church deacons, church society members, Sunday School teachers.

– Persuasion skills. Cheerleaders, Toastmasters groups, ex-debaters, ex-Girl Scout cookie sellers and lemonade stand operators, and raffle ticket sellers. – Plan ahead. Chess players in chess tournaments, event organizers, and endurance hikers.

– Multitasking. Stay-at-home spouses with school-age children and small budgets.

– Language skills. Book clubs, Shakespearean actor groups, politicians, volunteer speechwriters, volunteer auctioneers, and volunteers who teach at English-as-a- second-language schools.

– Trading and selling skills. Successful eBay buyers and sellers, baseball card and comic traders, and coin and stamp collectors.

– Free-form and innovative. Improvisational comedians and actors, jazz musicians, entrepreneurs clubs, inventors clubs, skateboarders, avid Facebook and YouTube users, Star Trek

conventions, bloggers, and bloggers conventions.

– Hand-eye coordination. Video-gaming tournaments, dart players, and bowlers.

– Global knowledge. French, Chinese, and other language groups, food groups, travel clubs, geography clubs, social groups that attract members of a single country or region, and volunteer language and tour guides for visiting delegations.

AVOID NARROWCASTING ONLINE FOR BETTER RESULTS

It is very tempting today with the power of the Internet to try and perform your narrowcasting efforts using the many social networks available online. Instead, you want to avoid that as much as possible. It is more powerful to do all your narrowcasting in a real-world, face-to-face environment, than in a virtual world where so many contacts are only at the surface level. In-person communication through old-fashioned networking is apt to yield better results than online contacts without looking people in the eye and giving them a warm- hearted handshake – and they are far less likely to forget you, either.

If you should use both methods, be sure to step back every once in a while and measure the effectiveness of online contacts versus ones that are in-person. Most likely you will discover that there is no substitute for either personally calling them or meeting them for lunch. Personal contacts go further when you are trying to recruit them to come for an interview and eventually work for you. It is a good idea to use technology to find some of the people that you think would be good prospects for your organization. There are more and more avenues opening up online that will enable you to do this. In fact, it may produce enough possible contacts as to become almost overwhelming. But when you want to actually contact them, use as much in-person contact as you possibly can for a better success rate.

Find out which method of contacting them is the most successful and then use that method to contact as many possible top talented people as you can. Focus on the most effective and easiest method to make the best use of your time.