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Courting the candidate-customer

The unlikely art of attraction

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Despite relatively high unemployment in the United States, millions of job vacancies are going unfilled as a result of talent shortages. The struggle to attract and retain top talent is exacerbated by many factors: demographic shifts, changing attitudes toward careers, and the globalization of business. Talent shortages often occur in critical, skilled roles that are vital to a company's success and have high barriers to entry, and traditional recruiting methods may not be the answer.

As a first step in bolstering their workforces, organizations are increasingly focusing on identifying the positions, skills, attributes, and behaviors that drive a disproportionate amount of value. These organizations are adapting talent-acquisition strategies and hiring the most promising candidates by focusing on key attributes such as a capacity for innovative thinking, an ability to effectively work with others, being highly passionate, and having strong social intelligence.

Growing a business often hinges on making appropriate investments; growing a workforce to support a business requires the same approach. For many organizations, growth is limited by shortcomings in their workforces, and a traditional linear hiring model does not allow them to hire enough skilled workers to remain competitive. Some are investing in and maintaining a strong pipeline of potential employees by preemptively recruiting candidates—even when there is no immediate need. By continuously engaging qualified candidates through social media, alumni networks, and other methods, organizations can provide an intimate, memorable experience that could lead to job offers later on. As part of its “Silver Medalist Strategy,” for example, a leading auto manufacturer engages top candidates in the market even when there aren’t open roles for them. Recruiters proactively maintain ongoing conversations with potential employees and invite them to join the company’s talent community as well as the company’s career social spaces on LinkedIn and Facebook. Candidates also receive RSS feeds or emails when a role that matches their interests becomes available.¹

Beyond the need to tend the pipeline, we have also seen that impressions are increasingly important. As indicated in Deloitte’s* September 2012 *Talent 2020* report, potential employees are more inclined now than in the past to work for companies that have a reputation for being a good employer.² Given this trend, organizations are beginning to develop talent acquisition programs that cast themselves in a positive light among potential employees. They are designing recruitment experiences that benefit candidates from start to finish—even in cases where they do not culminate in a job offer. By developing programs from the candidate-as-customer perspective, these companies aim to strengthen their brands as employers of choice among employees as well as prospective employees. For example, a large international retailer is positioning employees as brand ambassadors by encouraging them to post key openings on their LinkedIn pages. Employees receive a monetary reward for hired candidates that they referred directly or indirectly through their social networks.³

An organization’s ability to attract customers ultimately drives the need to expand its workforce. Some companies are deepening their talent pools using the tactics that lured their customers in the first place. Analytics, social media, innovative technological applications, organic growth and development, and tailored service delivery models—established methods for developing a customer base—can go a long way in helping a company cater to customer-candidates and cultivate an ample workforce.

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ANALYTICS AND THE POWER OF A PROACTIVE RECRUITING STRATEGY

Companies have grown accustomed to using analytics to identify potential profitable customers and drive business development, but these technologies also have the potential to become a disruptive force for talent acquisition, where the costs of getting it wrong can be large. Bad hiring decisions due to inadequate and subjective candidate screening processes cost organizations hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. A recent CareerBuilder (CareerBuilder, 2012) study found that bad hires cost some firms as much as \$50,000 per hire.⁴

Analytics can help an organization make better recruitment decisions by helping it identify insights and attributes associated with high-performing, high-potential employees. These insights, based on real information about their strong performers, are helping companies hire the right people for the right roles. Organizations with mature analytical capabilities are able to analyze performance, promotions, skill sets, personality characteristics, and other data of their high performing employees to create a data-derived set of attributes for success. At the same time, these organizations conduct data analysis to parse through external data on candidates from social networks and career pages in order to understand their interests, skills sets, project experiences, personalities, and endorsements. They then deploy predictive modeling and advanced algorithmic programs to identify external data that correlate with the organization's attributes for success. By mapping the key external candidate indicators with attributes of their top internal talent, companies can pinpoint the right candidates to hire and tailor their recruiting strategies accordingly.

Despite robust hiring practices, mature as well as fast-growing organizations can find themselves reacting to spikes in hiring demand. For these companies, even with clearly identified needs, there isn't always a clear sense of where to locate candidates. Analytics can provide the foresight needed to inform strategic recruiting decisions and identify the skills and critical talent pools that will provide the next high-potential employees. Among the efforts where we have observed analytics being especially useful:

- Gaining insight on critical talent pools within your company
- Identifying and proactively courting passive candidates in the external marketplace with the right skills, attributes, experiences, and passions
- Understanding your company's competition for critical talent
- Understanding the most effective ways to source talent, given that different critical talent pools may require different sourcing strategies

A leading insurance company, for example, uses predictive analytics to identify individuals from a large general population who have the highest likelihood of becoming successful agents. The company then uses this data to create targeted branding strategies to engage and attract top prospects. Similarly, a large global media company is using analytics to predict its future workforce needs. This company is dramatically rethinking its business model in light of shifting consumer preferences in favor of streaming content, and is leveraging its business forecast and predictive modeling capabilities to identify skills needed to meet its future strategic priorities. By building a supply-demand model of talent required over the next 18 months, the company uses business-driven workforce planning underpinned by analytics to create a proactive recruitment strategy.

SMART CANDIDATE RELATIONSHIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is an established channel for identifying customer and market trends, but it also allows organizations to proactively access information about potential employees. Many organizations are reducing their investments in formerly cutting-edge Internet sourcing methods and focusing on social media as a core recruiting tool. Cloud-based social media tools like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook are helping companies identify and source active candidates as well as “passive” ones who are not actively seeking new jobs. These organizations are making social media the foundation of robust recruiting and targeted communication campaigns that develop lasting relationships with potential candidates.

Communication between friends, colleagues, alumni, and potential employers evolved with the advent of social media communities, and younger candidate pools have come to expect them in the workplace. In some cases, because of the resulting brand perception, an inadequate or nonexistent social media presence can be a deal breaker in and of itself.

Social media platforms, used effectively, enable prospective workers to connect with potential employers. Companies can strengthen relationships and keep their talent pipelines warm by making sure company profiles, open positions, the skills they require, and referral capabilities are easily accessible and smartly presented to candidates. A large hotel chain developed a social media community of top talent that follows the company’s organizational news, networks with others, and receives updates on exciting and informative internal activities, job postings, and testimonials from current employees.⁵ The company’s career opportunities page on Facebook now has over 10,000 fans; its Twitter account advertises job openings and employee testimonials to over 4,500 followers; its YouTube channel shares employee videos that illustrate a day-in-the-life of an employee; and its Ning group for college

internship alumni lets it talk to new campus recruits about the company's culture and offer virtual support to applicants. These channels have led to a substantial pool of engaged talent that the company uses to fill its open positions. Its social media strategy generates buzz in the industry, entices potential candidates to learn more through targeted social networks, and eventually leads to more qualified candidates for open positions.

We have observed several ways in which companies have improved their social media presence:

- Develop a fan page for the organization on Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as a recruiting-related Twitter feed. Make sure each of these channels provides consistent messaging.
- Distribute targeted communications to spark the interest of passive candidates.
- Enable referral capabilities within social media tools.
- Create “cool” communities, and post simulations or videos that show people what it's like to work for a particular employer.
- Provide easy-to-navigate sites with clearly displayed open roles where candidates can submit resumes.

Done well, a social media strategy can spread awareness and spark the interest of the most qualified candidates. Recruitment, marketing, and relationship management campaigns—when working together with one voice—entice these candidates to learn more and are often the difference between an opportunity being overlooked and an application being submitted.



TECHNOLOGY DISRUPTS TALENT ACQUISITION

While applicant tracking systems have been around for a long time, the explosive growth of sourcing through social media, cost concerns, and demand for a better candidate experience are fostering the emergence of innovative and disruptive talent acquisition technologies. These technologies are redefining the recruitment experience by providing low-cost capabilities that save time, increase productivity, shrink the barriers to candidate contact, and enhance their early interactions with potential employers.

Imagine being able to watch, rate, share, and compare prerecorded video responses from candidates along with their resumes on a cloud-based platform before picking up the phone or flying them in for an interview. This describes what happened at the African Development Bank Group in 2009. Candidates prerecorded

and submitted video responses to job-specific questions in multiple languages and completed recorded interviews.⁶ Face-to-face interviews were scheduled once the bank had ample insights about its candidate pool. This approach narrowed the field of candidates selected for face-to-face interviews and reduced travel costs by nearly 60 percent. Therefore, HR was able to quickly screen candidates and compile short lists of interviewees. As a result, 150 candidates from 49 countries were screened and interviewed in 10 days.



Arguably, there is no longer a one-size-fits-all service delivery model that will serve to attract talent in a highly competitive and candidate-driven talent market. The challenge is to think about ways organizations can build and leverage their internal capabilities and resources to provide them a competitive edge in hiring top talent.

candidate pipeline by collecting, tracking, and monitoring candidate information on a regular basis. This helps companies efficiently forge long-term relationships with qualified applicants by keeping recruiters apprised of their ongoing dialogue with candidates. These tools are being embraced to create profiles tracking detailed candidate information, which recruiters use to tailor their messages to targeted individuals.

By expanding the use of advanced screening technologies, videoconferencing, and CRM relationship management tools, companies can expand their access to potential employees. Historically, companies have not adapted to the candidate's current employment situation, geographic constraints, and other unique circumstances. These technologies help address these limitations and dissuade candidates from viewing an organization as unaccommodating and therefore discounting an opportunity.

In conjunction with social media platforms, many organizations have also adopted cloud-based CRM strategies to improve the efficiency and tracking of their recruitment processes. In the traditional model, these processes were often managed offline in spreadsheets on recruiters' desktops. The problem with this was that data collected wasn't integrated with other talent solutions and did not provide sufficient visibility across leadership and recruitment. Advanced CRM tools help address these issues because they can be used to maintain a viable and active

From recruiters' perspective, these solutions can help to increase their productivity, reach, and efficiency while decreasing the time to fill positions and generating more interest among candidates. These tools help recruiters improve their knowledge of particular candidates while adapting to a prospective employee's travel restrictions and schedule limitations before spending money and time on travel. These lower barriers of contact are helping organizations to reach geographically dispersed talent pools without wasting time and dollars interviewing bad candidates. Employing advanced screening technologies and cloud-based CRM solutions to improve the recruitment process and collect robust candidate information enables a recruitment process that reimagines candidates as customers.

This notion of candidates as customers points to some specific goals for recruiting processes: Are we valuing candidates' time? Are we moving people through the interviewing process at an expeditious but appropriate rate? Finally, are we devising processes and adapting technologies that allow us to accommodate candidates' schedules and locations?

While the possibilities are still unfolding, there are a number of ways technology can improve the candidate experience:

- Actively engage candidates through ongoing dialogue on social channels, and make sure recruiters address any issues that candidates may have. This is a leap from the traditional, often rigid sequence of mail or email communications, in which candidates are often left in the dark between various stages in the recruitment process.
- Put a face to the company. Online job searches can be quite literally a faceless experience. Make sure candidates know they are engaging with genuinely interested recruiters (in the broader sense, not necessarily the org chart sense) rather than an inbox for forms.
- Arrange virtual interviews on the candidate's schedule in order to reach into geographically dispersed talent pools.
- Lower the barrier to contact with candidates currently employed elsewhere by providing video tools that allow them to complete parts of the interview process without missing work.

CREATE A TAILORED SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

Traditionally organizations have relied primarily on executive search and third party recruiting agencies to fill critical roles. This means that search firms own the candidate relationship, and organizations are extremely limited in their ability to engage in ongoing dialogues with top talent. Attempts to improve the

candidate experience and proactively engage candidates in the market have spurred the adoption of the “internal executive search” service delivery model by some organizations. These companies are building their own in-house executive search delivery model capabilities in order to own and manage the candidate experience, create tailored candidate messaging and employer value propositions, and hire high-caliber talent when suitable roles open up. In addition, social media tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, combined with advanced CRM technologies, make it much easier for organizations to access candidates in the market and sustain long-term relationships with them. For these companies, executive search firms are still critical for identifying high-value, hard-to-fill positions, but they are increasingly seeing the value of insourcing some elements of executive search through powerful candidate messaging, social media sourcing, and building strong internal recruiting teams.

For example, an online retailer’s rapid growth over the past five years and need to recruit top-notch global talent in a short period of time required the organization to rethink its recruiting service delivery model. Traditionally reliant on search firms for finding most of its top talent, this company saw an opportunity in creating a global, technology-driven in-house executive recruiting model. The organization hired experienced executive recruiters as part of its in-house team and provided them a full arsenal of cloud-enabled technology services, candidate data, analytical capabilities, and powerful employer brand to attract some of the best and brightest talent for the organization. At the same time, the organization is fully cognizant of its limitations and engages search firms proactively in finding high-caliber talent with unique skills in emerging markets and new service areas.

Other organizations extend the candidate experience toward their alumni by treating them as employees for life. Recruiters and leadership in these organizations proactively engage with alumni through alumni communities on social media (e.g. LinkedIn Alumni Pages) to forge strong relationships. By doing this, firms are able to boost their recruiting efficiency by posting jobs on alumni pages, using alumni as brand ambassadors, and tapping into alumni’s referral networks.

While employee referrals have been around for ages, many organizations are taking it a step further by engaging social media and technology to utilize employee referrals as a recruiting tool. These firms use tools such as LinkedIn Company Pages and Facebook Talent Communities to enable prospective candidates to have peer-to-peer conversations with employees who act as brand ambassadors and talent scouts for the firm. In addition, social media and technological advances have enabled employee referrals to go viral. Some technology-driven service models tap into employees’ social and professional networks, and electronically identify and reward employees who can make digital references. eBay uses an online Referral

Community that encourages employees to share open roles on their Facebook and LinkedIn profiles. The employees' connections see these and apply for the role themselves or forward it to someone who they know is suitable. Employees receive monetary rewards for new hires that came through their social network through technologies that track digital references across an employee's virtual network.⁷

Arguably, there is no longer a one-size-fits-all service delivery model that will serve to attract talent in a highly competitive and candidate-driven talent market. The challenge is to think about ways organizations can build and leverage their internal capabilities and resources to provide them a competitive edge in hiring top talent.

INNOVATE AND GROW FROM WITHIN

Recruiting from the marketplace comes with substantial costs. Top talent increasingly demands higher compensation, and there are significant opportunity costs associated with hiring external candidates, including lost productivity and time.

In an attempt to mitigate these costs, many organizations are relying on their own workforce to fill critical roles. According to Bersin's recent research on talent acquisition best practices, at least one in five open job requisitions are filled by an internal candidate.⁸ Moreover, given the challenges of retaining talent in today's highly competitive market, organizations are boosting their succession planning, internal mobility, and high-potential programs while simultaneously providing ample visibility for these initiatives. Keeping top talent around is often difficult, and transferring internal talent into critical roles can increase retention and trigger an influx of fresh ideas.

Making succession management and mobility programs a more integral component of recruitment endeavors can help fill critical roles with internal talent, and it sends a message to the market that an organization grows its employees through progressive techniques as opposed to merely hiring from the outside. For example, a global financial services provider recently staged its first-ever internal career fair in London. This one-day, *employee-only* event made employees keenly aware of opportunities outside of their individual departments while keeping them within the corporate "family." Similarly, CACI, a professional services and IT solutions firm, used its internal mobility program to fill 701 positions, thus increasing its retention rates and reducing hiring costs in an intensely competitive industry.⁹

A strong talent acquisition strategy relies on insightful analysis, visibility, and better integration with internal talent programs:

- 1. Identify characteristics that predict future success:** Analyze data from performance review cycles to help identify skills, attributes, and characteristics

common to the most successful employees. This can be used as a benchmark to attract candidates (both internal and external) with the highest potential for success in the role and organization.

2. **Use your workforce plan to drive a robust and flexible recruiting strategy:** Conduct analytics-driven workforce planning to ascertain the candidate pools (full time, flexible, free agents) to source from to meet workforce demands over the short and long term.
3. **Move high-potential talent into critical roles:** For mobility and succession management programs, provide visibility into current and future staffing needs, and deploy your high-potential talent into those roles based on suitability and career aspiration.
4. **Link career development to a recruitment strategy:** Align career development goals and career plans with current and future capability needs to enable the organization to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to recruiting talent internally for critical roles.

While developing an integrated talent strategy facilitates cost-effective recruitment, this is easier said than done. Recruiting internal talent from across an enterprise requires disparate business divisions to share employee data. Organizations need to assess their culture, leadership alignment, and technology infrastructure to decide whether or not to encourage this kind of movement between departments.

CATERING TO THE CANDIDATE-CUSTOMER

New job searches can be frustrating, stressful, and time-consuming for both the job seeker and the company. From the candidates' perspective, a company's recruitment experience is often little more than a necessary evil that doesn't accurately reveal who they are or reflect who they will be as contributors within the organization. Moreover, those candidates who don't receive a job offer are seldom given feedback derived from the process that might help them in the future. Frequently, organizations design the entire recruitment process around the company itself (and its lawyers) at the expense of its applicants.

From the company's perspective, finding new talent that can thrive and effectively navigate its unique and often complex social environment can be challenging. Too often, technically competent candidates who excel in job interviews turn out to be costly mistakes because the interviews didn't accurately reveal the candidates' creativity, emotional maturity, and social intelligence—the capacity to effectively navigate and negotiate complex social relationships and environments.

Brand-conscious companies are beginning to interact with potential employees with the same care they would give to their customers. These companies are redefining the entire talent acquisition experience by making sure their candidate-customers gain tangible value from the interview process, and have the capabilities to navigate and succeed within the organization should they be offered a position. The results of this innovative approach are impressive because the very process is designed to provide prospective candidates with a better understanding of themselves, while establishing a trusted relationship between a company and its potential employees.

How salesforce.com builds a workforce

Salesforce.com is focused on sustaining and accelerating its growth by building its workforce while simultaneously ensuring that the new employees fit its innovative, community-oriented culture. In 2011, the company's information technology (IT) organization relied exclusively on traditional linear talent acquisition processes. These traditional processes required myriad sequential recruiting steps, and filling an open position could take months. Moreover, because this process relied heavily on interrogatory interviews, they were skewed to reveal good interview skills and not necessarily how a candidate would actually function on the job.

In 2012, under the leadership of a new EVP of operations, the company augmented its traditional acquisition process for IT by introducing a nonlinear model that focuses on a candidate's experience, aptitude, and emotional intelligence. Its new model—Social Intelligence Hiring—holistically evaluates each candidate's technical competency, social intelligence, resiliency, and personality. Transparency is a key component of this model. The insights gleaned throughout the process are openly shared with job candidates in a way that helps them learn more about themselves.

Rather than relying on a series of traditional interviews, salesforce.com holds



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MAIN TAKEAWAYS

Brand-conscious companies that treat the candidate with the same attention and focus that they give their customers should find the Social Intelligence Hiring model to be impactful. In implementing this model, several guidelines have emerged as especially helpful:

- Focus on more than just technical skills by having the candidate participate in a variety of activities that reveal his or her personality, creativity, emotional maturity, and social intelligence.
- Design the recruiting process to mirror how work actually gets done within the company; emphasize team activities for companies that have team based cultures.
- Use extended workshops rather than a short series of interviews as the interaction will more accurately reveal who a candidate is in different contexts.
- Drive and nurture connectivity, collaboration, and sustained relationships between candidates and with the company through social media tools.
- Demonstrate to the candidate the importance that the company places on potential employees by actively involving and providing access to senior management who are committed to be at the workshop events.
- Build trusted relationships by being transparent with the candidates and letting them know that the process is about helping them succeed so that they understand and appreciate what you are doing and how it helps them become better.

daylong workshops with its prospective job candidates. Instead of relying solely on traditional methods of attraction such as job boards to build interest in the workshops, the company directly targets, connects, and extends invitations to prospective candidates using LinkedIn, Facebook, and Craigslist. Moreover, before the workshops, invitees are given access to salesforce.com's social collaboration technology, Salesforce Chatter, which allows them to make connections, build relationships, develop teams, and collaborate in an online community.

Leading up to and on the day of the workshop, the company asks its candidates to form teams because much of the work at the company is accomplished through teams. At the workshop, these teams perform a series of exercises, all of which are designed to reveal strengths and opportunities for improvement for the candidates. Because salesforce.com is interested in maintaining a culture where its employees are "healthful, creative, and self-aware," it uses an innovative and expansive enneagram-based personality modeling exercise in the workshop, which reveals personality types and working styles. This activity also identifies candidates with high levels of social intelligence.

The workshop provides the teams real-life challenges in the form of case studies. The process itself is designed to mimic the way salesforce.com might address its actual challenges. Teams of candidates are given time to flesh out solutions, formulate their ideas, and present them at the end of the day. The results of the challenge

have been encouraging; several groups of workshop candidates have produced breakthrough ideas and solutions that the company had not considered. Moreover, the process reveals how individual candidates interacted with their teams. The salesforce.com management teams attend the events and are able to observe, first hand, each candidate's creativity, emotional maturity, social intelligence, and ability to interact and communicate. These interactions and the ideas they produce give salesforce.com the insights it needs to select candidates compatible with the organization. Furthermore, candidates come away from the hiring process with new relationships, a better understanding of themselves and, as surveys indicated, a positive view of the company.



THE ART OF ATTRACTION

A company's success is directly related to its ability to attract and retain top talent. New approaches, technologies, and tools are increasingly becoming available that can help build an employer's brand, employee base, and relationships with potential candidates. Although not all of the activities described will make sense for all organizations, companies that have deployed a selected combination of them have achieved impressive results utilizing the art of attraction to their benefit. **DR**

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