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Best Practices in Employee Recruitment

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Contents

Introduction

As economic uncertainty and globalization continue to influence the evolution of business practices, leading-edge talent acquisition strategies will become critical to maintaining a competitive edge and driving future success. Finding qualified candidates will only become more challenging as recruiting departments continue to shrink, pressure to lower costs intensifies, and world-wide talent shortages increase. These increased complexities have led many organizations to reexamine their current strategies, and seek out robust solutions in line with today's significant pain points.

From utilizing social solutions, to building robust talent communities, to finding unique and effective strategies to target multigenerational candidates, the following whitepaper explores some of today's hottest talent acquisition trends.

Talent Communities: The Next Generation of Employee Recruiting and Sourcing

By John Hancock, Vice President of Strategy, The RightThing, LLC, an ADP® Company

When recruitment professionals talk about passive candidates the focus is typically on finding these oftentimes elusive individuals. Recruiters understand that because passive candidates are not actively looking for a job, sourcing is required.

However, even though today's sophisticated sourcing techniques can provide a recruiting organization with access to a pool of qualified passive candidates, sourcing alone guarantees little more than a list of names and details. It's what an organization does with this information that makes a difference.

Moving Forward with Talent Acquisition

Typically, recruiting organizations strive to be more proactive than reactive. The proliferation of sourcing, as an area of specialization, is an example of this tendency. However, the next step after sourcing has long been a stumbling block. For years, engaging passive candidates has met with mixed success. Currently, there is a great deal of congruence among applicant tracking systems, job boards, diversity groups, and other sources that allow for identifying the kind of candidates an organization seeks. Nevertheless, tapping into these sources for the purpose of engaging passive candidates and building relationships with these potential employees requires a process and a platform. It requires building communities – talent communities.

Foundational Steps in Building a Talent Community

Before a company builds a talent community, the recruiting and talent management groups must be well connected to understand the current inventory of talent. The two functions should work together to determine the volume and types of talent necessary to achieve strategic objectives over a two- to three-year period. Today, best-in-class organizations are prone to use a workforce and demand planning process. The objective is to first understand strategic growth and to then translate it to a tactical plan.

Volume and types of talent – along with location(s) and how talent is structured – should be considered. Talent should also be assessed by category. For example, a pharmaceuticals company might separate medical/clinical professionals from sales professionals. The idea behind segregating talent by buckets is to separate messaging. This will allow for targeted messaging to passive candidates, as well as viral distribution to other individuals these candidates know – via text messages, job distribution, video, and other methods. As viral distribution gains momentum, an organization essentially builds its own opt-in database of candidates.

Creating Communities to Expand Employee Recruitment

Because the structure of a talent community will be dictated by an organization's unique talent acquisition needs, it is vital to take the time to strategically plan for the talent community. Using social media, paid-for click advertising, and the corporate careers site, an organization can take a structured approach to communication that considers candidate demographics. The objective is to create an opt-in, low-cost conduit that enables an employer to easily replicate and disseminate content.

In order to create this conduit, an organization needs a good contact relationship manager (CRM) that allows for building a database within the system. The capabilities have to be sophisticated enough to permit drilling down to specific criteria. For example, in-house client data from The RightThing reveals that Gen Y candidates rarely retrieve email messages, but have a mobile open rate of between 75 and 80 percent. Needless to say, for this audience, an employer will want to be able to communicate via mobile messaging.

The correct method of dissemination is essential to keeping a candidate base engaged with an organization. So is the right content which can be adapted and disseminated through social media – for example via the LinkedIn® community, Twitter® feeds, and other sources.

Benefits of Talent Communities

Talent communities provide access to passive candidates and their networks, which, in turn, may bring others to the organization. When talent communities are established correctly, an organization has the ability to better leverage its own networks without paying candidate referral fees.

At the same time, talent communities provide a platform for building relationships with candidates who have an affinity with the organization. Over time, this can provide an opportunity to engage a large volume of candidates in a low-cost, highly efficient way.

Another significant advantage is that talent communities allow an organization to more effectively leverage its corporate careers site. Content at the careers site that articulates the employer value proposition, diversity, and branding can now be utilized more strategically.

Challenges of Talent Communities

Building and maintaining talent communities require resources. Organizations committed to success must be committed to follow through and budget allocation. In a cost-conscious environment this can often be a concern. However, costs can be controlled by managing the information flow.

By allowing candidates to opt in for certain types of messages as well as specific location preferences and areas of interest, an organization can more appropriately allocate resources. A robust, well-managed infrastructure also allows for very specific delivery of information to select candidates, such as sending a video job ad to candidates who fit the profile for a particular position.

While a plan is essential, follow-through in building and supporting the infrastructure is of equal importance. As for the time commitment required to support the effort, many companies already have social media teams in their recruiting organizations. These individuals are building databases of candidates without calling them talent communities. The talent community building process, which includes a calculated integration of social media, takes the concept to the next level, defining the way in which companies will work with candidates in the future.

Measurable Results for Talent Acquisition

Until now, it has been difficult to pin down how effective social media tools are as an aid in the recruitment process. Although some employers see benefits to social media, some have not been able to quantify the return on their investment. By building talent communities and using these communities as sources to engage passive candidates, organizations can now better quantify how successful their social media recruitment efforts are.

Employment Branding: Multi-Generational Employee Recruiting

By Michael Gruber, CCO of The RightThing, LLC, an ADP® Company

Employment branding and generational issues are both important considerations at leading organizations today. However, in my experience, the focus is typically on each area independent of the other. Because effective communication requires attention to specific audiences, organizations should carefully consider generational issues in their employment branding efforts.

About the Generations in the Talent Acquisition Pool

The reason for taking a generational approach to employment branding is actually very clear. For the first time in United States history there are four generations in the workplace. Because each generation brings its own set of characteristics, experiences, and expectations to the job and the job search, a one-size-fits-all communications approach will not work well.

Here is some background on the generations that comprise today's workforce:

Neil Howe and William Strauss – pioneers in the field of generational studies and authors of Generations and Millennials in the Workplace – among other books, identify members of the Silent Generation as those born from 1925 through 1942; Baby Boomers as those born from 1943 through 1960; Generation Xers as born from 1961 through 1981; and Millennials as born from 1982 to 2004.

When defining generations, other experts, such as consultant Leigh Branham, author of the books, Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business and The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave and co-author of Re-Engage, rely on slightly different parameters of inclusion. Branham refers to the oldest generation in the workforce as Traditionalists, indicating these are people born in 1945 or earlier. According to Branham, Baby Boomers are people born from 1946 through 1964; Gen-Xers from 1965 through 1980; and Millennials from 1981 through 1994.

Regardless of the parameters, I have found that it is generally agreed that each generation has specific characteristics which can be summarized by the following traits:

Silents/Traditionalists. These workforce members came of age at a time when loyalty was rewarded and reciprocal. This is the "gold watch" generation, people who believed in staying with one employer until retirement. They are devoted, dedicated workers. As a group, they are punctual, hard-working, and highly responsible. Silents bring a great deal of work and life experience to the job, and they want to feel their experience is valued. They are especially attracted to an organization that can benefit from what they have to offer. Although Silents may seek health care and other benefits, for them, at this stage of their lives, the most important component of the job benefit is flexibility.

Baby Boomers. This highly-driven generation is known for being career-focused and goal-oriented. Having sacrificed other aspects of life, including family, for career advancement, Boomers now seek work-life balance. At the same time, they want meaningful work. This is the generation that sought to change the world. Making an impact is important to them. So, too, is giving back to the community. These members of the workforce are independent when it comes to ideas and ideals, but they enjoy collaboration. Indeed, Boomers enjoy work relationships of almost any kind—to the point that most do not plan to totally retire. Surveys find an overwhelming majority of Boomers intend to continue working, at least part time, well into their golden years.

Generation Xers. These members of the workforce are frustrated with limited promotional opportunities at today's leaner, flatter organizations. They seek career advancement and have no problem changing companies for growth opportunity. Company loyalty is not a Gen-Xer strong suit. They view employment arrangements as temporary and will do a good job until it's time to move on. Learning opportunities of all kinds – including on-the-job assignments that are enriching and different from what they were doing yesterday – appeal to Gen-Xers. They also seek work experiences that allow for independence, as well as results. Work-life balance is important to this generation, and they are not timid about ensuring that their lives include it.

Millennials. Much has been written about the way Millennials were raised, and their upbringing has greatly influenced their employment expectations. This generation was reared by helicopter parents, so called because of their tendency to hover over their children. Accustomed to a lot of attention at home, Millennials expect the same at work. They gravitate toward structure and organizations that provide regular feedback. Millennials want to be coached. These members prefer a team environment. Community is important to them, including the community at large. Millennials want to make a difference by giving back. Moreover, technology is second nature to this generation. Because they have always used computers, they are quick to embrace new technology and companies at the forefront of technology appeal to them.

About Employment Branding

Employment branding conjures up images of full-blown programs that come with high price tags. Although implementing an employment branding initiative may involve consulting with experts and developing a multi-faceted strategy, there are ways for organizations to address the basics on their own.

So much of employment branding comes down to messaging. This messaging gets reflected in all communication, from a company's careers website and social media presence to its job postings and more.

It also gets conveyed in one-on-one interaction with candidates, whether online, via telephone, when using technology for interviewing, and, of course, in live interviews. Messaging consists of words and images, or, in the case of interviews – questions, backdrop, and body language.

Here are a few examples of how to leverage communication channels to ensure that employment brand messaging resonates with a multi-generational workforce:

Corporate careers site. Every generation wants to feel that a potential employer is a good fit. Images of employees representing a variety of age groups speak volumes on a corporate careers site. Employee testimonials are a highly effective way to communicate with candidates. Video testimonials come across as particularly strong because they allow candidates to see and listen to people like themselves who presumably have the same job requirements and life concerns.

When creating videos or written testimonials, make sure generational issues are addressed. A member of the Silent Generation, for example, could talk about how he is able to apply a lifetime of experience and knowledge in his role with the company and how he feels respected and valued. He might also mention his flexible work schedule. A Boomer, on the other hand, could talk about work-life benefits and programs the company offers, along with the company's community, and how she and her fellow employees participate in these initiatives. A Gen-Xer, meanwhile, could talk about learning opportunities and multiple career paths at the company, as well as the fact that the company focuses on results more than structure and how this allows her to find creative solutions. Finally, a Millennial might focus on how he appreciates the team aspect of the company and the support it offers. He could also talk about how the company is leading-edge, when it comes to technology.

Other careers site messaging matters as well. An employer should make sure it focuses on the hot buttons for the generations it seeks to attract when articulating benefits, work-life balance, career

development and advancement, and corporate culture. Messaging also has to be authentic. Employee testimonials speak to authenticity, and so do employer-of-choice awards. A company that has been recognized as a best employer should highlight this achievement, including a link to the awards site.

In addition, since community involvement and giving back is cross-generational, include information about corporate philanthropy at the careers site. If this information resides in an entirely separate section of the corporate website, a company should make sure a prominent link to the section is available on the careers site homepage.

Social Media. When communicating via social media, I've found that organizations are most successful when they target their messaging to the candidate audience they want to attract. Millennials seek structure and support, enjoy teamwork, want to give back, and like "cool", new technology. Gen-Xers seek learning opportunities, career advancement, independence, and want to be evaluated based on results. Boomers are driven but want work-life balance and to support the community. Silents want to feel valued and they want flexible work schedules. Whether posting at Facebook®, Twitter®, LinkedIn® or other sites, attention to these key points will increase audience engagement and help attract candidates.

Job Postings. When it comes to job postings, a company should use hot-button words and phrases aimed at the audience it seeks. In general, this audience should include all members of the workforce, but a college internship program, for example, might focus mostly on Millennials. A company should also consider where it posts jobs. Niche job boards that specifically target older workers, for example, are a good way to not only reach but also send a positive message to Silents and Baby Boomers.

Screening and Interviewing. The kinds of questions a recruiter or hiring manager asks during the interview process can have a generational hook. Questions about teamwork, for example, speak to the team environment Millennials seek, while questions about

a candidate's ability to work independently tell Gen X-ers they will have this opportunity. By the same token, asking Boomers about their long-range career goals – while letting them know that the company values work-life balance and, if appropriate, arrangements that transition to retirement – shows these members of the workforce that the company understands their priorities. Similarly, asking Silents if they would be open to sharing their wealth of knowledge and experience in a mentoring capacity conveys the respect and sense of value this generation seeks.

Question-and-answer sessions are an integral part of the recruitment process, but there's a lot more to screening and interviewing than asking relevant questions. Employers should not overlook the power of environmental factors. For example, in my experience, a company may want to consider generational traits when deciding on whether to conduct group interviews. While Millennials and Gen-Xers will embrace the process, Boomers may bristle and Silents will likely be overwhelmed.

Consider providing your top Millennial and Gen-Xer candidates with a tour of the work facility, including the cafeteria and on-site fitness center, where they can observe employees in action. Boomers will likely be more interested in seeing their own work area, and Silents will be less concerned about the work environment according to client feedback from The RightThing.

Employee Recruitment: Members and Individuals

When approaching employer branding from a generational perspective, it's important to recognize that generational traits are generalizations. For example, a Silent candidate may ask to tour the work facility and a Millennial candidate may not like working in teams. Likewise, not every Boomer candidate is driven and not every Gen-Xer seeks learning opportunities.

However, research suggests that because traits are common, a generational approach to employer branding will result in a larger talent pool. Once a company has the pool, it can dive into the issue of individual preferences.