

Refining your hiring practices

How to win the war for talent — without advertising

A key position in your company needs to be filled. Is your first impulse to call a newspaper and place a classified ad? Post an opening on an online job board? If you're looking for top quality talent, you may want to rethink your strategy, according to Jenny McCambridge, staffing consultant for Principal Technical Services.

"The fact is, 80 percent of all positions are filled without ever being advertised," says McCambridge. "The most talented individuals are well-known in the industry and therefore get calls all the time. They don't need to answer ads, and chances are they will never see yours."

Smart Business spoke with McCambridge about hiring strategies that can be used to locate the most qualified individuals, discern which ones are a good fit for your company and entice them to join your organization.

How do you find job candidates without running ads?

Network, network, network. If you've already done your homework, you've built an extensive network of people in your industry. You've been involved in organizations and societies whose members include leaders in your field. You've gone out of your way to make new contacts, collecting business cards at meetings and networking events.

Now that you've built your network, use it. Make a list of any contacts who might know someone with the qualifications you're looking for. They could be business associates, recruiters, even current or past employees. Contact these individuals, ask about potential candidates and ask if any of their associates might be able to help locate candidates as well.

If you haven't yet built such a network, get started today.

What are some strategies for building a network?

The goal is to meet as many people in your industry as possible. If you make an



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average of one new contact each day, you're on the right track. Make an effort to attend events that will allow you to socialize with others in your field. Events may be sponsored by professional organizations, trade associations and business councils. The important thing to remember when attending these events is not to spend time talking with friends and co-workers. Time spent with them is time taken away from your primary purpose — making new contacts to build your network.

It may seem obvious, but each individual added to your network is a potential source of other new contacts, and so on, and so on.

Another resource to tap into would be your local university. Offering to mentor students or give guest lectures provides an opportunity to meet talented individuals entering your field in the future, as well as the professors who can be on the lookout for talent for you.

How can companies make sure they're hiring the best candidate for a job?

That's a very important question. Too often in today's fast-paced business world, personnel decisions are made

quickly with minimal information about the candidate. Managers tend to spend more time investigating the merits of new software than new employees.

In light of today's labor shortage and the war for talent, now is the time to carefully consider each hiring decision. If a candidate has an impressive resume and interviews well, ask yourself whether he or she fits in with your company's culture. Will this person get along well with your current employees? Is this the type of person who inspires those around him/her to perform at their best? These qualities can't usually be assessed in an interview. The best way to tease out this information is to invite the candidate to a social function — dinner or a ballgame — with future co-workers. Yes, this involves added investment of both time and money, but it's an investment that will pay off in the form of increased productivity and decreased turnover.

How can the most talented individuals be convinced to accept a job offer?

We're talking about individuals who are in high demand. In fact, most of them are currently employed, which means you're going to have to steal them away from another company (hence, the expression 'war for talent'). Many of them are satisfied with their current situation, and you'll have to actively recruit them and entice them to change jobs.

Obviously, compensation will be a huge factor, but candidates will also be interested in other benefits, both tangible and intangible, that you can offer. Health insurance, 401(k) and paid time off are traditional benefits. More progressive ideas include flexible schedules, job sharing and telecommuting.

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