New Research

3 Trends in Attracting Today’s Candidates

The altered rules of engagement

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2011 Corporate Recruiting Reports

Top 3 Trends in Attracting Today’s Clients

The altered rules of engagement

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Jobvite
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Staffing.org
Other Staffing.org Reports

2011 Corporate Recruiting Reports — Premiere Research Subscription
2011 Corporate Recruiting Reports— Enterprise Research Subscription
2011 Corporate Recruiting Reports — Corporate Research Subscription
2011 Corporate Recruiting Reports — Target Research Subscription

2010 Corporate Recruiting Report — Enterprise Edition
2010 Corporate Recruiting Report — Small and Mid-Size Edition

Mastering Internet Recruiting: Job Seeker Attitudes & Behaviors
The Employer/Candidate Disconnect

Our next two research reports, *Candidate Attitudes and Behaviors* and *Marketing and Sourcing*, focus on the supply side of the corporate supply/demand equation.

Why do we feel this is important when the U.S. economy appears to be returning to an even keel and unemployment has begun to fall? Because the issue we are referring to has little to do with unemployment.

*It’s about something – a disconnect – far more pervasive and consequential: the way employers today go about finding the talent they need versus the way job seekers go about finding the companies they might like to work for.*

This disconnect affects all job candidates at all levels in all types of job markets, whether they are anxiously looking for work on a daily basis or happily employed and not looking at all. Neither side is pleased with the status quo. Candidates decry the mechanistic, impersonal, unresponsive nature of the system and employers complain about its efficiency and effectiveness.

We have been researching candidate behavior since 2007. At first we accepted the common categorization of workers as either active or passive, with each group having distinctive attitudes and behaviors that required traditional, well-understood job marketing approaches. But the more data we saw, the less those categories made sense. They seemed to be artifacts from another time when most employment was long-term and most people changed jobs infrequently. But they made no sense at all in a fragmented, turbulent job market where employers increasing sought highly flexible, worldwide workforces and job seekers increasingly held a dozen or more jobs between school and retirement.

Our clients are well aware of the internal adjustments they have had to make over the past decade to remain competitive in the job market. In the years ahead, those changes will not stop; more probably they will accelerate. The drivers of marketplace change – globalization, demographics and technology – will continue to roil the job marketplace.
These drivers have changed the hiring equation for both employers and candidates, but more so for candidates. The old job marketplace was information-scarce and hard to navigate. Candidates played on a field tilted sharply in the employer’s favor. Today that field is at least level, with abundant information about job opportunities and employers only a mouse-click away. This information has greatly empowered job seekers, who can now shop for career opportunities just as easily as they shop for homes, cars or vacations.

This new environment means employers need updated intelligence about what candidates are thinking and doing.
Changes in the Ecosystem

“To understand the what, one must understand the why.”

All our reports refer back to the changes taking place in the broad labor landscape: that high-altitude view we refer to as the staffing ecosystem. The material in this section summarizes the changes that have affected job candidates’ perception of today’s job market and the behaviors they have adopted to succeed there. A fuller analysis of those changes can be found in our 2011 Trends Report.

Efficiency, effectiveness and business impact are the staffing imperatives of 21st century staffing. To be successful, what perspectives must we develop? Once day-to-day concerns are dealt with, where should we focus? What should our planning take into account?

There are powerful trends at work in the marketplace that are altering where work is done and who does it, how companies are structured and how workers look for jobs. The recent recession has placed particular emphasis on efficiency and in our view a recovery will not appreciably reverse this. The pressures of global competition are too great and the costs of inefficient human capital management too well established. Our clients do not appear to be retreating from the best practices they have worked so hard to put in place.

Long-Term Trends

Globalization, demographics and technology are interacting in complex and fascinating ways. For example, demographics create labor imbalances that over time influence mobility. Companies move work to where the most profitable labor pools are located while workers move themselves to where the best opportunities are. Technology has accelerated this trend by exponentially increasing job visibility. From a communications standpoint, the potential labor supply for many jobs is now worldwide, available in any city, town or village that has Internet service.
We refer to long-term trends in all our reports because they are the deep currents on which all staffing boats float. Failure to account for these movements as we set business objectives means possibly putting down anchors in the wrong places and having to scramble when the tide goes out.

Most of the published research on the supply side of the job market consists of government labor statistics: employment statistics, workforce growth, and demographic data. This high-level information is the foundation of long-term workforce planning but it is a poor indicator of hiring success. It tells us a good deal about how many fish there are in the sea and where they are, but it doesn’t tell us how to successfully fish for them.

**Globalization**

Globalization now affects every aspect of who works where and what they do. A distant, unfamiliar, segmented world has become an easily accessed, interconnected, interdependent world. It used to be difficult and time-consuming to look for work outside a local area. Now job seekers can search worldwide from their living room couches. It used to take months for a company based in Istanbul to source talent for a new office in San Francisco. Now it can source hundreds of candidates in a day.
### Driver | Candidate Impact
--- | ---
**Globalization** | increases mobility  
|  | increases opportunity  
|  | increases corporate instability
**Competition** | increases corporate instability  
|  | decreases job security  
|  | increases economic volatility

### Competition

Globalization increases competition. For most of the last century, the United States held very good, competitive cards: a large, wealthy, homogeneous domestic market; ample natural resources; access to risk capital; an outstanding legal system; and an exceptionally well-educated, productive, and ambitious workforce. Our businesses were innovative, well financed and aggressive. Globalization has reduced those advantages. Roughly half the largest and most successful enterprises in the world are now based outside the United States. Talent demand has skyrocketed and talent flows are now extremely complex.

**Mobility**

Globalization has also fostered mobility: the ability to move work to workers and workers to work. Mobility has been steadily increasing for decades, driven by decreases in the costs of transportation and communication. Wherever there is work, word now quickly circulates around the globe and workers may respond from anywhere.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Candidate Impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>increases opportunity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>decreases loyalty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>forces mobility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>can increase job competition</td>
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<td>can decrease job competition</td>
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**Demographics**

U.S. demographic trends are well-publicized and include imbalances of older and younger workers as well as workers in the wrong places possessing the wrong skill sets. In other parts of the world such imbalances are even more severe: ageing populations in Europe and Japan, huge youth surpluses in the Middle East and deficits in China.

**Education**

Not so long ago, American and European workforces were the best educated in the world. Today many other countries are successfully educating their populations and unleashing their energies and ambitions. U.S. educational performance has fallen to mid-rank. Declining workforce quality, combined with repatriation of foreign students and restrictive immigration policies, constitute long-term U.S. recruiting problem.
### Driver | Candidate Impact
--- | ---
**Education** | increases opportunity & choice  
| | increases aspirations  
| | stimulates mobility

**Changing nature of work** | affects social contract  
| | decreases job security  
| | creates instability

---

**The Changing Nature of Work**

Not too long ago, most work was manual; today, most is knowledge or service-based. Globalization requires cross-cultural fluency. Computerization requires technical sophistication. Flattened, matrixed organizations require refined communication and leadership skills. These are new and unfamiliar job competencies for large segments of the working population.

**Corporate Instability**

As businesses adjust to globalized competition and fluid, rapidly changing economic conditions, business restructurings of all kinds have accelerated. Few employees today have not been personally affected by some, plant closing, merger or acquisition, restructuring, downsizing or off-shoring initiative. Over time, these painful workforce adjustments have altered the social contract that binds together workers and employers.

### Driver | Candidate Impact
--- | ---
**Corporate Instability** | alters social contract  
| | decreases job security  
| | decreases loyalty

**Speed of Change** | decreases job security  
| | increases corporate instability  
| | increases economic volatility

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**Speed of Change**

The world as a whole, and the workplace in particular, is changing more rapidly than ever, which has caused workers to mentally adjust the duration of their social
and professional contracts with employers. Spending one’s entire working career with one or two employers, once the norm, is now the exception.

**Management Best Practice**

Senior managers today are more apt to believe – as opposed to merely say – that ample, high quality human assets are as critical to business health as ample, high-quality financial or physical assets. This upgraded emphasis on people has been accompanied by the need to create ways of measuring and monitoring that value. Companies are struggling with those metrics. Even today, a surprising number of large, successful companies have only rudimentary programs in place.

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<tr>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Candidate Impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management best practice</strong></td>
<td>greater focus on talent</td>
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<td></td>
<td>increased competition for talent</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>revised social contract</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td>more information &amp; choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>encourages mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>decreases worker loyalty</td>
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**Technology**

The evolution of staffing technology over the past several decades has been extraordinarily rapid and shows no sign of slowing. On the whole, this has favored job seekers and early-adopter employers, causing the gap between recruiting best practice and average practice to widen. This has resulted in a job market of haves and have-nots where some employers are able to attract all the talent they need, while others suffer chronic shortages.
Job Seeker Adaptations

It’s easy to overstate the significance of attitude studies in several ways: first, by suggesting that a spot measurement signifies a trend; and second by stating that the trend is significant. Professional pollsters know that the public mood is notoriously fickle and can reverse itself very quickly. Academics are better at collecting data over time and examining it rigorously for meaning and significance, but their work takes time and often appears long after it might have had a practical business application.

What we attempt to do here is thread the needle. Our clients have talent acquisition and management needs today. They can’t wait for the results of a ten-year longitudinal study. We have been studying candidates for four years and see consistency in both our formal and anecdotal data as well as in the data reported by others. For our purposes that is sufficient.

Obviously the following conclusions do not apply equally to all candidates. Many people work for unselfish reasons, would never relocate or job-hop for career reasons, and are perfectly happy at the lower or middle rungs of the corporate ladder. But the group data does provide useful guidance that can inform staffing decisions today and improve staffing results tomorrow.

The two tall poles around which the following changes in candidate attitude revolve are: a) information access and; b) the employer-employee social contract.

Tell Me More

Yesterday’s job market was built around information scarcity. Standards for corporate self-disclosure were low, so employers could release relatively little information and not be viewed as secretive. Candidates who happened to be diligent researchers could find ex-employees to talk to or unearth company intelligence in a business library, but such searches were time-consuming and inconvenient, and good local library resources were unavailable in many places.

Comp, benefits and lifestyle information were considered privileged company information, to be released only to job finalists, and even then only as individually relevant. To a considerable extent, job hunting was a caveat emptor proposition.
The Internet has radically changed all this. Job research is now vastly more convenient and efficient (although still not perfect), and social networks provide extraordinary access not only to ex-employees of a target employer, but also to current ones. This new information-rich environment has affected candidate attitudes in several ways.

- First, it has changed expectations. A question is now *supposed* to be answered; information is now *supposed* to be there. Failure to find what one seeks is an irritant.

- Second, if information is not available someone or something takes the blame. If the search engine results are deficient it’s the browser’s fault. If the social network fails to find a contact then the network is lousy. And if an employer fails to provide useful, attractive candidate information on his jobsite, he now pays a direct brand penalty.

Some employers have capitalized on this new expectation by creating lavish amounts of candidate-friendly information that they offer to share in all sorts of attractive, graphically enhanced ways. Because these sites are exceptions they stand out when compared to other employers who still adhere to the old information rules. Candidates notice the difference and tell us that their job-search behavior is affected.
While information transparency has benefited both employers and candidates, we believe candidates have benefited more. In information-poor job markets employers have a decided advantage. Often the only way a candidate can really evaluate an employer is to be hired first and do their due diligence after the fact.

Today’s employees need not do that. They can now easily access deep, broad archives of information that used to be only available in major business libraries, as well as powerful new, informal, social resources.

Tell Me the Truth

Information quantity is not necessarily synonymous with information quality. More is not necessarily better. From the candidates’ perspective, the information they seek has two purposes: to accurately distinguish between opportunities; and to synchronize pre-hire expectations with post-hire experiences. The difference now is that experiencing lots of information has allowed them to develop more sophisticated antenna about what is honest, straightforward and aligned with their interests, and what is not.

Television advertising provides a useful analogy. We look back at network commercials from an earlier era, or at inexpensive local cable television ads, and chuckle at their lack of sophistication and production values. Even if we know nothing about media, years of exposure have allowed us to develop an appreciation for camera work, editing, story lines and copywriting.

Internet recruiting is now more than 20 years old. Candidates have had ample time to develop a similar appreciation for employer pitches. The calculated, modulated, bland assertions of corporate PR (“Every company says their people are important...”)
but our company really believes it!”) no longer carry much weight. Candidates want direct, intimate, unfiltered commentary, preferably from the shop floor or the executive suite. Production values are less important than credibility and authenticity.

**Best information sources**

- Employee testimonials
- Current employees via chat, email, blogs...
- Video and slide tours of facilities
- Employee case studies & bios
- Corporate financial statements
- Presentations by managers & executives
- Corporate honors & awards

**It’s My Life, Not Yours**

This refers to the social contract that binds all employers and employees, whether they are hourly, part-timers, contract workers, lifetime union employees, or executives. Regardless of what is written in the actual employment agreement, it’s a devilishly complicated arrangement involving all sorts of implied promises and expectations.

Over the years, this social contract between the two parties has become less sure. Employers, buffeted by globalization, volatile business cycles and competition, have sought workforce flexibility. Candidates have had to accept uncertainty as a career constant. The net effect has been the near disappearance of the old, lifetime job-plus-pension arrangement and the rise of its replacement, the self-governed, multi-job career path.

A candidate who expects to remain with an employer for a limited amount of time has a different perspective on his employment than a lifer. He knows his social contract is much more self-determined, even if he lives paycheck to paycheck. Because he knows his employer’s loyalty to him is conditional, he qualifies his own loyalty to the employer.
This diluted arrangement has recruiting implications, which are often characterized negatively, particularly in younger workers, as a self-centered, what’s-in-it-for-me narcissism. Our judgment is less harsh. The safety nets are pretty much gone these days and candidates know it. Their attitude is highly realistic. In their view, dropping the fictional veil of boundless mutual loyalty up front clears the air and puts the potential match on a better footing.

### Workforce sentiments — Labor Day 2010

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<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feel less job security compared to a year ago</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not optimistic about direction of U.S. economy</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy what I’m doing but would consider another job with more pay/benefits</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company does not help/support work life balance</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not take a vacation in last year</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel more negative toward job since start of recession</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not disconnect from work while on vacation</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked from home while sick</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dislike what I am doing and I am actively looking for a new job</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dislike what I am doing but I will wait until another opportunity presents itself or for things to improve before looking for another job</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
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_Spherion/Monster staffing services, Labor Day Workforce Survey, 2010_

### Of Course I’m Looking

Over the years, we’ve gradually stopped referring to candidates as either active or passive. The fact is, 80% of all workers are in the market to one degree or another. They may look rarely, or only respond when an opportunity serendipitously drops in their lap, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t interested in the right opportunity and wouldn’t move if they knew about it.

Many employers reject this information, insisting that they offer wonderful places to work and that their retention numbers prove it. True, some employers have made themselves into powerful talent magnets and lose valued talent infrequently. But most have not. The majority of employers, the 60% clustered at and below the mean retention metrics, are far more liable to talent loss than they suspect.
With little loyalty to bind them, no safety net to protect them, and all the weight of security on their shoulders, it should come as no surprise that the most employees keep some kind of eye on the market.

Mobility is a Good Career Move

Exceptional mobility is a distinctly American cultural characteristic. We have always moved to take jobs, change jobs, seek the advantages of city life or country life, attend college, seek warm climates, retire, escape family or return to it.
Mobility is a fact of modern life. No one enjoys forced mobility — being fired or having a needed or desirable job disappear from under his feet, but this is a negative from a worker’s perspective, not a candidate’s perspective. As education and sophistication increase, candidates are enjoying elective mobility because it offers expanded opportunity and more choice.

While technology is reducing travel as a condition of work, it is increasing it as an elective option. Video conferencing grew sharply during the recession and leading staffing departments have discovered its practicality for candidate interviewing. And the comfort of maintaining home ties, coupled with the career benefits of a diverse, worldwide CV, and the personal benefits of exposure to different cultures and lifestyles, are all contributing to more mobility rather than less.

All recruiters understand that relocation has a double edge, winning some talents and losing others. However they may not have observed that education and the willingness to relocate for work rise in tandem. As skills and education rise, so does the willingness to move. As the world globalizes and information about opportunities increases, candidates’ horizons expand as well. We observe this phenomenon worldwide and not necessarily as a flow from poorer countries to wealthier ones. Mobility is no longer a distinctly American phenomenon. Where education rises, the world beckons.

![Willingness to relocate for work](image)

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Staffing.org
Don’t Waste My Time

With ATSs stuffed with resumes, it may come as a surprise that candidates have little regard for the typical corporate recruiting process, which has not improved much since the days of paper resumes and file cabinets. It’s still an enormously wasteful endeavor reminiscent of diamond mining: tons of earth moved per carat of value.

The slick technology of automated applications, data mining and automated responses has not improved candidates’ experiences in most cases. They are still trapped in a system that doesn’t really know who they are, doesn’t tell them much about the job they’re applying for, and doesn’t let them know where they stand or what their prospects are. The recruiting black hole remains the de facto standard.

The data tells us that candidates have three reactions to this system, two of them negative. First, they shotgun the system with applications hoping the law of averages will eventually work in their favor. Second, even when a match appears good, they give up on the application because the process is so frustrating. And third, they respect the employer who treats them like an individual rather than a number even if the response to their application is negative.

This really isn’t so strange. Being annoyed by bad customer service is universal because it insults us and wastes our time. Why should the recruiting process be exempt? Conversely we celebrate good customer service because it makes us feel good and it’s so rare.
Employer Adaptations

Two of marketing’s fundamentals are: understanding the customer and communicating with the customer. In a world where communication and information were limited, HR didn’t have to worry too much about marketing. Consequently, the expertise developed in other departments for selling products and managing corporate images never migrated there. Good recruiters have always been good salespeople but very few were ever tasked with creating a brand presence in the job marketplace focused specifically on candidates.

That was yesterday. Today’s candidates live in an information-rich environment filled with choice. They know that there is no social contract they can depend on and that they must be responsible for their own careers. This has changed their attitudes and habits. How will employers have to adapt if they are to continue attracting the talent they need?

Adapting to Change

Change is hard; few managers enjoy it; few companies make it a cornerstone of company culture. Departments charged with corporate talent acquisition have been asked to change a lot in the past 20 years but they are still not departments used to rapid change or comfortable with it. As managers of complex, demanding administrative systems they are happiest when things are in a steady state and running smoothly.

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<th>Lower Performing Companies</th>
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<td>Strategy execution/alignment</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Leadership development</td>
<td>Managing/coping with change</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Talent management</td>
<td>Leadership development</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Performance management</td>
<td>Talent Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Knowledge retention</td>
<td>Innovation &amp; creativity</td>
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*i4cp, The Critical Human Capital Issues of 2011*

The 20th century recruiting model did not require much change. A recruiter dropped from one staffing department into another could quickly feel at home because most employers did things the same way, using the same tools and processes.
But when the world changes and we don’t, we become progressively more inefficient and ineffective. Such is the case today in enterprise recruiting. The candidate’s world has changed every bit as much as the employer’s but he has adapted faster. As a party of one, he doesn’t have to organize a committee, prepare a business case, check with purchasing or worry about depreciation. He can check with his boss by looking in the mirror.

Social media is a good example. Having only personal technical systems to modify, job seekers are adapting to new communication technologies very rapidly. Employers, on the other hand, working within the constraints of large, complex systems, have a much harder time. So job seekers are racing ahead to develop new information habits and channels while employers are frequently trying to reach them through messages and channels that have lost relevance.

The rate of change must accelerate in most corporate recruiting departments. It already has in some, which is why we see the gap in performance statistics related to efficiency and effectiveness approaching 100%. This means the numbers reported at the front of the bell curve are twice as good as those reported at the back.

Expertise in change management was not a management requirement in the 20th century corporate staffing model. In the 21st century model it already is.

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*IBM’s recent study of 700 CHROs worldwide found they cited three workforce gaps as the biggest opportunities for HR. All involve continuing change and adaptation.*

“However, while businesses have traditionally managed their workforces with an eye toward operational efficiency, they have not necessarily done so with the creativity, flexibility and speed to capitalize on the growth opportunities that spring from a dynamic global marketplace. Nurturing these capabilities will require organizations to focus on cultivating leaders, mobilizing their workforces for greater speed and flexibility, and capitalizing on collective intelligence – things they admittedly have not done well in the past.”

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*Working Beyond Borders, IBM white paper*
Adapting to Talent Scarcity

There has always been intense competition for the highest quality talent and there always will be. That particular supply/demand equation is no different today than it has ever been.

However, globalization has vastly expanded the scope of that competition, made it more complicated, and raised the performance bar for top talent competitors.

10-15% of all companies, large and small, have made themselves such able competitors that they are not experiencing talent shortages. They usually land the candidates they seek, keep them as long as they need to, and always have a line of competent candidates waiting at the door.

Everyone else is in a war for talent.

Becoming a top competitor is achievable for more companies, but it requires changing old perspectives, habits and processes (see above). Success begins with understanding today’s evolving talent ecosystem and how jobseekers operate there.

From a macroeconomic point of view, good or bad job markets can be defined by unemployment rates. However, from a recruiting point of view, those statistics make much less sense because the great majority of potential candidates are already employed. What really defines good or bad recruiting markets for most companies is recruiting competence. Some companies are successful competitors while others aren’t. In the absolute sense, top talent is always relatively scarce. Yet
some of our clients have all they need all the time. Others do not. So we view the situation as “how good at recruiting are you?”

What really defines good or bad recruiting markets for most companies is recruiting competence.

Adapting to Talent Mobility

From staffing’s perspective increased worker mobility is a mixed blessing. On the one hand it provides access to more candidates; on the other, it increases the risk of losing one’s own employees. Companies seeking to minimize the liability and maximize the opportunity are adapting by:

1. Viewing employee restlessness, often expressed in surveys as low engagement or increased receptivity to new job offers, as the new normal. They are no longer making planning assumptions based on a stable workforce but rather on an unstable one, using detailed data on voluntary separations and average worker tenure as benchmarks.

2. Focusing on their retention programs. They assume that the people they most want to keep are being regularly solicited and that sooner or later tempting offers will surface. Succession planning, high potential programs, learning and development opportunities, career planning and regular comp and benefit assessments all reflect this focus.

3. Emphasizing knowledge transfer from senior to junior workers through formal and informal learning, mentoring, job sharing and careful succession planning.

4. Offering mobility to workers in all its forms including not only assignments in new geographies but also job rotations, internal transfers, mobile technologies, remote workplaces and flex-time. They are harnessing the lures of mobility – the desire for change, advancement, novelty, excitement or lifestyle change – and removing two of its biggest liabilities, uncertainty and risk.

5. Viewing structure as something inherently dynamic rather than inherently static. They are reviewing structure often to make sure it is always facilitating change and not inhibiting it.
6. Leveraging technology. In the past most worker mobility was physical: either the worker relocated or the employer did. Now it can be increasingly virtual. They are not only investing in work portability, but also encouraging social technologies — Internet telephony, text messaging, Skype, email, Flickr, Facebook and Twitter — that preserve the social context of the workplace and relationships with friends, family and co-workers.

Adapting the Social Contract

Globalization increases competition. For most of the last century the United States held very good, competitive cards that helped us build the most powerful economy in the world. Now many other countries hold similar cards and, in addition, some cards we no longer do, like access to large pools of low cost labor.

In today’s increasingly competitive marketplace, businesses need maximum workforce agility and flexibility. To compete effectively they must be able to downsize, expand, acquire, merge, enter or leave markets, and develop or abandon products – and often all these things simultaneously – whenever circumstances demand. The negative press attached to many of these actions is a constant headache.

Our data shows that candidates have increasingly accepted the inherent uncertainty of the working world and are programming their careers accordingly. They don’t believe in the old social contract any more than employers do. For both parties “forever” is a conditional term: nice to hear but undependable.
Realizing this, leading employers are changing their workforce composition from one dominated by FTEs to one that includes greater numbers of contract workers, part-time workers and strategic partners. Instead of “building a workforce,” progressive CHROs now think in terms of “aggregating talent.” If the costs are right and the right talent is in the right place at the right time, it makes less and less difference to them which worker category supplies it.

Candidates tell us they don’t mind. A reliable, short-term employment contract is preferable to an unreliable long-term commitment that may be terminated with short notice when least expected.

**Adapting Information**

Candidates like transparency as much as employers dislike it. Candidates want to be able to see a company as it really is, as they will experience it if they become employees. Employers, on the other hand, often view transparency as a competitive liability. If they reveal too much or the wrong things, competitors will take advantage, investors will flee or raiders will pounce. Unless the news is favorable, no news is good news.
Leading employers are recalibrating such information policies toward greater openness because they have realized that:

1. Openness is very attractive to candidates and a sign of strength. Even if their short-term thinking is dominated by the need to buy groceries, candidates will still be keenly interested in the “real story” about how the employer operates, how it values its human capital and what its prospects are. Also, because they value their time as much as employers value theirs, they appreciate not wasting it if the job match isn’t good.

2. Painting pretty pictures for candidates is very expensive if they don’t end up on the wall. Over-promising or misrepresentation will be found out anyway once they are on board and will inevitably set the stage for disenchantment, disillusionment, and ultimately disassociation. The financial consequences of that are far greater than the direct costs of rehiring.

3. The Internet has made it very difficult to tightly manage information.

4. The Internet frequently allows misinformation to be accepted as truth. When that happens, the real story, directly from the employer, helps to blunt its impact.

The bottom line is that they are choosing not to operate at cross-purposes to candidates, who technology has turned into avid and discerning information consumers.
Adapting Process

Candidates have never had positive things to say about the traditional recruiting process. This is because its efficiency was based on separating a small number of hires from a large number of applicants as efficiently as possible. This meant:

1. Brief job descriptions tailored to fit classified newspaper formats combined with a limited amount of printed material. If candidates wanted any additional information, either about the employer or the opportunity, they had to do their own legwork.

2. Candidate vetting had to be ruthless: resumes scanned and preliminary candidate lists screened as quickly as possible; and expensive, time-consuming interviews kept to a minimum.

The result was a process adapted to employer needs but not at all friendly to candidates, who coined the term “black hole” to describe lack of closure, or even acknowledgement, with most applications.

The Internet has turned this model upside down, allowing employers the opportunity to create a new recruiting process built around easily accessed jobsites packed with useful information, and rich, scalable, personalized candidate interactions.
A good jobsite with good follow-up, probably a good company to work for; a bad jobsite with no feedback, not worth the effort.

The Internet is now the job seeker’s primary information gateway to potential employers. For many, it provides a reliable proxy for the recruiting process itself and by extension what working there would be like: a good jobsite with good follow-up, probably a good company to work for; a bad job site with no feedback, not worth the effort. If one views candidates as job shoppers, this behavior is consistent with shopping behavior in other markets where presentation has long been considered one of the critical elements in making sales.

Adaptive companies that have evolved their process to reflect this are experiencing:

1. More positive employer branding in the job marketplace, which pays off when the best candidates come on the market
2. A deeper pool of “next best” candidates who may not fit the organization now, but very well might in the future
3. Leverage through exploding viral social networks where candidates freely share details of their personal and professional lives, including job searches.

Adapting to Technology

One irony of technology’s invasion of the recruiting space is how little overall industry efficiency and effectiveness metrics have changed since we began measuring them in 1998. This suggests that what has occurred in many companies is the automation of old recruiting systems rather than the creation of new ones.

Instead of using technology to create something that lowers costs and produces better corporate value, many companies have used it to create a higher wheat-to-chaff ratio – i.e. more applications per hire – in effect making the old user-unfriendly model even more user-unfriendly. They have created the illusion of progress – expense, inconvenience and retraining – but without the benefits.
Using technology and adapting to technology are quite different activities. Technology has now evolved sufficiently that adaptive companies can use it to change how they find candidates, educate and persuade them, and optimize their value over time. For example they can now:

1. Use information-rich jobsites to provide customized search experiences for many different kinds of candidates: passive and active, exempt and non-exempt, junior level and senior level
2. Cater to passive candidates (most of the market) by eliminating barriers to casual browsing like registration and personal identification
3. Create rich, opt-in streams of information for candidates who want to follow their company over time
4. Encourage (even require) that candidates demonstrate competency online through problem solving and skills tests
5. Leverage data assets into comprehensive reports and executive dashboards that address both operating efficiency and bottom line business impact
6. Leverage the social media behavior of their employees by creating adjunct recruiter programs
7. Interview candidates virtually instead of physically
These and other staffing initiatives are the building blocks of new staffing models that are candidate friendly, improve funnel ratios, find candidates more quickly, improve financial accountability and produce concrete business results.

Along the way, some are also discovering that best-in-class technology performance is better bought than built. A good example is Microsoft, certainly a tech-savvy company, who found jobsite creation sufficiently time-consuming that they hired an outside company to do the work: 400 pages, constantly updated, for all their product lines, divisions and geographies.

**Adapting to Clutter**

The Internet is a powerful recruiting tool but what it bestows in reach it compromises in clutter. While a company’s staffing communications are now visible to every desirable candidate, so are everyone else’s.

Wealthy companies can afford to blast through this clutter by simply outspending competitors. Their rationale is similar to buying million-dollar Super Bowl spots on television. But not every company can afford this tactic, nor is it necessarily the most efficient way to tap small talent pools of upper level talent over long periods of time.

The adaptive alternative stresses analytics and leveraging employees’ family, online and professional networks. Staffing technologies can now generate precise data on who is looking, where they are looking, what information they value and how they are reacting. Analyzing that data pinpoints which sources are generating the most interest and producing the highest percentage of qualified candidates and hires. (Sample on following page) Clients who do this well can leverage smaller budgets into outstanding performance.

Leveraging employee networks means:

1. Making talent acquisition and retention a core competency of the entire organization, not just the recruiting department
2. Encouraging and rewarding employees for recommending good candidates
3. Evaluating managers for achieving human capital as well as financial objectives
4. Developing marketing and branding programs targeted equally at current and prospective employees

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**Adapting to Complexity**

The era when everyone recruited more or less the same way using the same tools has been superseded by an era where there are a great many more tools and ways of using them. Process differentiators now include technology, information management, process, structure, outsourcing, marketing and candidate relationship management.

Rising complexity has made top efficiency more complicated and difficult to achieve. Our research shows a growing gap between leaders and laggards. The differentials in various efficiency measurements such as time and cost are now approaching 100%, meaning that leaders are recruiting nearly twice as efficiently as laggards.

This is not solely a function of company size and staffing budgets, although large companies with large recruiting budgets do benefit from economies of scale and marketplace brand recognition. But smaller companies also have advantages. They can focus their organizations more easily, adapt more quickly, provide more
personalized experiences and are less apt to remain trapped by legacy attitudes, habits and processes.

Complexity always creates winners and losers because rates of adaptation differ. Some companies are simply more alert, nimble and focused than others, and as a result they pull ahead while their competitors fall behind. The assets appropriate in stable times – large, embedded, refined, sophisticated structures and processes – can become liabilities in unstable, rapidly-changing times.
SUMMARY

In 2010 the Gallup organization released the results of a major, worldwide study of human aspirations. Basically they wanted to know what people wanted in life. The unambiguous clarity of the result stunned them. The study, Global Migration Patterns and Job Creation, includes this statement by Jim Clifton, Gallup’s Chairman and CEO:

Gallup is committed to conducting the World Poll for 100 years, but we may have already found the single most searing, clarifying, helpful, world-altering fact. If used appropriately, it may change how every leader runs his or her country. But at the very least, it needs to be considered in every policy, every law, and every social initiative. All leaders – policy and lawmakers, presidents and prime ministers, parents, judges, priests, pastors, imams, teachers, managers, and CEOs – need to consider it every day in everything they do."

“What the whole world wants is a good job.

That is one of the single biggest discoveries Gallup has ever made. It is as simple and straightforward an explanation of the data as we can give.”

That universal need has always worked in employers’ favor. If they offered a job, any job, even minimally described, they could more or less be guaranteed that some kind of line would form at the door. What has changed lately in this supply/demand equation is the dynamic. With more access to job information, more employment choices, and with more uncertainty in the job market, job seekers are behaving differently. They no longer have to settle for what is available from the local convenience store; they can shop at the 24/7/365 supermarket.

This has led to a disconnect between employers and job seekers. The lines at the door are impossibly long in some places and distressingly short in others. Employers are not happier overall with the results and neither are candidates. Staffing efficiency has not improved and employees are increasingly restive. Most of them are keeping an eye out for better opportunities.

The technology that was supposed to usher in a better world of matchmaking has vastly increased matchmaking opportunities, but whether the overall results are qualitatively much better remains in doubt.
In our view, the situation can be much improved. Innovative staffing leaders are proving it. What we have attempted to do in this report is point to their successes and explain why they happened. As we do in all our reports, we frame this explanation as the clash of two recruiting models, one based on the manufacturing hiring office of 100 years ago, and the other that reflects today’s very different job market.

The Social Contract

Workers have also been paying close attention and making their own adjustments.

Adapting talent acquisition to our times begins with recognizing the forces that are at work in the job marketplace and what they are causing. Our audience of business people has been paying close attention all along and making changes appropriate to their focus on growth, competition, costs, and profits. They began shortening their planning cycles long ago to keep abreast of unexpected developments. It is now not unusual to have strategy reviews semi-annually, even quarterly, to make adjustments.

Workers have also been paying close attention and making their own adjustments. These have been gradual and are still far from universal or uniform. In some parts of the U.S., which has a relatively homogenous culture, employer/employee relationships haven’t changed much in generations. In other places they have changed a good deal.

But everywhere there are common signs, even in the most conservative areas: young people deserting their home towns for opportunities elsewhere; job-hopping that characterizes entire careers, not just career beginnings; younger workers intent on balancing lifestyles and paychecks; low engagement scores on worker surveys; Boomers worrying about relevance instead of retirement; mid-career managers wrestling with the costly trifecta of elder care, tuition and nest egg; burdensome health care costs; huge increases in job applications.

If there is one thing to draw from this report, it is the evolving expectations of candidates. Obviously every individual candidate has a unique set of wants and needs, but they are all products of a common environment that is information-rich and filled with choices.
They have had to learn to survive in an unstable and unpredictable world with flimsier safety nets. They have accepted less absolute power over their destinies, but also reclaimed a measure of personal control. And yes, while they want a paycheck, they have also learned to value other benefits — environment, community, fair treatment, personal growth, and personal meaning.

Companies seldom change HR policies proactively. They wait until some trigger event or some critical mass forces them to. We suggest that the time to review your social contract is now because we know that talent is a pressing issue and that some recruiting organizations are performing much better than others. If companies aspire to top recruiting performance tomorrow, the time to revisit their employer/employee social contract is today.

Marketing

Think of candidates as customers.

Hoarding information in a world that wants more of it, plus more clarity, more honesty and more transparency is swimming against a very powerful tide.

Think of candidates as customers. They are infrequently candidates but always customers. Everyone understands from thousands of experiences how good customer service empowers us and makes us feel valued, and bad customer does the opposite. Traditional recruiting doesn’t properly value on that universal experience.

Become familiar with the extensive research into customer attitudes (psychographics) that now resides in your company’s sales and marketing departments as well as in third party PR and marketing agencies.

Brand marketing is how you want people to think about you. However, your brand is what they have actually experienced. Who you are is more important than what you say. The best job market branding begins internally, with your current employees. Be a great employer.

Instead of trying to overpower the message clutter of the Internet by spending more money, use its viral capabilities. The Internet can be a very fast, very powerful
brand multiplier. Make employees happy and set them loose. Let them socialize, brag, refer, and be your best advocates. They are the information source most trusted by candidates.

Much as they would like to, employers cannot not control messages on the Internet. In that viral world there are few secrets. The hunger for transparency is a need you can either try to satisfy or try to dodge. Be more open and honest than your competitors. You may lose a few candidates, but you will ultimately attract those with whom you are potentially most compatible.

**Technology**

*Leverage technology. Its optimal productivity lies not in streamlining old processes but in creating new ones.*

Use it to narrow the funnel at the top. Tune it to deliver the lowest wheat-to-chaff ratios, not the highest. 1000 resumes are no better than 20 if the 20 contain the 5 viable candidates you want to interview. You will also have saved 980 candidates time and frustration. The perfect ratio of applicants to openings isn’t 100 to 1 or 1000 to one, it’s 1 to one: ten openings, ten ideal candidates.

Use it to create structural improvements by moving expensive internal staff from transactional roles (screening and scheduling functions) to quality control (candidate development and interview functions). Financially speaking, the impact of staffing quality is much greater than the impact of staffing efficiency.

Consider outsourcing. World-class talent acquisition is increasingly complex and technology has become a core competency. If you don’t have that competency and decide not to develop it, find a strategic partner.

Use it to exploit information. Recruiting technology has three great attributes that are often underutilized: volume, interactivity and media.

1. **Volume** means it can store tremendous amounts information cheaply. Candidates want information and different candidates want different kinds. Your jobsite is a big container. Fill it up.
2. Interactivity means its two-way capabilities: surveys, forums and discussions, skills tests, and opt in newsletters, notifications and blogs. Use it to answer questions, gather market intelligence, keep in touch, and to establish and build relationships.

3. Media means sound, pictures and video. Words can be the information backbone, but these additions can capture attention and leave impressions that words cannot. A video clip by the CEO has more brand impact than those same words in a printed quote.

4. Use it to adjust traffic patterns. Your jobsite can tell you exactly how candidates use it, what they look at, where they come from, whether they come once or repeatedly, and much more. Google provides extensive website analytics for free.

Process Counts

*Process counts. It either supports your brand or undercuts it. It either leaves the candidate feeling gratified, indifferent or frustrated.*

Because their recruiting processes are so familiar and entrenched, many companies don’t realize how anti-consumer their legacy recruiting process are. In effect, those processes invite as many people as possible to a party, then make all but a few stand outside in the rain. The disconnect with job seekers begins here.

Our surveys show that the differences between staffing leaders and the rest of the pack aren’t so much a question of leaders doing things that the rest aren’t. In many cases they are doing the same things, but leaders are doing them at a higher level and more consistently. Leaders are not necessarily smarter than everyone else but they are usually better at process and execution.

Today’s front-end recruiting experiences are mostly virtual and they happen very fast, often in a few seconds. Processes have to take this into account. Candidates tell us that web design and ease-of-use are critical to keeping them engaged. Web analytics data is the only way to know which content attracts candidates and which does not.
If you can’t do something well outsource it. Today’s RPO providers are getting more and more capable and can now provide services that are more efficient and effective than our median enterprise clients’ internal services. (We explore this in greater detail in our February, 2011 report, Strategic Outsourcing.)

Terrific recruiting process is not mainly about cost; it’s about brand-building and candidate quality. Get the branding right and your costs will decline because you’ll have an easier time finding candidates. (It’s easier finding people who are already lined up at the door.) You’ll also have an easier time selling them because they’ll be presold. Get the quality right and big numbers on your P & L will improve.

Good process does not create waste; it minimizes it. Create as little waste as possible and have the best possible waste treatment process in industry. Let candidates know where they stand.

Process counts. It either supports your brand or undercuts it. It either leaves the candidate feeling gratified, indifferent or frustrated. You control which.

**Adaptability Wins**

Talent scarcity…talent mobility…social contract…information management…process…technology…clutter…complexity…marketing

Changing how companies think and act isn’t easy and the larger they are the more difficult it is. It’s hard enough to create something that works without having to consider rethinking it and beginning over again. Apply the brakes too much and you’ll fall behind; step on the gas too hard and you’ll never reap the full benefits of what you just finished building. CEOs always say change management is one of their biggest challenges.

At the moment there are a lot of moving parts in the talent ecosystem. Very little is static. This is perhaps the most challenging recruiting environment in history, not because the basic supply/demand labor equation is so out of balance, but because there are so many ways to go about filling seats.

Evolution creates winners and losers. Complexity rewards focus, analysis and adaptability. The top recruiting organizations we track in our surveys tend to do
well in all markets. They react quickly to change, are early adopters, are leaders rather than followers, and make change part of their planning process. The more challenging the employment market the better they fare against competitors.

The fundamental issue of this report is employers and job seekers being out of sync. The job market playing field no longer favors employers over job seekers. It has leveled.

There is no reversing this process. Evolution does not proceed backward. Candidates will continue to exploit their new empowerment: the information landscape of the Internet, access to opportunity, more personal choices, and more rewarding career outcomes. They will also continue to move faster than employers because their adaptive systems are so much smaller: they can adopt new technologies in days; they can browse a dozen job opportunities in an evening.

HR is a conservative profession partly because it is the custodian of complex systems that resist rapid change. But today, at least from a talent acquisition standpoint, it has little choice but to move more quickly. In our January, 2011 Trends report we detailed all the forces at work in the staffing ecosystem. In our February, 2011 report, Strategic Outsourcing, we examined one of the ways talent acquisition teams can change more quickly by giving up time-consuming transactional tasks in order to pay more attention to delivering quality. Our fall report on Technology will revisit this issue. Our next report, Marketing and Sourcing, the companion to this report, examines the productivity of recruiting channels.

Of course we must bring up metrics and measurement as indispensible to change. Agility depends on data. If you don’t know where you’ve been, where you are, and where you want to go, you’re a blind man on a crooked path. You may make it to your destination but you’ll have bruised shins and a cold dinner.

Adaptability begins with mindset. Everyone has constraints: size, budgets, reputation, history, markets, competition, leadership and culture. But every company has the ability to adapt. There are no odds favoring one group over another. Every one can be a player if they choose to be.
Report Sponsor & Author

About Jobvite

We hope you found this report useful. Depending on your business needs, Jobvite can help with two product offerings:

**Jobvite Hire** is an easy-to-use and practical intuitive web-based platform that helps you effectively manage every stage of hiring. It’s the only social recruiting and applicant tracking solution that makes it easy for everyone to work together on hiring. With Jobvite Hire, you can improve the speed and quality of talent acquisition, create a great candidate experience, increase referral and social network hires – all while using fewer resources.

- Highly efficient management of the entire recruiting process
- Improved productivity for everyone involved in hiring
- Increase high quality employee referral hires
- Connect with relevant talent through social recruiting
- Actionable intelligence and analytics on all efforts

**Jobvite Source**, is an easy-to-use and practical intuitive web-based application that can help you achieve your recruitment sourcing goals today. It’s the only social sourcing and candidate relationship management application that helps you target relevant talent through employee referrals, social networks and the web – then build and engage your talent pool. Jobvite Source is one intuitive platform to manage all sourcing programs and see the results.

- Get results with social recruiting
- Build and engage your talent pool
- Target relevant talent anywhere on the web
- See what’s working with personalized dashboards
- Gain better intelligence to target the right talent while reducing costs

Plus, Jobvite Source works independently or with other applicant tracking and recruiting software you have now without complex, lengthy integration.
Jobvite is the only recruiting platform that delivers real-time recruiting intelligence with innovative technology for the evolving social web. Leading, fast-growing companies today use Jobvite’s social recruiting, sourcing and talent acquisition solutions to target the right talent and build the best teams. Jobvite is a complete, modular Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) platform which can optimize the speed, cost-effectiveness and ease of recruiting for any company.

**Staffing.org**

We have been researching, advising, consulting, lecturing, teaching, and writing about the 21st century corporate staffing model since 1998. Our primary objective is to collect data from our 34,000 subscribers, as well as from the more than 100 other sources we monitor, and to summarize that information in useful reports.

Our research focuses on three things:

- **Metrics and performance benchmarks** — Analyzing the present state of corporate talent acquisition and management
- **Trends** — Identifying and analyzing the evolutionary forces that are moving the staffing ecosystem in new directions
- **Best practices** — Guidance on how companies can best adapt to these changes

Our published products range from weekly research updates and monthly topical reports to our landmark annual Corporate Recruiting Report, now in its 14th edition and one of the bibles in the field. Topical coverage includes trends, strategic outsourcing, candidate attitudes and behavior, marketing and sourcing, cost, time, recruiter workload, recruiting effectiveness,
retention, department structure, technology, and business impact & leadership.

Basic membership in Staffing.org currently totals just over 34,000 companies and individuals worldwide representing all areas of corporate talent acquisition and management. Since 1998, over 4000 enterprises in all industry sectors, ranging from small consultancies to the Fortune 50, have purchased our research reports.

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