How to Build a Rich Talent Pool
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Introduction

The recruiting industry is not what it used to be. Jobs, technology, candidates, and strategies have all changed immensely over the past few years, as STEM positions proliferate, social media explodes, and a new generation of workers—complete with new habits, wants, and needs—has emerged.

You’ve probably felt the impact of this evolution firsthand, and you’ve realized that it doesn’t matter how many people are actually out there looking for jobs (or not looking for them, as the case might be). If you’re having trouble finding the right candidates for the right positions at the right times, you’re dealing with a talent shortage.

The issue, of course, isn’t really about finding people; average applicants are everywhere. Instead, it’s about finding people with skills—many of which are scarce and often short-lived—and stockpiling them for future opportunities. Unlike the process of recruiting for specific job openings, sourcing by skillset demands proper timing, preparation, and endurance. It’s about creating a talent pool that you cultivate and nurture before you even need to hire.

But how do you fill that pool? And how do you keep it full?

In this eBook, part of our Insight4theEnterprise series, we outline four critical ways you can ensure the development of a rich talent pool:

1. **Build and maintain a strong employment brand.** Like it or not, a good employment brand is your best asset when it comes attracting candidates.

2. **Cast a wide net.** Your ideal candidates are likely spread across a number of influential channels. It’s your job to go after them all.

3. **Create a simple, intuitive user experience.** Sounds basic—but this is vital to engaging prospects, particularly when they aren’t actively seeking employment in the first place. It’s also extremely important to easing your own workload.

4. **Continue engaging.** Understand that you’re never finished achieving candidate loyalty. You have to continuously work to sustain interest long-term, and unless you achieve the goal of hiring, you’re not succeeding.

Ready to learn more? Let’s get started.
Building a strong employment brand

Today’s emerging workforce is focused intently on finding meaning and experience beyond the traditional career. Even the most highly skilled employees don’t mind switching jobs every few years, if it means they can grow personally, contribute more, gain autonomy, or achieve better work-life balance. That’s why employers must work diligently today at fostering a brand that embodies these new cultural ideals. Communicate that you offer a place where people can be truly purposeful, and you are far more likely to gain the attention of both active and passive jobseekers. “The idea,” according to one expert with Bersin by Deloitte, “is that whether or not potential candidates are actively seeking employment, they are still passively exposed to the company as a favorable employer.”

Unfortunately, according to recent research, only 17% of global companies today “feel they have a compelling and engaging employment brand.” How does your organization compare? And how can companies work to improve both the delivery and perception of their employment brand?

Here are a few tips:

**Have your employees be your evangelists.** If you already have people working for your company that are happy with their jobs, then position them to tell the world about it. They are the most trustworthy advocates you will find. In fact, according to one 2013 report, “Employees rank higher in public trust than a firm’s PR department, CEO, or Founder. 41% of us believe that employees are the most credible source of information regarding their business.” Be sure workers have the tools they need to easily share engaging corporate or personal content—such as blog posts, updates, reviews, or articles—to all of their networks and connections.

**Have a killer online presence.** Without a doubt, you need to regularly and appropriately communicate with followers on your social networks. Today’s jobseekers are fluent on these platforms and can spot outdated content from a mile away. You also need an engaging and branded career site that showcases your employment culture across a variety of mediums—including photos, testimonials, and videos. And be consistent in the messages you send across all of your online channels. Remember, your brand needs to tell the story of what it’s like to work for your company, so you can earn the interest and loyalty of prospective applicants.

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Bersin by Deloitte
Be authentic. You can’t fill a talent pool with false promises. Be sure that the employment brand you communicate paints an accurate picture of your company culture. This means you must first understand the specific messages you want to convey to specific audiences. Executives don’t care about the same things that entry-level engineers care about. What can you share with prospects about your environment that will strike an emotional chord? Today’s workers crave this kind of transparency and will recognize and respect your honesty.

Monitor market perception. Be mindful that your employment brand is discussed in various places on a daily basis. Track what’s being said, and respond to questions or concerns. You need to be certain that your brand is doing what it’s supposed to do: helping you win the interest of high-quality talent.

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Casting a wide net

Remember that building a talent pool isn’t about sourcing specific candidates for specific jobs, but rather about pipelining scarce and valuable skill sets. Your first job, then, is to know where you have skills gaps—so you can determine how to effectively find and reach the owners of those skills. Think of your effort like a lead generation campaign. You’re marketing your company and employment brand in order to build interest among specific audiences. And just as in marketing, a multi-channel approach is the best way to efficiently and consistently reach the greatest number of people.

Here are some of the best channels to incorporate as you work to grow your talent pool:

Social media. According to the 2014 Jobvite Social Jobseeker Nation report4, today’s workers are using networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn as vital components of their job searches—not only to find jobs, but as forums for networking, advice and referrals. By establishing a solid presence on these networks and managing your employment brand, you give skilled prospects ample opportunity to engage with you. Look for tools that simplify this process by automating social broadcasts and easily capturing profile and resume data.

Career site. As mentioned earlier, you need a well-branded career site that offers potential employees a way to connect with you beyond simply applying for a job. Not everyone who visits your career page will be ready to apply or a good match for an open position. That doesn’t mean they won’t be valuable someday. (For more information on how to leverage career sites optimally, see the previous book in this series.)

Employee referral program. Referrals are the best source of new hires for a reason. Your existing employees—particularly your top performers—typically connect with like-minded people, many of whom share their skills, worth ethic, and business values. A strong employee referral program will help send those “pre-screened” prospects your way with little effort on your part. (Read more about best practices for employee referral programs here.)

Email lists. After you’ve built up your talent pool, whether through referrals, social media, or web search, make it simple for them to stay in the loop. Provide easy ways for them to opt in to your email list, so you can gather pertinent details about skills and experience and target your future communications appropriately.

Previous applicants and existing employees. Never underestimate the power of what you already have. Every one of your company’s current employees has the capability of being developed further, or might prove to be a skilled asset in a different position down the road. Likewise, anyone who has ever applied for a position with your company has the potential to match an open requisition in the future. Look for tools that help you archive and search prior applications or video interviews, as well as your entire talent pool—whether it’s through tagging or bucketing groups by department. When you have an effective way to sort and organize your talent, it’s easier to do due diligence on what your prospects, as well as existing employees, can offer.
Creating an intuitive user experience

An underlying theme in all of these suggested tips is ease of use. Passive job seekers in particular won’t go out of their way to join your talent pool. After all, they aren’t even looking for a job.

Bottom line: You have to make it easy for them—and for anyone whose skills you want in your corner—to gain interest, and then take action when the time is right. Create the right combination of messaging and usability, and you can convert passive prospects to active candidates.

Here are a few options for ensuring an intuitive experience:

**Job alert notifications.** For those folks who aren’t ready to apply for a job or don’t fit current openings, provide a way for them to hear immediately when new positions matching their skills appear. Consider placing a sign-up on your career site or various social networks that makes it easy for people to opt-in to communications tailored to their skills, locations, or interests.

**Social media integration.** No one likes to fill out endless forms repetitively. Wherever you can, enable social media logins, LinkedIn profile imports, and so on. The name of the game is easy.

**Single-click widgets and tools.** Don’t try to re-route interested people through a number of different pages just to get their information in your talent database. Look for tools that reduce the impact on a prospect to a single click.

**Mobile access.** Mobility is extremely hot right now. Research shows that jobseekers who are currently employed often turn to their mobile phones to learn about new opportunities or apply online, rather than use their work computers. Be sure that you have a strong mobile recruiting platform that maintains complete functionality across all major mobile devices. You never know where people might be when they hear about your company or a job opportunity from a friend or connection.

Additionally, while the prospect experience is incredibly important, your experience as a recruiter matters as well. If you find it’s too difficult to create a skilled talent pool, you won’t work at it. Look for tools that make your job easier, so you can focus less on the chore of data input and more on harnessing quality talent.

The most effective tools enable you to:

- Capture prospect data directly from web site pages, resume databases, or web searches.
- Import that data directly into a full-featured Candidate Relationship Management database.
- Easily import prospect resumes from a variety of sources—and, even better, bulk import resumes to save time!
- Automate posts to social networks or other online sites that attract skilled prospects.
- Archive, search, and filter applications and video interviews from previous applicants, so you can review them at a later time for matching qualifications.
- Integrate easily with your applicant tracking system, so prospects who ultimately apply for a job are fed directly to the next step in the process with no required data re-entry.
Continuing engagement

After you begin filling your talent pool, your next challenge is making sure it stays full. Prospects might show initial interest in your brand or your opportunities, but they won’t stay engaged if you don’t give them a reason. You need the people in your talent pipeline to have one foot in the door, so you don’t have to rebuild relationships from scratch every time you have an open requisition.

Prospects in your talent pool should be kept up to speed on your employment brand, messaging, workplace environment, and corporate culture. At the same time, you need to remain relevant. If you’re continuously reaching out to prospects with introductory content, they’ll fade out fast.

Here are a few tips for tackling this ongoing issue over time:

**Treat it like a nurture process.** Good lead generation campaigns are built around different touch points, understanding that prospects enter the track with varying levels of knowledge about your brand. Create your talent pool communication campaigns with these touch points in mind, crafting one message series for people who are completely new to your company’s culture, for example, and a more advanced message series for those people familiar with your brand but curious about next steps.

**Communicate with compelling style.** Launch and track campaigns across different channels, including email, social media, and web sites. Speak to your talent pipeline about the topics that they care about—not what you want them to care about. Use engaging graphics, photos, or video that capture attention while providing information that matters. Never send fluff.

**Always be respectful.** Any prospective candidate in your talent pool is someone whose time is valuable. Don’t bombard anyone with requests or emails. Communicate at the appropriate level of experience and skill (i.e., don’t put 15-year senior managers in the same category with recent college grads). And remember that they all have aspirations. Let them know you understand their goals, and your company looks forward to building a relationship where they can contribute meaningfully.

**Don’t stop reinforcing the employment brand.** Just because prospects know who you are doesn’t mean they don’t need continued implicit reminders. Be consistent in your messages, images, and style. You will lower the odds of candidate confusion, while reinforcing your expertise.

**Invite interaction.** Encourage prospects to speak up and respond to your communications. This is the kind of two-way process that today’s jobseekers expect. Start discussions that not only engage those who provide comments, but also attract the attention of prospects that might be new to the conversation. And be sure to make it simple for people to take action.

**Be accessible at all times.** Candidates think about job opportunities in the most interesting places, from restaurants to bedrooms to bathrooms. Be sure the communications you send are available to prospects on the devices and platforms they use regularly, so you can keep interest strong even when they’re away from their desks or on the road.

**Integrate.** If your ultimate goal is to convert prospects in your talent pool to applicants for specific openings, you have to make that transition seamless. Provide simple ways for prospects to jump to your current openings and then apply.
Conclusion

As millennial workers increasingly shrug off traditional jobseeker and employee paradigms, businesses looking to hire have their work cut out for them. By presenting a strong employment brand, leveraging the right number and type of communication channels, ensuring ease of use, and continuing to engage prospects, however, you can dramatically increase your odds of accumulating interest among this new workforce generation—and besting the competition.

In fact, the emerging importance of the talent pool is one of our greatest indications that recruiting has now become a marketing endeavor. Talent pools are to recruiting what sales pipelines are to sales and marketing. And any company that’s serious about being prepared to fill critical job openings quickly would do well to pay attention.

1 http://hrtimesblog.com/2013/11/19/everyone-into-the-pool/
4 http://web.jobvite.com/FY14_Website_JobseekerSurvey_LP.html
5 http://web.jobvite.com/FY14_Website_JobseekerSurvey_LP.html