

## Avoid Narcolepsy Online

As many of you know, I've long been concerned about the terrible quality of recruitment ads that appear on the Web. In fact, I've often described reading job postings as a cure for insomnia. They're so boring and so uninspired, they would put a brick to sleep.

The only people who can stand to read today's job postings, therefore, are active job seekers. They have no choice. Passive prospects, on the other hand, have plenty of opportunities from which to choose, so a lot of them chose to ignore the ads they see online.

Now, it appears that this same affliction has seeped into ads posted on social media sites. Whether it's on LinkedIn or Twitter, what we're seeing today isn't professional networking, but propagating narcolepsy online.

Let's look at ad titles, for example. A job posting's title is its front door. Too many titles today, however, look like they lead to a house of horrors. Consider these recent titles posted on LinkedIn:

- Seeking Inside Sales Manager for Randy's Ring & Pinion in Everett, WA
- Seeking former Army Captain with supply chain, logistics, Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle, or materiel readiness experience.
- JDE Purchasing Functional Analyst.

You can hear the snoring already. During the period I checked, the first and second titles generated exactly zero responses. Even active job seekers were turned off. The third title did manage to bring one response ... from a job board urging the employer to post on its site.

The shortcoming common to all three of these titles is their focus on features. As our colleagues in sales and marketing have learned the hard way, features don't sell; features and benefits do. In other words, if you want someone to "buy" your organization's value proposition as an employer, your ad's title (and content) must describe both the key feature of that proposition and the value it offers to the prospect.

For example, the first title above might be modified as follows: "*Seeking Inside Sales Manager to Head High Performing Team at Leading Retailer in Everett, WA.*" In this case, the feature is a management job in sales in Everett, Washington. The benefit is the opportunity to work with an established and successful group of people in an established and successful company. Why? Because the chance to work with winners is one of the key motivators for high performing talent.

How do you produce such an ad?

Here's my suggestion for a simple 3-step process that will help make sure your ad titles generate interest among top prospects:

**Step 1: Identify the one or, at most, two key aspects of your employment value proposition that most appeals to top talent.** How can you figure that out? Ask the top talent who already work for your organization. What should you ask them? Try this simple question: "What do you value most about working here?". Or this: What single factor had the greatest influence on your decision to say "Yes" to our employment offer?". Remember, the goal is not simply to find a feature—your company is big—but a feature and its benefit—your company is big so offers significant growth potential.

**Step 2: Find the right words to articulate the feature and benefit you identified in Step 1.** Passive prospects have the attention span of a gnat, so your title must be short and clear if it is to have any impact.

It must convey the information necessary to pique their interest and do so in the fewest number of words possible. That means avoiding buzz words whose meaning is vague or unclear—"employer of choice" is a perfect case in point—and focusing on words that make an emotional connection with "A" talent—"high performing," "successful," "leading" are good exemplars. As long as the words express the truth, the more exciting, impassioned or moving, the better. What you're trying to achieve with a job posting title is an impulse purchase—you want the reader to make a spur-of-the-moment decision to invest some time in reading your ad.

**Step 3: Test the ad title on your target population.** Take the title (and the ad, if you've written it) back to your high performing colleagues and ask them if it accurately portrays what they most value about working for your organization. If it does, post your ad; if it doesn't, refine the statement and check with them again. In other words, don't post until your ad is good enough to transform passive prospects into active applicants. Why? Because the caliber of your ad is the first impression an individual has of your organization's employment brand. And if the ad is so boring it puts them to sleep, it's also the only impression they will have.

A growing number of recruiters today invest hours online searching through profiles on LinkedIn or using Twitter to tweet with prospects. Many, however, won't devote the same amount of time or exert the same level of effort to write good copy for the recruitment ads they post on the same sites. From a prospect's perspective, however, both activities say something about the values and culture of an employer. The surest way to undermine your networking, therefore, is to publish narcolepsy online or what is now all too often provided as a job posting.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

Visit me at [www.Weddles.com](http://www.Weddles.com)

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