

Precruitment

In a normal year, this would be the time for preparations. The silly season of fall recruiting would be about to start, so the smartest among us would be doing everything they could to get ready for it.

But, of course, this year is different. Hiring activity is still way down, so there seems to be little reason to worry about how prepared we are. And yet, there is. The pace may slower than we would like, but the economy is picking up steam. A recovery is on the way. And it's for that recovery that we should be preparing right now.

I call such activity "precruitment" because it includes the steps we must take to ready both ourselves and our organizations for the rigors of a reenergized War for the Best Talent. It's the preparatory actions that are essential for recruiting success.

What do they entail? The following checklist isn't all-encompassing, but it will get you started.

Workforce Planning

Review the 2010 budgets of your organization's strategic business units and confer with their leaders to determine:

- the likely demand for talent over the next 12 months and
- any new kinds of talent required by changes in strategies, product or service mix or the marketplace.

Assess the internal supply of talent to see who might be appropriate and available to meet the expected demand.

Identify the gaps in talent that will have to be met with external recruiting and during which quarters in 2010 those requirements will likely occur.

Review the size and skills of the recruiting team to determine if additional permanent or contract recruiters will be needed to address all requirements, whether they are expected to be filled with internal mobility or external recruiting. Begin laying the groundwork now to acquire the staff resources you will need in the future.

Reputation Management

Assess the credibility and persuasive power of your organization's employment brand and takes steps to remediate it, if necessary.

Reenergize your Employee Referral Program by training your coworkers on (a) the key elements of your employment brand and (b) how best to articulate them to high caliber prospects outside the organization.

Research online documents, blog commentary and postings at Web-sites that publish "employer evaluations" to determine what's being said about your organization. If necessary, devise a strategy to counteract negative points of view and implement it right away.

Asset Management

Review the following to ensure posted content is accurate and up-to-date:

- the career area on your organizational Web-site;
- your organization's Facebook page, if it has one;

- your organization's LinkedIn group or profile page, if it has one.

Launch a promotional campaign (or reinvigorate the one you already have) to encourage interest and participation in your Employee Referral Program.

Launch a relationship marketing campaign to reconnect and develop greater familiarity with the individuals whose resumes are stored in your applicant tracking system database.

Push your applicant tracking system vendor to upgrade its technology for identifying the source of your candidates. (You'll be surprised—and horrified—at how rudimentary and thus inaccurate many of these systems are.)

Research changes that have occurred among the 100,000+ job boards and career portals currently online to update your list of the best sites for acquiring the best talent for your organization. Negotiate posting rates now while volume is low and deals can be made.

Resource & Process Management

Secret shop your recruitment process to determine where bottlenecks or behaviors might detract from the candidate experience.

Eliminate the single greatest source of frustration among job seekers by ensuring that your auto-responder is working and that you are acknowledging the receipt of every application and thanking every applicant. In addition, add a notice to the career area on your Web-site and on every job posting that asks candidates to include the address of your auto-responder on their "white list" so that your message gets past their spam filter.

Conduct a review of best practices in interviewing for both hiring managers and recruiters. Where possible, do these sessions at the same time to foster a collaborative spirit among the two groups.

Develop a "Leader's Checklist" and distribute it to all hiring managers to reacquaint them with the tasks involved in your recruiting process and who is responsible for accomplishing them.

Meet with your recruitment ad agency (or your own staff) to review:

- the tone and content you want to see in your job postings;
- which social media tactics you want to see executed and where;
- and
- other sourcing strategies you are likely to employ (e.g., campus visits, career fairs).

Also, solicit their input on alternative methods you might use to differentiate your employer and its outreach to talent.

There are, obviously, many other steps you can take to get ready for the recovery, but attending to workforce planning and reputation, asset, and resource and process management are among the most important. They are, as well, the key elements of successful precruitment.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

Visit me at Weddles.com

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