



RECRUITING TALENT IN A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

THE BATTLE FOR TALENT HAS NEVER BEEN MORE INTENSE. WITH BABY BOOMERS RETIRING AND THE LABOR POOL SHRINKING, COMPANIES FIND THEMSELVES VYING FOR THE SAME GROUP OF QUALIFIED PEOPLE. WHILE THIS PUTS CANDIDATES IN A POWERFUL POSITION, THERE ARE CHANGES ORGANIZATIONS CAN MAKE TO IMPROVE THEIR HIRING TACTICS AND THEIR CHANCES OF ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TOP TALENT.

BY KIMBERLY BISHOP

First, despite the challenging environment, do not lower your expectations or compromise your standards. Do not feel compelled to snag talent just because it's available. Begin by making a checklist of the specific capabilities and competencies you need to manage your company today, and plot the types of skills you will need someone to bring to ensure success in the future.

Do not be easily "wowed" by a resume boasting many impressive titles. Make sure the candidate can give specific examples of accomplishments that mirror the tasks he or she would be expected to perform. Beware of "job jumpers" who move from company to company. Their resumes typically list many responsibilities, but very few results. The interview process should be used to discuss their accomplishments. If you are looking for someone to play a role in sales, ask them to describe their notable sales results. If you are recruiting someone with P&L experience, ask what percentage of growth they have achieved. If it's a product development person you are seeking, ask candidates what new products they developed and how those products fared in the marketplace.

It is important to remember that in a tight talent market, the job seeker is not the only one selling. It is critical that a company sell itself as well. Define what your company stands for and what differentiates it from others in the industry. Every hiring manager should have an "elevator pitch" or short profile, which describes the company's culture and telegraphs the leadership styles that align with its values.

Is your company a blue chip firm with an established reputation? Is it the kind of organization that offers training and an opportunity to work with large, brand name clients? Or, is your firm a start-up

that offers opportunities to advance quickly? Is it a customer-centric organization? Does it inspire loyalty and pride? These are important things to convey. If a candidate is seeking a particular type of environment, the wrong fit can be a deal breaker. If someone is excited by an entrepreneurial environment and they are hired at a firm that is hierarchical, they will not succeed in that culture. Alternately, if a candidate is looking for an organization in which process is important, a position that requires independent thinking and quick decision-making would be the wrong fit.

Think about what it takes to attract top talent. What are the benefits you're offering – do they make your company stand out? Your compensation, for one, must be competitive. Although, people may say it's not just about the money – it often is about the money. If that money is not there, the rest will not matter. Are you offering assistance with relocation, health insurance, continuing education, 401k matching? All of these perks will make your company more competitive.

In a tight market, speed also counts. Good candidates are likely to receive multiple job offers, so organizations need to move through the hiring process quickly. I worked with a candidate who interviewed for a position in December. Although the position was critical to the company's business, the hiring decision was delayed until after the holidays. At the end of January, the company finally decided to bring the candidate in for another interview. Guess what? The candidate had already accepted another offer and has begun in that position.

In situations like this one, executive recruiters can be extremely useful. They specialize in finding talent, have a keen

knowledge of what is happening across industries, and have connections most companies won't. What's more, a good executive recruiter is privy to which candidates want to make a move, giving an organization access to talent they may have assumed would be unavailable.

Another critical element in remaining competitive is talent retention. Companies spend a lot of money to recruit talent, but fail to pay enough attention to onboarding. It's not unusual for a new hire to arrive for his or her first day of work and be without a phone, a computer or an office. Something like this, which may seem inconsequential, can influence whether or not that person stays. Seriously. Remember you only get one chance to make a first impression.

In short, it takes talent to find the right talent for your firm. And with some pre-planning and processes in place, you will have the edge on securing the talent you need.

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