

Next-Generation Recruiting Tips

Now more than ever employers are competing to acquire the best talent in the workforce. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that this year growth in jobs will begin to outpace the growth in workers. Competition for top talent will be intense, and employers must be savvier than ever in identifying methods of sourcing employees.

What does this mean? It means that employers must think outside of the box, keep up to date on recruitment trends, and think about innovative ways to reach the next generation of workers.

For most employers, this means turning to the internet. According to the latest statistics, 63 million Americans are online looking for information about jobs; the latest DirectEmployers recruiting trends survey indicates that almost 55 percent of new hires in 2006 came from the internet.

But be aware--online sourcing is more than just a matter of posting to popular job boards such as Monster and CareerBuilder. The more astute and successful recruiters are going even further and are utilizing venues such as:

- Corporate websites
- Networking sites
- Blogs
- Virtual reality sites

Each of these venues offers opportunities and pitfalls, and we've spelled out the details below.

Corporate Websites

Corporate websites are an essential part of an online recruiting strategy; according to a 2007 DirectEmployers survey, they account for 20 percent of new hires. Given the high costs of other sourcing methods, corporate websites can be one of the easiest and most cost-effective means of drawing in top talent.

Corporate career sites should be carefully thought out and not pieced together. The layout and information provided on the site should have the jobseeker in mind. Below are a few guidelines to follow when developing a career site:

- Use a creative but simple-to-follow format that allows visitors to easily access job postings from the home page—jobseekers should not have to spend a lot of time trying to find the careers page.
- Develop job postings that are appealing and easy to understand—simply copying and pasting from the job description can provide too much information and confuse the jobseeker.
- Ensure the job information is pertinent to the candidates—tell them what they really want to know.
- Provide a method to apply for the job—preferably an online application or e-mail address.

Networking Sites

Networking sites allow recruiters to tap into a system of passive job seekers and target specific groups (for example, candidates within a particular profession, geographic area, or industry). Some of the most well-known networking sites are MySpace (www.myspace.com), Facebook (www.facebook.com), and LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com).

MySpace and Facebook are more socially oriented sites and allow users to create personal web pages, post photographs, and link to people and organizations of interest. They each have more than 100 million registered users. LinkedIn, with more than 4 million users, has a professional focus and allows users to post information about their careers, skills, places of employment, and networking interests.

Many organizations have found networking sites to be great tools for identifying quality talent. Using these sites does require recruiters to think outside of the box and be creative in soliciting job opportunities. Employers interested in networking sites should:

- Create a company user profile and list available job opportunities—make it easy to apply by including a link to the company's careers page.
- Design a profile to reflect the company's culture—and update it regularly.
- Spread the word about job openings by visiting user pages and targeting the ideal candidate groups—college students, IT professionals, marketing gurus, etc.
- Make connections by inviting users to become “friends” with the company's profile—this will allow the company to easily notify “friends” about new positions as they become available.
- Beware of “TMI” or too much information—if company representatives come across information that they shouldn't consider in the employment process, they should ignore it.

Blogs

Blogs have been a popular tool of personal expression among internet users, and now they are beginning to catch on with businesses. Blogs are “web logs,” or accounts of a person's experiences, opinions, viewpoints, praises, or gripes.

Blogs can be beneficial to organizations, but the organizations must understand the pros and cons and determine if their culture will support such a tool. Blogs can provide candidates with an inside look at a company and its environment, often from the perspective of employees. Companies such as Microsoft, Sun Microsystems, and Honeywell have fairly sophisticated employee blogs and encourage staff members to update them regularly. Employees can provide firsthand accounts of what it's really like to work for the organization and at the same time help “sell” the company to jobseekers.

Blogs can be a great recruitment tool, offering information on upcoming hiring events, open positions, ideal qualifications, and so on. But they do pose some risk because of their open forum. Organizations with employee blogs should develop well-defined blogging policies, communicate them to all employees, and monitor blogs regularly for inappropriate content.

The following tips, adapted from *Blogging for Talent* by Judi Hasson, are helpful when creating a company blog:

- Understand the scope and potential impact of anything written and expressed in a blog.

- Clearly state that the views expressed in the blog are the blogger's alone and do not necessarily represent the views of the company. Even with such a disclaimer, though, it's important for the blog to maintain a thoughtful tone in its content and in the way it shares information.
- Make sure the blog doesn't compromise the company's confidentiality or disclose proprietary information.
- Be respectful of the company, employees, customers, partners, and competitors.
- Check with the HR director if you have any questions about what can be included on the blog.
- Make the blog sound real and not like it's just more of the company line. Potential job candidates are looking for good information about what it's like to work for your company. Don't try to make the blog sound like a public-relations product.
- Keep the blog short, tightly written, and easy to skim. Remember that you have only about 15 seconds to grab a reader's attention before he or she moves on.

Virtual Reality Sites

What is virtual reality? According to dictionary.com, it is a realistic simulation of an environment, including three-dimensional graphics, by a computer system using interactive software and hardware. In layman's terms, it is a computerized world much like our own that is created by highly artistic and inventive people and that allows users to be who they want, create what they want, and live out the experiences they want. Virtual-reality worlds already exist and continue to gain thousands of users each day.

Many companies have already created their own virtual-reality "havens," where users can visit their business and become acquainted with virtual company employees. TMP Worldwide has already held virtual career fairs and partnered with companies such as Microsoft, eBay, and Verizon to promote open job opportunities, some of which are jobs only available in the virtual-reality world. Some candidates are hired online without ever meeting anyone face to face. Many consider virtual reality the way of next-generation recruiting.

One of the most talked about virtual-reality worlds among recruiters is Second Life (www.secondlife.com). Second Life has more than eight million users and allows them to create their own world—including homes, businesses, products for sale, and so on. It provides organizations with opportunities to promote themselves and available jobs, and it has quickly become a recruiting source for all types of candidates, not just IT or technical positions.

Organizations that choose to recruit in the virtual reality world are strongly encouraged to follow standard and legal recruiting practices, including conducting thorough reference/background checks. They should follow the same employment guidelines in the virtual world as in the real world.