Everyone into the (talent) pool!

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For most organizations, the recruiting struggle is all too real. According to a 2015 LinkedIn survey, 75% of leading US companies are expecting their hiring volumes to increase, while only 49% are increasing their talent acquisition budget. Most of you are probably living and breathing recruitment every day, but here are some statistics from major industry contributors that bring to light what is happening in talent acquisition today:

- Passive talent now accounts for 75% of all professionals worldwide
- Overall, time-to-fill has increased to 52 days from 48 days since 2011
- 68% of recruiters expect hiring competition for qualified candidates to increase
- The interview process has increased by 3.3 days since 2009 increasing the amount of offers rejected by candidates

The business is demanding more, candidates expect white-glove attention, and hiring the wrong candidate can significantly hurt your business. The evolution of today’s market puts an immense amount of strain on what is already a very lean talent acquisition team at most organizations. The truth of the matter is that most companies do not have either the capacity or the capability (or both in some situations) to provide the level of attention that each element of the recruitment process requires.

So where is the best place to make an impact? There are several “right” answers to this question. One of the most effective is to develop an efficient and effective talent pooling process.

Talent pooling is vital for any company looking to create a more proactive recruiting process. When managed efficiently, qualified candidates are placed into segmented repositories that can be categorized in ways that are important to achieving your organization’s business goals. These candidates can then be engaged with verbal and digital communications that foster candidate engagement with your organization and sustains their interest until an appropriate job opportunity becomes available.

Talent pools are generally created for positions that have significant hiring volumes, are niche roles that typically yield a very small percentage of active job-seekers, or specific projects that have ample lead time. Talent pool categories can be segmented in many ways including: function, location, diverse candidates, universities, “silver-medalist” candidates (qualified candidates who have already interviewed), and any other relevant segments you identify as relevant to the business.

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1 LinkedIn, 2015 Global Recruiting Trends, (2015)
4 Dr. Andrew Chamberlain: Glassdoor, Why is Hiring Taking Longer? New Insights from Glassdoor Data, (2015)
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There are a number of benefits from a successful talent pooling strategy:

**Time-to-Hire and Cost Efficiencies**

A robust strategic workforce plan should uncover the segments of talent pools you need to create and when they will need to be leveraged. Talent acquisition teams can proactively build and maintain the talent pool months ahead of the anticipated hiring need so you are prepared to present qualified candidates as soon as a requisition is opened. You can also realize significant cost savings by proactively building a stable of candidates who are qualified, interested and available. Not only are losses in production mitigated because positions are filled faster, but you can often reduce recruitment media and staffing agency costs.

We work with a large Defense manufacturer with a continuous hiring need for very niche software, hardware, electrical, and aerospace engineers. The complexity of these roles means that there is a real shortage of qualified talent, and so the tactics the client used to fill positions were causing a lengthy time-to-hire and an inflated cost-per-hire.

Working alongside our client, we devised a full-cycle recruitment strategy in which a team of our recruiters and sourcers—branded as the client—went into the candidate market. While identifying and engaging these uniquely qualified candidates took time and effort at the outset, the sourcers’ dedicated effort has produced a significant quantity of qualified candidates in the talent pools who are now continuously engaged with branded collateral that maintains their interest. This strategy is one of the main reasons the client has seen a 55% reduction in their time-to-hire in the past 2½ years for these types of roles. What’s more, the company has seen a reduction of almost 97% of their staffing agency usage, significantly shrinking their overall cost-per-hire.

**Candidate Experience, Diversity, and Brand**

The candidate experience is enhanced through an effective talent pooling strategy. Proper segmentation allows organizations to provide tailored content to targeted professionals. For example, engineers receive information about new innovation at the organization while students are pushed information about events on campus. This kind of personalized experience improves candidate engagement and brand perception, both of which make it easier to convert passive seekers into applicants and eventual hires.

One of our large technology clients was experiencing difficulty recruiting females into their senior technical roles. On top of auditing the organization’s internal work procedures against preferences of their current employees, it was decided that a talent pool needed to be created that targeted female technical professionals. Our organizations grew this talent pool to over 600 qualified women in 12 months. The pool received consistent communications around the company, its flexible working arrangements, community outreach, and job vacancies. The strategy helped increase the portion of interview slates that included females from 8% to 44%. In those 12 months, our client hired 32 females for their senior level technical roles, increasing their female ranks in these positions from 15% to 35%.
Candidate Quality

With 75% of the workforce considered passive job seekers, it takes a lot more than leaving a voicemail or sending an email to persuade qualified candidates to apply. Talent pooling can augment and optimize the effort that recruiting teams place into passive sourcing – providing the mechanism to spark interest and engagement. While active candidates can certainly be qualified, converting passive seekers from targeted talent pools into applicants helps increase the percentages of qualified candidates. It is also likely that these passive candidates will be a better fit for open roles because they were initially sourced and pre-qualified for their experience and skills by your recruiting and sourcing team.

We’ve partnered with a large retail bank in an effort to improve its direct passive sourcing and talent pooling capabilities. Together, we leveraged innovative sourcing strategies to identify and develop the talent pools, which were then pushed branded content including virtual branch tours, stories from employees and more. Over the course of three years, our client saw significant reductions in short-term attrition, and 64% of the directly sourced hires were rated as high or very high potential.

Some Things to Consider When Embarking on a Talent Pooling Strategy

**Workforce Planning and Workforce Segmentation.** This is an age-old challenge for most organizations, but carefully planning your workforce needs in advance can go a long way to creating an effective talent pooling strategy. Developing a clear understanding of talent shortfalls (including pockets of high attrition) and critical talent needs is imperative. You need to understand the correlation between your organization’s business strategy and its talent strategy, so that you can anticipate needs and plan accordingly.

**Enabling Technologies.** Integrating technology is a powerful way to support the strategy. Mobile enablement, Candidate Relationship Management (CRM) platforms, and data collection tools will all improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your efforts to maintain and connect with your talent pools. Technology, however, cannot be revered as the "silver bullet". Talent pooling will not be successful without the proper amount of personal touch and effort.

**Communications.** Candidates will begin to ignore messaging that either becomes redundant or only advertises open roles. You need to carefully plan the communications that candidates see and try to combine job advertisements with information that will spark interest. As mentioned earlier, we have seen success come from messaging that contains information about community outreach, stories from employees, multimedia, innovation, and more.

**Time.** Like most things in life, if you want to do something right, you need to devote the appropriate amount of time and resources. It is important to realize that talent pooling may not have an immediate impact on hiring. Time and effort are needed to build the right talent pools and populate them with the right people. Providing the proper amount of time and attention will ensure this strategy produces the long term benefits it is capable of delivering.

The advantages of talent pooling are compelling in today’s business environment where candidates are once again in a relative position of power. If your team is already working at or beyond capacity, it will be important to evaluate where the resources reside to execute this strategy. Some companies have determined that partnering with a talent acquisition firm – who has a wealth of experience and technology relationships – can go a long way to accelerating
the effectiveness of talent pooling while mitigating the risk of potential pitfalls. Should your organization be looking into talent pooling, make sure you and your team are committed for the long haul.

About Alexander Mann Solutions

Alexander Mann Solutions is passionate about helping companies and individuals fulfill their potential through talent acquisition and management. Today, over 3,000 talent acquisition and management professionals are partnering with 65 blue-chip clients across multiple sectors, in over 80 countries globally. Delivering a distinctive blend of outsourcing and consulting services, Alexander Mann Solutions’ unrivalled experience, capability and thought leadership helps its clients attract, engage and retain the talent they need for business success.

If you’d like to discuss our paper in more detail or find out more about Alexander Mann Solutions services, please do not hesitate to contact:

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