PREMIER
TALENT PARTNERS

HOW TO HIRE IN COMPETITIVE JOB MARKETS

7 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR COMPANY STAND OUT IN COMPETITIVE MARKETS

If you are a business looking for the perfect candidate in a competitive job market like New York City, it can be difficult to stand out amongst the other companies that are vying for a job seeker's attention. The search for qualified job leads is only the first part of the process, and weeding through the dozens of qualified candidates for the one can take weeks. That timeline can stretch even longer in major markets like NYC, which is why you need a finely-tuned staffing strategy to make your business stand out to the candidates who matter.

Hiring and onboarding new talent is expensive, and doubly so if you don't find the right person, so in this ebook we're going to review a few simple things that you can do to make sure you are attracting the best talent in the crowded market of job seekers.

1. Open yourself up to Passive Candidates

Think about the last time you were looking for a job — it's entirely possible you weren't actively seeking a new opportunity, but one came up that looked interesting and then one thing leads to another... and before you know it you are interviewing for the position. You may not have known it, but you were a passive candidate – someone who isn't out on the streets pounding the pavement out of necessity. You aren't alone either, as over 75% of working professionals consider themselves passive candidates, i.e. open to new job opportunities.

Attracting these types of hires is an essential way to get your company on the radar of more qualified leads. If you can lasso an engineer that is working on a similar project at another company, their spin-up time may be less than someone who isn't coming from similar work. Having a new hire that can hit the ground running sounds pretty nice, right? Of course it does, but you'll never get their attention unless your company's profile is raised high enough to capture it.

2. View your company as an outsider

Having a strong brand and recognizable culture is the first step in attracting passive talent. If your company doesn't look better than the one they are currently employed at, it's going to be a hard sell to get them to jump ship. Take a step back and look at your company through the eyes of someone looking for a job — does your website reflect a modern and fresh place of work? Are you interacting with potential candidates on places like LinkedIn or Twitter? Are you actively marketing your company with social media that reflects your company culture? These are things you'd probably be looking at if you were applying for the job, so make sure that you can answer yes to all those questions.

3. Make sure your job description doesn't stink

Harsh words? Maybe, except we can probably all remember a time where we read an unclear job description, shrugged, then applied anyway. Job descriptions should be the filter at the top of the funnel, actively telling candidates if this job is or isn't for them. Unless you like sorting through stacks and stacks of resumes, a good job description is the best way to keep everyone from applying for your job. This type of pre-screening can save you (and your hiring managers) dozens of hours by stopping the unqualified candidate from even applying in the first place.

4. Be explicit about qualifications

In smaller markets, casting a larger net makes sense for finding candidates for your job as there may not be as many qualified people with those exact qualifications. However, when you are looking to stand out in a crowded job market like New York, then you need to be clear about what you are looking for and the exceptions you'll make. For instance, if you are absolutely firm on 3 years of experience in a specific field, then explicitly state that in your description. You may still get jobseekers that apply with less, but you can confidently dismiss that resume and move onto others. Being crystal clear about these expectations for applicants will save you the hassle of interviewing an unqualified person.

5. Appeal to a candidates' needs

Sure, you are giving them a job and a salary. That might be enough if you are hiring a management position at a fast food place, but most professionals are seeking out a company that provides benefits beyond just a paycheck. These can be tangible benefits such as health insurance or gym memberships, or they can be the intangible feeling of spending their time at a good place to work. Clearly stating what your company can give a potential employee makes your business stand out amongst others who may think a high salary is enough. Your job description should reflect the company brand and the job personality that your business has worked so hard to grow. Make sure these things are reflected clearly in your job ad.
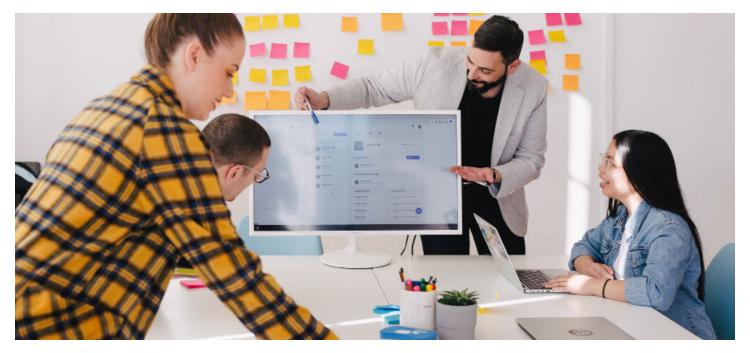
6. Treat the Interview as a Two-Way Street

If you are really interested in finding the right person in a market that is packed with potential, then your interview should feel like a conversation rather than an interrogation. Bring in team-members that you trust to the interview, and don't stick to the same old questions that everyone has heard a thousand times. Your company will be more memorable to a candidate if you challenge them with questions that makes them think, as well as showing them that you are engaged in a way that other companies are not. A job-seeker is most likely interviewing you just as much as you are interviewing them, so be sure to use that time to really feel each other out and make sure it's a good fit for both parties.

7. Use all the tools available

Creating a good staffing strategy and raising your companies' profile can get you a lot further in the hiring process than most companies, but even then it can be hard to really find that perfect person. Don't be afraid to take a step back and tweak your job descriptions or change where the job is being posted. Working with a staffing company that knows your niche can give you access to candidates that you didn't even know were in your pool of possibilities. Large markets are going to hold some of the best and brightest job seekers, so don't be afraid to reevaluate your strategy if it isn't netting the best results.

Looking for more ways to net the brightest talent in competitive markets like New York City? Contact Premier Talent Partners to see how we can help give you the talent your company deserves.

HOW TO BUILD A STRONG EMPLOYER BRAND

As job markets continue to become more congested it becomes increasingly challenging for growing businesses to attract talented candidates. In competitive industries employer branding becomes a vital factor to the success of an organization. If you can't attract the attention of top talent, you fall behind.

Even if your company has great perks and awesome culture it may be lost on candidates due to poorly executed employer brand marketing, a faulty onboarding process, or even a few bad reviews.

What is an employer brand?

It's important to understand all that goes into an employer brand. It's not just the reputation your organization has as an employer. It includes the value proposition you provide to your employees and is made up of your company culture, the story you tell about your company, and the process an employee experiences from start to finish. Many factors contribute to employer branding such as your companies mission statement, the benefits you offer, workplace atmosphere, onboarding processes, HR procedures, the technology you use, and your employees' salaries. An effective employer brand frames your company as an awesome place to work. Several departments have a hand in influencing employer branding such as human resources, operations, marketing, and of course, senior leadership.

Why is your employer brand important?

If you're reading this you probably understand that employer branding is important. But you may not understand exactly how important it can be. The positive effects of good employer branding can be so impactful, but the negative effects of bad employer branding can be even more so.

Positive effects of good employer branding:

- Increase application rates, giving you more options
- Attract the most talented candidates for your open positions
- Improve customer brand perception
- Develop a better company culture
- Differentiate your company from competitors

Negative effects of bad employer branding:

- Lower quality applicants
- Low application rates, limiting your options
- Reduced customer brand perception
- Company culture suffers

Understanding brand perception

Brand perception is viewed from several different angles but almost all facets of your company can affect all forms of brand perception. One of the biggest driving factors of employer brand perception occurs when employees use Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin or Glassdoor to share their experiences. Glassdoor reported that the majority (70%) of candidates read reviews before making career decisions.

While sites like Linkedin and Glassdoor provide notifications when employees review your business, the same is not true for Facebook, Twitter, and other social sites. For this reason, social listening services such as Hootsuite can become valuable tools for monitoring your companies employer brand perception. Listening is just half the battle. Responding to reviews in an appropriate way is important.

By listening to your employees you can identify the pain points that will influence the work needed to improve your employer brand. This will also give you an opportunity to identify brand advocates and incorporate them into your brand narrative.

Evaluate your employer brand reputation

In order to make progress, you need to know where you currently stand. Brand monitoring with social listening tools is a good place to start but there are several other tactics to employ that will aid in properly auditing your brands' reputation. Polls and surveys are a great way to get feedback from stakeholders within your organization. Exit interview procedures that measure satisfaction and identify pain points can provide invaluable insights as well. Based on the feedback received, you'll want to create a strategy to improve your employer brand reputation.

Define your message

Once you've identified areas of improvement you'll want to define a concise brand message. To do this effectively you want your message to be authentic. It should match the voice of your brand and clearly articulate what employees can expect working for you. This message should speak to candidates as well as existing employees. This message will influence the content used on your careers site, in advertising, and in video content. This conversation should be consistent with your customer-facing brand. The goal should be to present a cohesive visualization of the organization from the inside showcasing the human element while differentiating your brand from other companies in your space.

Identify your ideal candidate

This should be a persona more than a list of skills and requirements. This ideal candidate should fit into almost any role within your organization. When identifying their personality traits determine what their expectations are for your company. When putting together offers and benefits packages

make sure the expectations of this ideal candidate are being met on a consistent basis. Everyone from the top to bottom of your organization should feel like their expectations are being met by you, their employer. Experiential programs such as employee value programs can aid in making employees feel valued. However, if these programs are neglected they can have a negative effect on your brand. Quality should be your focus and in tern, you'll attract high-quality candidates.

Be in the right place at the right time

Once you've identified your ideal candidate you need to make sure they can find your job posting. Make sure you promote the position where your target talent is most likely to be present. This means exploring options such as Linkedin, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Quora, Reddit, Stack Overflow, or Indeed. Do some research to identify the best place to promote your jobs and whether or not you can afford to promote them on networks that have passive candidates rather than active candidates.

Promote Everything You Offer

When structuring your benefits offering make sure you're properly showcasing all value propositions properly. Training courses, continued education, tuition reimbursement, and other tertiary benefits often don't receive as much attention as the more well-known benefits. Think of your offerings as the solutions to problems that candidates are facing and promote them as a feature of your employer brand.

Messaging this from your official channels is essential. If you want to take it to the next level you want to leverage your employees to promote these benefits. Do this by providing a structure for employees to share their stories. Create a hashtag dedicated to your employer brand and encourage your team to tell their stories using the hashtag. The key here is that you follow through. Give them something to be proud of. This can be in the form of philanthropy, charitable giving, and volunteer work. Positive, fun, and engaging company culture stories will resonate well with potential candidates while helping build your employer brand. Give them something to be proud of being involved in.

Foster your company culture

Engage every individual within your organization and build a strong company culture based on the human element. Promoting your people is one of the best ways to build employer branding. When you showcase people and

share how great they are it inspires candidates to put themselves in the same situation. When hiring select people based on how well they fit with the company's values. The most skilled candidate isn't always the right fit for the job. When developing employees focus on the positive impact their role has on the overall health of the company. This helps to make employees feel valued and keeps them focused on achieving their individual, departmental, and overall company goals.

Invest in your people to help them grow and feel like integral parts of the team. Learning and individual development initiatives have a major impact on employee satisfaction. If your employee sees you investing in them, they're more likely to have a positive perception of the companies employer brand. Company cultures that provide opportunities for advancement have higher retention rates which allows them to keep top talent from leaving.

To improve company culture you'll want to focus on personalizing the onboarding process. The saying "first impressions are everything" is true when it comes to employer branding. It can be difficult to come back from a bad candidate experience. A key factor to employee retention is a personalized experience and that starts with onboarding.

Start by mapping out talent progression. Map out a career roadmap for new hires that clearly identifies the opportunities they have within the organization. This roadmap should include the process by which they can advance such as required degrees, experience, skills, etc. Provide opportunities like tuition reimbursement, flexible schedules for employees attending school, on the job training, pay for online classes, etc. This customized plan makes new hires feel valued and motivates them to achieve their career goals within your company rather than looking outward in order to get ahead.

Continue to build good company culture by nurturing relationships with your staff. Good company culture involves everyone. From the executive level, down make sure that relationships between supervisor and subordinate occur. This will aid in building camaraderie among the workforce resulting in employees who feel like they have genuine connections with their coworkers. Open lines of communication are crucial to healthy company culture. Clear communication ensures that individuals understand the impact of their work, and their role in the story of your company. Internal communication tools like Slack can help foster open lines of communication as well. Embrace these forms of technology to promote proper communication.

Recognition for achievements and contributions also plays a big role in healthy company culture. Recognition boosts morale and furthers a sense of accomplishment. Showcase top performers on social media and with internal newsletters as well as gifts and perks to further foster good company culture.

Tell a story. Have a conversation

There's no quicker way to turn off potential candidates than to seem stuffy and corporate. Avoid this by talking conversationally in communications with job seekers as well as customers. Tell compelling stories to represent the human element of your employer brand. Storytelling can be present in every step of the process from the job listing through the entire employee experience. Tell the story of your people and your company in your job descriptions. Include videos that tell the stories of your staff on your career pages, and share stories about your current employees on social media and within the organization.

Storytelling is an opportunity to make your brand unique. Tell the stories of your people using engaging relatable narratives that vibe with your company's culture. By telling the story of employees who already fit the perfect mold of what you're looking for it will attract talented candidates that likewise fit that mold. Draw from the experiences of your staff and all them to tell the stories of their own experiences. This will help your stories feel more authentic rather than coming from a corporate voice-over artist.

Take care of your reviews

As most shoppers read customer reviews online before buying so to do candidates before applying. Even if you do everything else correctly to build a good employer brand, if you neglect your reviews you could miss out on top talent. Third party review sites like Glassdoor are the primary source for this type of window shopping. Monitoring your company's reviews on sites like Glassdoor and utilizing social listening tools you should be able to stay on top of negative reviews. However, it's not just negative reviews that can have a negative effect on employer brand perceptions. Lukewarm and even positive reviews and social mentions should be given attention as well. Being receptive to praise and presenting your company as a caring organization can be achieved by engaging in conversations of all kinds, not just rebutting negative feedback. If you do get a negative review, reply back. The simple act of conversing about the issue results in an increase in perception.

In highly competitive job markets strong employer branding can be the difference between success and failure. Attracting the right candidates and reducing turnover is vital to maintaining a productive workforce and minimizing costs. The real cost of recruiting new employees is often far greater than the cost of making current employees happy. Several prominent studies have determined that the financial cost can be as high as six to nine months of an employee's salary to find and train a replacement. The intangible costs are extreme as well as turnover can have a ripple effect that stretches far throughout a company's staff. Additional costs such as productivity cost (the time necessary for a new employee to perform at full capacity) and opportunities cost (lose business opportunities from a lack of sufficient human resources) further inflate this calculation. Combine all of this with lower productivity, workflow disruptions, and increased operational costs and the big picture quickly comes into focus. Retaining quality employees is important and deserves significant investment.

"Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room."

-Jeff Bezos

So we all agree that engaged, happy employees are more productive and it's more effective to retain talent than it is to find new talent. How do we achieve this? This guide does a great job of offering several action items to move you in the right direction. It's important to note that the most important factor cannot be found in a list of benefits or in a story on social media. The primary factors are company culture, values, and opportunities for advancement. Most of us aren't working for benefits, we're working toward a goal. Offering a path to that goal is the most relevant benefit any company can offer an employee. Culture and values needs to be fostered from senior leadership down.

WRITE A GREAT JOB DESCRIPTION

Crafting an exceptional job description is complicated now more than ever before. Modern job seekers are looking for more than a job title and a paycheck. Most professionals are interested in having a meaningful career in a field that excites them. They want to work for companies whose mission and culture are aligned with their personal & professional goals. When looking for a new job, they're tired of the same old boring job details. They want to see compelling job descriptions that appeal to them analytically and emotionally.

Traditionally, we think of job descriptions in terms of their structure. Job title, summary, duties, responsibilities, skills, qualifications. These lists of things have become standard for job descriptions and they all have one thing in common. They're boring (but still necessary). So how do you write a compelling job description without creating an insurmountable wall of text? Let's break it down for you.

Why You Should Care

A job description is a tool used to present an open position to a potential candidate. A sloppy job description attracts a substandard candidate. A finely tuned job description can be an instrument for attracting qualified candidates that perfectly match your companies needs. Basically, you'll get out what you put in.

What Candidates Care About

These are the things you want to think about while you're writing a job description. If you don't touch on all of these points, consider rewriting your job description. Aim for a balance between providing adequate information and being concise. Based on a Glassdoor survey, these are the most important factors job seekers consider when applying for a new position.

- Salary & Compensation
- Benefits Packages
- Company Culture
- Vision & Values
- Company Goals
- Location
- Company Size
- Industry

BEST PRACTICES FOR GREAT JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Align The Position With The Mission

When it comes to vision and values, candidates want to know how the role contributes to your company's mission. Describe the type of projects candidates will work on and the challenges that the company faces. Detailing how their role will influence the outcome of those challenges helps candidates understand the purpose of the position. Employees with purpose are more driven and happier.

Another good way to convey how the role aligns with the company's mission is to include videos with the job. This is usually only available for jobs listed on your website. You may find that job boards will soon offer the ability to embed a video in your job listing. So, be prepared with something ready to go.

Go Light On Requirements

It's easy to fall into the habit of listing requirements. While it's important to include some requirements, keep this section light. Be selective of what you include. Instead of strict skill-based requirements, think about including character traits that are important for an employee to thrive in the role. Consider including some "preferred" qualifications as to avoid deterring new grads and less experienced candidates who might be perfect for the job.

Keep It Short

Above all else, this is one of the easiest ways to optimize your job description. When a candidate sees a gigantic wall of text, they can't help but think negative thoughts about the job and your company. Too many requirements, and you're probably overbearing micromanagers. Too many duties, and you seem like a sweatshop. Too long didn't read (TL;DR) comes to mind whenever we see long job descriptions. Keep it short and sweet. This can be difficult as you go through our list of best practices for optimizing a job description. The key is to edit down.

Remove non-essential elements until you end up with a short, concise, and engaging job description. Another way to keep your job descriptions brief and punchy is to link to your company's Glassdoor or Linkedin profile. This allows you to keep your company description to a couple of sentences. According to data collected by Indeed job descriptions between 700 and 2,000 characters perform best.

Keep It Conversational

Another surefire way to turn away prospective candidates is to sound boring and stuffy. Write in a conversational tone that sounds like the vernacular that people use in your region and industry. Be sure to write in a voice that matches your organization. If your culture is laid back, be cool, man. A little more serious? Clean up your act a bit. Write as if you were speaking to the candidate.

Also, please replace all buzzwords with words people actually use in conversation. If your company is super chill and you want the reader feels like you're speaking directly to them. Replace terms like "ideal candidate" with "you" and rather than listing "required skills" talk about "what you're good at".

Do Some Research

If you're unsure about any details of the job or job description, search for competitors similar job listings. Perform a search on Google or Indeed and look at how others are titling their positions and writing their job descriptions. If you're following this guide, you probably don't want to copy them too much. Your job description will end up being better. But you can still get good information just by looking at how others are writing their descriptions. Who knows, you might get inspired to be creative.

Format For Mobile

One of the reasons to keep your job descriptions short is because people are looking for jobs on their phones. A lot of text looks way worse on a mobile phone screen than it does on a desktop monitor. Clearly separate your content with headers and use bullet points where possible. Another thing to consider is where your job is posted. If your career site isn't mobile friendly, fix that. Like, right away.

Pack It With Personality

Do your best to convey the personality of your company through the job description. Your goal is to get the right candidate. You don't just want the most qualified or the most experienced. You want the right fit. Adding some personality to your job descriptions will help you accomplish that goal. To do this

- Describe what a day in that position looks like.
- Get input from the people who have worked in that role or alongside that role.
- Discuss the types of challenges and projects the applicant will be working on.
- Describe how those projects will impact the company.
- It never hurts to describe the commute, transit options, and work/life balance considerations.

THE STRUCTURE OF A JOB DESCRIPTION

The Job Title

Now that we've covered what makes a job description unique and interesting, let's cover how to spruce up the things that you absolutely must have. Job titles don't have to be fancy. Your job title should be specific, but don't make up a title like "code rockstar" in place of "full stack developer". A good title should precisely and accurately describe the role. Avoid internal lingo that might not resonate with candidates. Terms like "senior" and "junior" are universal. "VI" and "II" are not. Don't reinvent the wheel.

While it's good to be creative in the summary of the job description, titles need to be straightforward. Avoid using terms like "hero", "guru", and "superstar". This will allow your listing to be more easily found by job seekers. It will also increase the rate that qualified candidates click on your listing.

Job Summary

While this section needs to accurately describe the expectations of the position, it should also be engaging and capture the attention of the reader. Include a couple of sentences about your company, but don't go on and on. What makes you unique? What is your culture like? For extra Internet points, include the location of the job to help optimize for search engines.

Roles & Responsibilities

Outline the role, but don't get too detailed about specific tasks. It's not necessary to describe each person you report to or how often reports are prepared. That information can be provided in the interview, and it's rarely relevant to an applicant. Highlight a few activities that are relevant to the day-to-day. Don't clutter this section up with a huge paragraph. Be concise, and don't be afraid to paint the role in broad strokes. Be sure to communicate how the position contributes to the success of the organization as a whole.

Skills & Qualifications

Include a list of skills and experience necessary to adequately perform in the role. Separate them into what is absolutely necessary, and what would be nice to have. If a specific education is required, be sure to include it here. This is where you want to make sure to include character traits that are necessary for the candidate to fit into your company. When you're done writing the list, pare it down. Then do that again. These lists tend to get out of control. Don't frighten away potentially perfect candidates with a list of impossible standards.

Job Description Examples

We have compiled a number of sample job descriptions for positions we hire for regularly. Since we specialize in staffing for a select number of specific industries and professions, this is somewhat limited. Let us know if you have any questions or if you need assistance finding the perfect candidate for your company.

CREATING A SUCCESSFUL RECRUITING STRATEGY

When you need to acquire top talent you have three options: recruit from within your organization, recruit from outside your organization, or rent talent from a staffing agency. There are benefits and advantages to each option. There are also potential disadvantages associated with each option. Creating a successful recruiting strategy is neither easy nor straightforward. This guide will provide you with a broad strategy as well as tactical insights to generating a successful recruiting strategy.

Option 1: Grow Your Team From Within

There are incredible upsides to recruiting from within your company. The candidate has already proven their worth to your organization, they fit in with your company culture, and the cost of promoting from within is immensely less than other options. There are also some cons to recruiting from within. Firstly, many companies just aren't big enough to fill the need from within. Also, top talent is rarely lying in wait, biding for their time for a promotion. Additionally, if you promote from within, you'll end up having to hire a replacement for the promoted individual. So what do the other options look like?

Option 2: Grow Your Team From Without

The primary reason to recruit talent from outside your organization is quality. You need the very best candidate and the individuals you currently have lack the experience or expertise you need. The primary downside of hiring from outside is cost. The true cost of hiring a new employee is going to be different for each organization but the issues will be the same. There are costs associated with employing HR staff, costs associated with paying to promote the job to candidates, and costs associated with screening, interviewing, and onboarding new hires. The market your organization is based in can exacerbate the issue by increasing costs and competition. For instance, hiring in Los Angeles, California is generally going to be more expensive than in Fargo, North Dakota.

Option 3: Work With A Recruiting Agency

Hiring a temp through a staffing agency can be an effective alternative to option 1 and 2. The service does cost money. However, you will reduce your costs by saving time in the hiring process and being hand delivered the perfect candidate. The first two options are most often viable. When they're not, staffing agencies like Premier are here to help. If you're going it alone, you'll want to develop a cohesive recruitment strategy. Let's get started with some high-level strategy.

Forecasting

As you plan your organizations future, factor in your staffing needs. While generating your annual operating plans create a workforce plan as well. What are your critical roles? How many hires will need to be made in the coming year? What scenarios could affect these numbers? Identify key performance indicators for each role. Evaluate talent availability internally and externally. When evaluating internally perform a review of potential candidates for the critical roles you'll be looking to fill. Think about succession plans for those individuals as they'll be leaving vacancies behind. When evaluating externally perform a market analysis. Does a talent pool exist? If so what are the going rates and benefits for each position?

Build Value

Once you know who you need, identify how to appeal to them. Why would someone want to work for your company? If there aren't a lot of good reasons, work on that. Poll your current employees and find out what they like or dislike about your organization. Fix the things they don't like and frame the things they do like as a value proposition.

Attractive Job Descriptions

Job descriptions are often the first interaction a candidate has with your organization. You can convey a lot about your company through job descriptions. This is where building value is most important. You're promoting the company as much as you're promoting the job opening. Make sure your job descriptions are compliant with all federal and state regulations as well as any terms associated with job boards where you'll be posting them.

ONCE YOU IDENTIFY THE PROS OF WORKING WITH YOU, WORK THAT INTO YOUR JOB DESCRIPTIONS.

Perfect Your Interview Process

Plan everything from the screening process all the way through onboarding the new hire. Each organization is different but one thing is consistent across all industries and company sizes... planning pays off. Figure out whether you need to do any skills testing, how many interviews are necessary, and who is necessary to be present for each interview. Once you have a precise interview process, you'll need some candidates to interview.

Promote Your Open Positions

Post your jobs to job boards such as Indeed, Monster, Glassdoor, or LinkedIn. But don't stop there. Atypical promotion efforts are often underutilized. Capitalize on the opportunities your competitors are ignoring to achieve the maximum exposure.
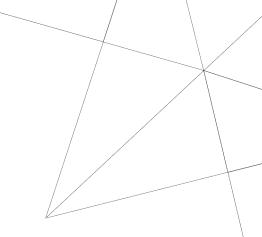
- Host a meetup event for your company. Showcase your company, the benefits of working for you, and allow candidates to meet their potential coworkers.

- Implement an employee referral program. Referrals are known to be more effective than cold contacts. Reward your current staff for referring talented candidates and reap the rewards.

- Don't ignore passive candidates. Promote your jobs and/or your company to potential employees using sites like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

- Utilize niche job boards. While the big hitters like Indeed are a great place to post your jobs, there are other sites that can perform well for niche industries and positions. Perform a quick Google search to see if there are niche job boards in your industry.

- Reach out to former applicants. If you've hired for a similar position in the past, reach out to the candidates that didn't make the cut.

- Reach out to former employees. If a former employee left on good terms and has acquired some good experience since they left they could make a great candidate. Don't be afraid to reach out to former employees.

Be Prepared To Make Competitive Offers

When doing your forecasting for the year you should identify what a competitive offer looks like. Be prepared financially to make such offers. All of this will be for naught if you can't match an offer from a competitor.

HOW TO EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY REVIEW APPLICATIONS & RESUMES

Processing Applications and Screening Resumes

The key to processing applications and reviewing resumes is planning. Before you receive your first application you should have a plan in place to evaluate, interview, and hire candidates. Ensure that you've thoroughly thought out the details of the position and written a great job description. If you're working with a staffing company, this is where the article ends for now. Send them your job description and let them get to work finding you the best candidate. If you're hiring internally, post the job on relevant job boards and utilize your network & social media to attract passive candidates. Make sure you've put in the work necessary to build a strong employer brand so candidates feel confident applying. Then sit back and watch the applications come in.

The steps of processing and evaluating resumes:

01. Set Aside Enough Time
02. Create A Review Process
03. Sort Resumes Into 3 Categories
04. Evaluate The Cover letter
05. Evaluate The Resume
06. Screen The Candidates
07. Call The Candidates References
08. Refine Your Process

Plan Enough Time

Time yourself going over one resume. Multiply that amount of time by how many resumes you need to review. Allot enough time to review all of your resumes. Add an extra 15-30 minutes for padding. Turn off the ringer on your phone and dedicate all your attention to this task. Distractions and running out of time could mean that you rush the process.

Create a Review Process

You've received a giant stack of resumes, now what? Hopefully while writing your impeccable job description you identified "must have" requirements. This will allow you to eliminate candidates based on their application without ever having to read their resume which can eliminate a lot of wasted time spent reviewing the resumes of unqualified candidates. If you prefer handling tangible resumes print them out. Otherwise, review them digitally. Consider using technology to speed up the process. If you haven't yet researched it look into tools for spell checking, finding keywords, and parsing resumes. Many of these are built in or integrate into applicant tracking systems.

Sorting Resumes

Your resume review process should include some kind of sorting. Traditionally three yes, no, and maybe piles are created. If your resumes are digital, use yes, no, and maybe folders. These can also be identified as qualified, mostly-qualified, and not qualified. Create a screening checklist that includes requirements for the position. The screening checklist should include items like adequate experience, education, required skill sets, certifications, etc. Identify a threshold for the three categories. For example, resumes that have 8 or more out of 10 requirements can be placed in the yes folder while those with 5-7 of the requirements end up in the maybe folder. If the resumes are digital use the ctrl+f (command+f on mac) function to find keywords relevant to the position. Requirements like spelling and grammar should take a backseat to skills & experience. An overlooked spelling error shouldn't disqualify someone unless they're applying for an editor position.

Evaluate the Cover Letter

Read the cover letter. When reviewing cover letters choose whether you want to be effective, efficient, or both. The fastest way to review cover letters is to ensure that it's customized for your company/job opportunity and to scan for relevant keywords. If you're more concerned with quality take the time to ensure spelling and grammar are correct. Also, look out for a unique opening line. If no cover letter is included, that doesn't necessarily disqualify the candidate. If you've received a lot of applications feel free to disqualify these candidates. However, in many industries, cover letters are becoming passe. If you received printed resumes, ignore paper quality. Things like paper quality shouldn't factor into your decision making. Anyone can buy fancy paper, not everyone can craft a clever cover letter showcasing their abilities. Base your decision on what they say, not what the paper feels like.

If you've opted for a thorough reading of each cover letter focus on how customized it is. Generic statements generally mean the candidate is reusing the same cover letter for all of their applications. This might be acceptable for entry-level positions as candidates aren't typically going to wax poetic about their dreams to achieve greatness in the position. Use your best judgment.

Evaluate The Resume

Look for a statement that summarizes the candidates' experience and qualifications. A statement like this should help you check some of those boxes or identify the candidate as not-qualified. If you've opted for the fast track this statement should contain the keywords you need to categorize the candidate.

What To Look For

Experience, education, and necessary skills are the type of criteria you should include in your requirement checklist. Look for examples of quantitative results and messaging that's tailored for your company or the position. A lack of these doesn't necessarily disqualify a candidate, but the best candidates will most likely include them. Red flags such as a lack of professionalism or a lack of long term mentality should disqualify candidates. This is true even for those who meet all the other requirements. If the candidate can't be professional in their resume, imagine what they'll be like in person.

WHILE REVIEWING THE RESUME KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS AND RED FLAGS.

Furthermore, if the candidate doesn't have any aspirations, they're more likely to be a dud. Review recent employers, accomplishments, etc. to check the rest of the boxes or decidedly scrap the resume into the no pile.

Don't Ignore Red Flags

If a candidate meets all the requirements but triggers some warning flags in your review, relegate them to the maybe category. Some issues to keep an eye out for are gaps in employment history, signs of demotion or decreasing responsibilities, short-term positions, or multiple shifts in career path.

Once you've finished reviewing the applications, cover letters and resumes. Go through the candidates that made it into the qualified category. Looks for strengths, weaknesses and rank them from most qualified to least qualified. Do the same for the maybe/mostly qualified category. One of the reasons candidates will end up in the maybe category is experience. If a candidate lacks experience but has a lot of promise they could be a suitable alternative if your other options don't work out.

SIDENOTE:
COUNT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED. IN THE END, YOU SHOULD ELIMINATE AT LEAST A THIRD OF THESE. IF YOU HAVEN'T YOU MAY WANT TO ADJUST YOUR QUALIFICATIONS TO MAKE THEM MORE STRICT.

Screen Candidates

Once you've identified the qualified and the mostly-qualified candidates start the screening process. Before you reach out to candidates, review each resume again and sort them into more defined categories. Once you've chosen the top candidates, perform phone screenings and schedule interviews. Depending on the position this might be the last step. References and multiple interviews with team members and higher-ups might be necessary. If you've been working with a staffing company this is where you'll come back into the picture. The staffing agency will provide qualified candidates who have been vetted. All you have to do is the final interviewing, select the individual you'd like to hire, and negotiate compensation.

Contact The Candidates References

If references are required, check to make sure they've included the right amount. When contacting references take notes and look for consistency. It's a bad sign if the way there are inconsistencies with the references descriptions of the candidate.

Refine The Process

As you progress through the process for the first time you'll identify ways to improve. This is where taking notes can be so helpful for increasing efficiency. Make modifications to the process that make sense for your organization. In addition to those improvements try some of the following tips to increase the efficiency of your resume review process. A streamlined process will allow you to spend more time interviewing the top candidates.

Ignore spelling errors or grammar mistakes. This is something you can use to identify the cream of the crop. Don't throw out high-quality resumes because of a typo. Ignore paper quality or font choices. Unless you're hiring for a print designer these choices have little bearing in the review process. This is an antiquated qualifier, welcome to the 21st century.

Skip reading candidate names, address, and other personal information. It's irrelevant until you've identified them as a qualified candidate.

Take notes. If you've printed out the resumes, use a bright colored pen and make marks and notes directly on the resume. If not, make your notes digitally, or just write them on a notepad. There are a lot of resumes to review and it's easy to get confused.

As you progress and review more and more resumes you'll get better at the process. The key is to actively refine the process and intentionally focus on being efficient and identifying candidates that will work well within your organization. The more you're able to optimize this process the more time you'll have to do all the other things necessary to stand out in a competitive job market.

PRESCREENING CANDIDATES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Prescreening is the process of evaluating the quality of a candidate before interviewing them. The process starts by evaluating the candidates' application, then moves on to their cover letter, and resume. If the candidate passes these prescreening tests you'll conduct phone calls, video interviews, and finally an in-person interview. The screening process can save you time, money, resources, and a lot of headaches.

Why PreScreen Applicants

In-person interviews take a lot of time. It requires a commitment from your team as well as from the applicant. If rushed, the candidate could come in for an interview when they have no chance of getting the job. In order to maintain a positive employer brand, it's important to give candidates a positive experience even if you don't end up hiring them. The purpose of pre-screening applicants is to eliminate candidates from the hiring pool in order to find the very best. Pre-screening candidates before in-person interviews will contribute to your recruiting strategy as a whole making you more efficient at hiring.

SCREENING ALLOWS YOU TO ELIMINATE THE MAYBES OR PUT THEM INTO THE QUALIFIED PILE OF RESUMES.

A quick phone call can reveal pertinent information that might not be possible to gather from reading resumes and cover letters alone. People lie on resumes, it happens. A quick phone screening allows you to identify the difference between an expert and an imposter before having them come in for an in-person interview. A phone screen is also an opportunity to ask more questions about experience, motivations, and skills. It allows you to evaluate their professionalism as well. The screening process also allows you a chance to build rapport with the candidate and pitch them on the benefits of the position.

How To PreScreen Candidates

Depending on how many applicants you receive you may want to evaluate candidates in a number of ways. The process typically involves evaluating the application, resume, and cover letter. If the candidate passes this test other steps can be taken to ensure they're a good fit.

- **Check Your ATS** – Verify that the candidate isn't already in your applicant tracking system. If they are, update the existing record rather than creating a new one. If they previously failed interviews this could be enough to stop here.

- **Cover Letters** – Requiring a cover letter allows you to weed out the lazy, disinterested, and otherwise unqualified candidates. If they fail to attach a cover letter or if the cover letter is too generic, they're not for you.

- **Resume Screening** – A quick review of the resume should allow you to eliminate a good portion of the candidates.

- **Phone Interviews** – Phone interviews are the staple of the pre-screening process. Conducting a quick phone call should help you identify the most qualified candidates and eliminate the unqualified.

- **Video Interviews** – You should be able to get everything from a phone interview but if you're hiring for a remote position you may want to verify that the individual is capable of setting up or joining a video conference call.

- **One-Way Video Interviews** – One-way video is not the best option because it doesn't allow for dialogue between you and the candidate. It does allow you to see and hear the candidates delivery and professionalism which could be important. If you get a high volume of candidates this may be the route you want to take as it can save you a lot of time. This also eliminates candidates that either lack the motivation to create a video or lack the confidence to create one. Depending on the role you're hiring for those may be valid reasons to use one-way video interviews.

- **Reference Checking** – Once you've prescreened the candidate, checking references comes next to verify their work history.

- **Skill Tests** – If certain skills are vital to their success in the role, conducting a skills test comes next.

- **Temp Hire** – If you're still not sure or want a period of time to evaluate their performance, hiring the candidate as a temp is another good option.

Preparing For Phone Screening

Phone or video screening calls should take about 15-30 minutes. Calculate the maximum time you could potentially spend screening and dedicate that much time to the task. Create a plan starting with the questions you'll want to ask an applicant. Involve your team when developing the screening questions. We recommend including your HR team, the hiring manager, and members of the team who will be working closely with the new hire. Make sure to keep your list of questions brief. This is just to verify that you want to bring them in for a formal interview. For each candidate create a list of notes and specific questions you weren't able to answer from looking at their resume. We recommend asking about 3-5 questions. Don't be afraid to ask tough questions. Near the end of the call give the candidate an opportunity to ask questions. If they don't ask any questions, it indicates a lack of interest in the position.

To get a good idea of what to ask here are some sample questions:

- "Give me an example of when you did xyz in your past role"
- "Tell me a bit about how your major applies to this role"
- "When working with abc technology what did you find most challanging?"
- "What makes you a good fit for this position?"
- "Can you share an experience in which you used xyz strategy to solve a problem?"
- "What knowledge areas are your strongest? What would you like to learn more about?"
- "Are there any other skills or knowledge that might be useful for this position that aren't on your resume?"
- "Why are you searching for a new position?"
- "Describe your work style"
- "Which leadership skills are your strongest? Which are your weakest?"
- "What are your shortterm & longterm career goals?"
- "How can you apply your skills and knowledge to this role?"
- "What would you like to get out of this job?"
- "What are the top three responsibilities in your current/last job?"
- "Can you provide a sample of your work?"
- "If hired, when can you start?"
- "Do you have any questions for me?"

Schedule a time for your screening call and set clear expectations. Communicate to the candidate that the call is introductory in nature and that you'll have a few questions for them. Most importantly, be prepared. Remember that this isn't just your first impression of them. Based on how you conduct yourself on this call you can build the candidates confidence or deplete it.

How To Conduct The Screening

Start by introducing yourself and giving the candidate a chance to introduce themselves. You can learn a lot by allowing a candidate to speak freely. Introduce the company and the position. They should know all this but it's important to be clear. Discuss the selling points of your company and the job throughout the call rather than everything up front. This makes the "sales pitch" seem more organic and less forced. Also, try to avoid long monologues, the candidate should do most of the talking.
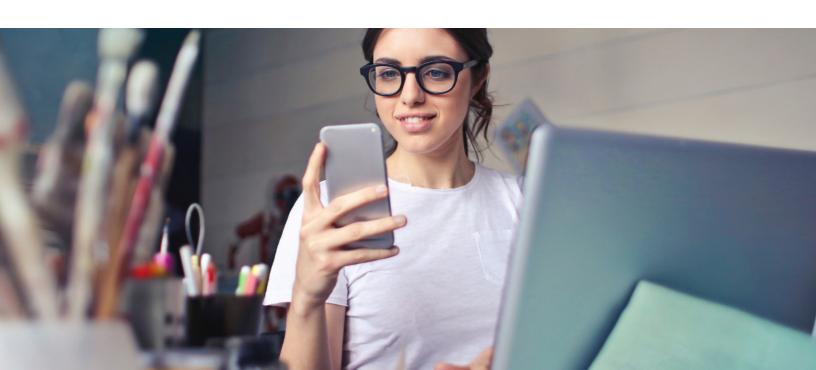
Follow this step by asking your questions and taking notes. This should be relatively brief. Remember you're trying to keep the conversation to 15 minutes if possible. End the call by setting clear expectations. Provide information on the next step. Schedule a follow-up message either via email, phone, or video chat. If the call is going well and you feel like they're a great candidate, feel free to take a little extra time selling the company/position. If you've already built a great employer brand, you may only need to promote the position.

If possible we recommend using a video chat service like Google Hangouts or Skype rather than audio only. This will allow you to have a more organic conversation.

What To Look For

When conducting phone screenings or reviewing resumes and cover-letters it's important to identify specific details such as past employment experience and skills relevant to the position. Hopefully, you've written a great job description which should clearly inform candidates of the requirements.

Identify where the candidate lives. Unless you're willing to pay for relocation or you're hiring for a remote position, the candidates' location can make a difference. If the candidate has an extremely long commute or would have to relocate for the position you may want to come back to the candidate after evaluating other options. Set aside their resume for closer inspection and plan for another call after you have a chance to screen other qualified candidates.

Candidate Testing

If the position you're hiring for requires a highly technical skillset such as a software developer you may want to conduct a test prior to a formal interview. This type of test is best prepared by the manager that will be working directly with the new hire. Other types of tests aren't often necessary but can sometimes be important if your organization has identified the need. Personality tests can be good to use if your company has an unusual or atypical culture. Companies involved in sensitive matters may also want to conduct personality tests to identify red flags.

Verification

You may choose to complete other steps to verify a candidates work history, education, criminal background, etc. before bringing them in for an interview. However, you may want to wait until after you interview in person. This is especially true if you have a large volume of applicants to evaluate. When performing background checks for criminal history it's important to be aware of the guidelines set forth by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The EEOC provides a framework for legally evaluating criminal records when making an employment decision. Ensure that you follow these and any city/state rules regarding assessing candidates with criminal history if you choose to perform a background check.

Interview

Once you've identified applicants who meet the criteria for a qualified candidate, schedule an interview and continue with the hiring process. If you run into any issue along the way or if you'd like to expedite the process by testing out qualified candidates on a temporary contract basis, give us a shout.

HOW TO WOW YOUR TOP CANDIDATES WITH AN AWESOME SECOND INTERVIEW

First Impressions The Second Time

When meeting a candidate in person for the second interview, make them feel like a VIP. This is someone you want to hire. Respect their time and don't leave them waiting. Make sure to greet them in person. Be authentic, fake excitement is easy to spot. Use their first name to make them feel comfortable and don't forget to reintroduce yourself and teammates. For conversation sake, now is a good time to point out a couple highlights of the office. If you plan on wooing them with company swag, keep it simple and thoughtful.

Focus on presentation. Make sure you and your interview team have had a chance to review the applicants and ask relative questions to their experience. By this point your team has formulated key questions that will inspire your candidate to feel confident, yet a chance to round out new information they missed in the previous interview. Your first interview was more structured with prepared questions on print outs for each teammate to take notes on. Reference these to make sure you are asking questions specific to what you already know about your candidate.

If it works for the team, choose an atypical location rather than the conference room that they had their first interview in. Move them to the executive office and even involve the executive in this interview. As your interviewee settles in, make sure water is available within reach and give them a moment to take in their surroundings. Pacing is everything. Silence your phones and close your laptops. Candidates know exactly where they stand when an interviewer gets lost in a screen or answers a phone call while conducting an interview. You don't want them asking, "Is this really someone I want to work for?"

Setting Expectations & Getting Clarity

Your top candidate is sitting across the table. Everyone is feeling comfortable in the room. Let the candidate know about how many questions you have. Be sure to clarify who will be asking the questions. Your teammates are coming in with prepared questions, but the goal is to inspire a more conversational setting. Make sure each teammate has a printout of the questions for notes and knowing who will jump in when. Stay focused on the position you want to hire them for.

Some candidates will need more time to ease into the flow of the interview. If necessary be sure to ask follow up question. This allows them to get comfortable while speaking with you. Make sure to clearly address any questions they bring up. Great candidates want to know they are heard and their opinions matter.

Asking The Right Questions At The Right Time

Ask the right questions for the right reasons. Going down a list of interview questions and simply checking them off will only annoy the candidate. Make your candor and tone even more friendly and calm than the last interaction they had with your company. Top candidates will not be impressed by how many questions you ask them. Instead, get them to open up and talk freely about past work situations where they had to make a difficult decision. Now you have their attention and respect because you engaged in a more equal conversation.

DO NOT ask brain teaser questions. These were once popular among tech giants like Google but they found that these questions didn't predict anything regarding the success of the candidate. Skip the oddball questions and be professional. Remember we're setting expectations. Avoid asking generic questions like "Do you prefer to work in groups or alone". Instead, ask about specific instances in which the candidate experienced challenges/produced something they're truly proud of while working in a group or alone.

Top candidates will have done their homework before arriving at an interview. In some cases, they might even know exactly why the position they are interviewing for is vacant. Be prepared to answer their questions clearly and concisely. A good interview is a two way interview. Don't forget, your candidate is there to make sure they want to work for you.

Most top candidates are generally looking for new challenges and something that will keep them wanting to come to work every day beyond pay. Be honest when describing the job and the state of your organization. By doing so, you'll open up a dialogue that will impress top candidates helping them feel a part of the team already.

Following the formal part of the interview offer them a tour of the office/facilities. Make sure the tour route is clean and organized beforehand. If time allows introduce them to current employees while touring the office/facilities. Great candidates will care about the work environment and who they will be working with. Make sure to show them the best amenities your office/facilities have to offer.

From Shake To Shake

Walk your candidate to the front door. Give them a general time line they can expect to hear from you. Make sure you thank them for their time. Do what it takes to make them feel like you were 100% focused on them from the first handshake to the last. This is your final impression so make it count. Showing them this level of attention to detail will help them make their final decision when choosing to accept your offer.

If you'd like to expedite the process by testing out qualified candidates on a temporary contract basis, give us a shout.