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The best team wins:
Ten tips to hone your recruiting,
hiring, and onboarding processes

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Introduction

Human resources departments continue to struggle to build the best workforce. There are plenty of applicants but not enough candidates with the right combination of skills, experience, work ethic, and attitude to be top performers. In fact, a recent survey revealed that 63% of CEOs worry about the availability of key skills required for the future of their organizations.[1] Furthermore, 93% of CEOs believe their organizations need to improve their strategies for attracting and retaining talent.

The success of any organization depends on its people. Employees are a company's greatest asset—and that asset must be managed to yield positive results. At Sage, we call this the Return on Employee Investment, or ROEI. This guide provides tactics and tips to help you improve the effectiveness of your company's recruiting, hiring, and onboarding processes.

1 Plan to succeed

Hiring the right people is critical to helping your organization achieve its mission. The stakes are high; a bad hire can be very costly. In tangible terms, the cost of recruiting, onboarding, and training the wrong person, followed later by termination and another round of recruiting, onboarding, and training, can cost a company as much as three times the first year's salary for the position. But it's more than that. The wrong hire can disrupt productivity, sour the attitude of a team, or even cause turnover of other valuable top performers.

The best way to minimize the odds of making a bad hiring decision is to start with as much information as you can gather and create a solid plan for success. Understand the objectives of the organization, its culture, and the working dynamics of current employees. Work with hiring managers. Plan a smooth recruitment process—for both internal employees and applicants.

To plan for successful recruiting:

- Know your company and its people. Really get to know the people in your organization. The better you know your company's products or services, processes, and employees—the better you can predict how a prospective candidate might fit.

- Meet with the hiring manager. Find out what the hiring manager thinks is needed for success in the position and what types of people he or she likes to have on the team.

- Do your homework about compensation. Know what competitors are paying for similar positions and the upper limits that your company could offer a top-tier candidate.

- Define success factors. Determine what qualities an employee will need in order to be successful in this position. These qualities may or may not be listed n your published job description. For example, "can work around big egos" or "holds up under intense pressure" may not be in your advertisement but might be critical for success.

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[1] PwC, "17th Annual Global CEO Survey," 2014, pgs. 18-21.

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2 Look inside the organization

Look around. Are there talented, enthusiastic employees within your organization who are ready for a new challenge and greater responsibility? The best recruit for the job may be right down the hall. Do you encourage employees to pursue career paths within the company? Current employees are the most frequent source of hire for any open position, filling nearly 42% of job openings.[2]

3 Create an employee referral program

Employees make good recruiters, too. In fact, roughly one out of four new hires is a result of a referral by a current employee.[3] Who has a bigger vested interest in the success of both the candidate and the company than your employees? Referrals are usually friends or close professional colleagues, so your employees want to make sure the job would be a good fit. And if the candidate is qualified for the position, your employee will help you sell him or her on coming to work for your company. It's a win-win.

Steps for creating an employee referral program:

- Write down and communicate the rules.
- Clarify the benefits or compensation structure.
- Keep it simple—don't make your referral process difficult or time consuming.
- Remember to thank employees for their referrals.
- Track the costs and results of your referral program and compare it to other sources of hire.

4 Embrace social media tools in your recruiting

Social media is expanding the tool set available to recruiters—empowering you to quickly connect with a greater number of professionals. It's clear that this will become an increasingly important tool in the recruiter's arsenal. A recent Aberdeen Group survey demonstrated that 68% of "best in class" recruiting organizations think social media is "critical" to their recruitment strategies.[4] However, at present, recruiters only attribute about 3% of hires to social media.[5]

LinkedIn is very popular with recruiters and enables you to network with people you know, as well as two degrees of your colleagues' contacts. Your company's Facebook page and Twitter account can help quickly spread the word about new job openings. Recruiters also use social media to reach out to passive candidates—employed individuals who are not actively looking for a new job. Recruiters can scan social media profiles and blogs to learn more about potential candidates' backgrounds, skills, qualifications, and opinions.

[2] CareerXRoads, "2013 Source of Hire Survey," pg. 6.
[3] CareerXRoads, "2013 Source of Hire Survey," pg. 7.
[4] Madeline Laurano, "2013 Talent Acquisition: Adapt Your Strategy or Fail," Aberdeen Group, September 2013, pg. 9.
[5] CareerXRoads, "2013 Source of Hire Survey," pg. 12.

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5 Don't neglect tried and tested recruiting tactics

As you explore what social media can offer your recruiting process, don't cast aside tried and tested sourcing methods. Continue to attend face-to-face networking opportunities, industry trade events, and recruiting fairs. You'll still want to advertise online on job boards; nearly one in five new hires finds organizations through job boards. Indeed.com currently produces the most hires by aggregating job postings from many other online job boards. Indeed produces about the same percentage of hires as Monster, CareerBuilder, and Simply Hired combined.[6] If your organization needs employees with special certifications or a lot of industry experience, you might also want to try out specialty job boards and industry/trade association websites.

6 Organize effective interviews

Nothing is more frustrating to candidates or hiring managers than an unorganized interview process.[7] After all, the interview is the first impression for both parties. It's not only a chance to assess the candidate; it's also the candidate's chance to observe your corporate culture. Both potential employer and employee should walk away from the interview knowing if they are interested in continuing the conversation.

At least 42% of companies now employ virtual, video conferencing interviews in the recruiting process. Often conducted by Skype, these interviews can replace first-round interviews that used to be conducted by phone or in person. It's a great way to screen applicants without either party's incurring the expense of an in-person interview. Since so much of communication is visual, a video interview offers interviewers a big advantage over a telephone interview.

Regardless of the interview format, remember that an interview should feel like a waltz, not a square dance. Much like dancing, an interview can be awkward and stilted or flow smoothly in conversation. Is your interview process like a finely choreographed waltz, engaging the candidate and giving him a chance to whisk you off your feet? Or is it more of a chaotic square dance, forcing candidates to turn in endless circles as one interviewer after another asks the same tired questions and receives the same rote answers?

Ways to orchestrate more effective interviews:

- Create interview questions. Though some of your questions can be about specific skills for the open position, make sure many questions probe qualities and attributes that reveal how a candidate works and how he would fit into a particular work group and the overall company culture.

- Ensure that each interviewer has different questions to ask.

- Create points of comparison by asking every candidate to answer the same core set of five to ten questions.

- Interview in groups. How better to see how a candidate contributes to a team than by having several interviewers meet her at once?

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[6] CareerXRoads, "2013 Source of Hire Survey," pg. 10.
[7] Forbes, "Skype Hype: The Key to Acing Your Virtual Interview," February 7, 2012.

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7 Strive to be an employer of choice

Ultimately, the goal of any HR department should be to help their company become an "employer of choice." It's not easy and doesn't happen overnight, but any company can build a reputation as an employer of choice. You'll need leadership and vision at the top of the company and active effort from everyone. But the reward is worth the effort—employers of choice tend to have more engaged employees and better recruiter results.

"If you build it, they will come."[8] It's easy to recruit the best and brightest if everyone knows your company is an excellent place to work. Like Kevin Costner's "Field of Dreams" attracted baseball fans from far and wide, your company will draw in top talent from across your industry.

Employers of choice:

• Encourage big ideas from employees.

• Listen to and give out constructive criticism.

• Offer their employees opportunities.

• Create a positive, enthusiastic work environment.

• Embrace diversity.

• Hire and train great managers.

• Are willing to try new things to improve employee engagement.

8 Take advantage of technology

Recruiters stay busy because they are always recruiting—at work, during social gatherings, and everywhere else. Your success as a recruiter hinges on your spending more time with people than paperwork. Take advantage of software solutions, including a Human Resource Management System (HRMS) and a recruiting tool. Streamline job posting, resume collection, and background checks as much as you can so you can focus on the human aspects of recruiting, including relationship building, interviews, and negotiations. Have a system in place to track applicants through the recruiting and hiring process and bring any new hires smoothly on board.

Automated recruiting solutions can help you:

• Create job descriptions.

• Automatically route resumes and hiring paperwork to managers for approval.

• Post job openings online.

• Accept applications and resumes online.

• Screen candidates with assessments.

• Search for candidates based on skills and qualifications.

• Schedule interviews.

• Prepare offer letters and onboarding forms.

• Keep records for compliance with employment laws.

[8] Universal Studios, Field of Dreams, motion picture, 1989.

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9 Hire for attitude; train for skills

Finding a candidate with the right work ethic, brains, and attitude may be more important than specific skills. The technology in use today at your organization may not be used next year. It may be more important that the candidate chosen is a good fit for the team and the company culture. Specific skills can be obtained on the job or through outside education, but a personality rarely changes. So if you find a winner, make the investment in training.

10 Maximize the success of new employees

The recruiting process may be over when the offer is accepted, but that's not the last step to building a better workforce. A smooth onboarding process will help an employee get acclimated, trained, and productive as quickly as possible.

First impressions matter—both to the new employee and to his or her supervisor. The first days or weeks of employment can be a major influencer of an employee's success (or failure) down the road. Your onboarding process needs to support new hires so that they do not feel stressed, overwhelmed, or alone as they begin their work. Likewise, give an employee adequate training so that the supervisor perceives him or her as confident and competent from day one. A well-planned onboarding process can leave a positive first impression that blossoms into a lasting, productive work experience.

Conclusion

As a recruiter, you are an architect of your company's future—building the workforce needed to create innovations and outsmart the competition. Just as the right people can drive a company forward, the wrong hires can disrupt morale and hold a company back.

Hone your company's recruiting, hiring, and onboarding processes. Find things that aren't working and eliminate them. Try some of the ideas in this guide, measure your results, and keep making improvements.

Become an employer of choice, and you'll find that the brightest talent in your industry will be eager to join your team. HR leaders should work with the executive team and middle management to foster a workplace with good supervisory skills and plenty of new challenges and advancement opportunities for employees.

A good Return on Employee Investment (ROEI) can make the difference between a thriving company and one that struggles for survival. Effective recruiting and positioning your company as an employer of choice can lower recruiting costs, produce stronger candidates, and increase your company's ROEI.

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