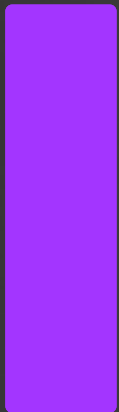




IMPROVING HIRING EFFICIENCY AND CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

A practical advice guide



Introduction

Finding good talent was already a struggle. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 4 million Americans quit their jobs in July 2021. The global pandemic, fuelling the Great Resignation, or what Josh Bersin calls the Great Migration, has exacerbated this talent shortage. The tidal wave of resignations brings the challenge of high turnover rate in many different organizations, extending right up to the C-suite. A recent UN report highlights the issue; that advanced economies are confronted with labor shortages amidst the perfect storm of ageing populations, migration patterns, and low wages.ⁱ Will you be able to find the talent to face today's challenges? Do you have an efficient and effective process to ensure you can continue to fill key roles and retain top talent? For many organizations, the answer to these two questions is a resounding "no" and there is no plan to address the gap.

Across all industries, 52% of HR professionals recognize improving quality of hire as the top recruiting priority in 2021. Followed closely by increasing talent retention and improving hiring time. (Human Resource Director 2021). However, 75% of the talent acquisition budget is spent on basic external channels like job boards and career sites. (Infinity Social Media 2021) This leaves only 25% of budget for employee branding efforts to attract qualified candidates and selection systems to identify the right ones.ⁱⁱ

Organizations understand the problem: 57% of leaders selected attracting and retaining talents as the number one leadership challenge for the future.ⁱⁱⁱ At the same time, applicants and candidates are more demanding and expect a more efficient, candidate friendly process. Not only does an inefficient process cause you to lose candidates, it can hurt your business – 83% of applicants say that a negative hiring experience harms their image of the organization. If you are competing for market share, turning off a job applicant could mean losing a potential customer.

These problems surface when it comes to attracting and hiring talents across a wide spectrum of roles, and at all role levels. The goal, at all levels, is to be more efficient and effective at attracting, selecting, and retaining top talent, while reducing time to fill and turnover. All of this can be accomplished with a thoughtful, deliberate approach, even if resources are limited.

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ⁱ United Nations: World Economic Situation And Prospects: November 2021 Briefing, No. 155

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ PSI Research report 2021: Leading in the future world of work

Hiring is a two-way street

Most organizations at least acknowledge that hiring is a two-way street but don't treat it that way. You are evaluating candidates to find those who can do the job and help you achieve your goals. Candidates are evaluating you in hopes of finding a situation that is rewarding, challenging, and gives them the best chance at long term career success.

You need to build a talent acquisition process that effectively evaluates candidates AND shows your organization in the best light possible. This means a positive website and applicant tracking system experience, interactions with recruiting staff and hiring managers, and timely follow up. Many organizations have admitted that they frequently lose highly qualified senior leadership candidates because their entire process is cumbersome, slow, and painful. With so many potential solutions to address these issues, this is unacceptable.

In addition, the culture and values of the organization are also of paramount importance when it comes to hiring talent. In today's candidate market, applicants are increasingly looking to work for an organization whose values they can align with. 88% of job seekers believe that a healthy culture at work is vital for success, and candidates expect to learn about an organization's values and culture within the hiring process.^{iv}

Practical advice:

- Be sure to get to candidates, at every point, what they need to know - including the basics (hours, work pace, benefits, etc.).
- Take the time to craft a clear message selling the organization, and the role, and make sure the message is clear and consistently delivered. How is this role unique, challenging, and/or rewarding?
- Tell them about your culture, and be transparent about what's good, what's hard, and what it's like every day. The earlier in the process you can do this the better.
- Consider creating realistic job preview videos that highlight 'a day in the life' and have current staff 'tell it like it is'.
- Regularly monitor candidate reaction data and adjust your processes and messages accordingly.



New expectations for talent acquisition and hiring managers

Talent acquisition no longer exists just to find sufficient warm bodies, fill requisitions, and reduce time to fill. These are important metrics, as you can't continue to grow and innovate your business if you don't have the staff to do so. Attracting applicants is Step One.

Today's major challenges such as the Great Migration mean we need to get incrementally better at every step at finding people who fit, who will support the culture you envision, and who will move the organization forward. You need staff who are not only dependable but who are goal-oriented. You need employees who are outstanding team players. The talent team needs to understand that their job is not only to find candidates but to find and help to choose the **right** candidates.



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Similarly, hiring managers can no longer expect a system where human resources' job is to find candidates and the hiring manager decides which ones they like. The talent team and hiring manager need to function as a team with a clear vision of the desired competencies and a consistent and effective process to efficiently evaluate candidates. Both parties here are responsible for not just finding minimally qualified candidates but for building, developing, and retaining teams that will drive the candidate and employee experience.

Go beyond the basic HR metrics. The entire team, hiring managers included, should be evaluating selection system effectiveness, fit, hiring manager satisfaction, candidate reaction data, staff performance ratings and productivity, and employee engagement.

When a National Football League team evaluates its scouting and talent efforts, they don't just look at time to fill and turnover. They want to know whether the people they draft or sign will perform and contribute to the team's success. It should be no different in a traditional business. Senior leaders need to communicate these new expectations and hold people accountable.

Get the buy-in of your customer

As you build a selection system for any level of the organization from entry-level staff to senior leaders, the people who rely on the system need to believe in it. It's critical to get their input and feedback during all stages of the selection process design. An example: Nursing leadership should take the first shot at defining new nursing expectations, capturing the organization's vision. Those expectations, though, should then be molded and tailored by the practical insights of front line nursing managers.

The processes, then, need to be built to make that hiring manager's job easier. This is even true in the C-suite. BEFORE the search for candidates begins, the stakeholders should define the requisite competencies and experience, and agree on an efficient selection process that meets their needs. Capturing the voice of the customer doesn't end here. At least annually, get feedback from hiring managers on whether your processes and tools work for them.

Once you've designed a new process, don't assume everyone's on board. They may just expect it to work, but when there is a glitch, they'll often assume it was not well designed. Plan a communication and training strategy well in advance.

Maximizing process and efficiency

It goes without saying that with the challenges we've laid out, maximizing process and efficiency is vital. Practical guidance based on our experience designing selection systems for companies large and small:

- Map and evaluate the entire process, especially considering the candidate experience. We had a request to shorten a behavioral assessment used early in the process because of complaints about the length of the application experience. On review, we found that the application itself - not the assessment - took 45 minutes and was gathering a great deal of low/no value information.
- Take advantage of technology but be thoughtful. Define your desired functionality first, based on the map of the ideal process. Program technology around this functionality, not vice versa.
- Understand what is being measured where in the process: Which skills/competencies are evaluated in the resume review, application, phone screen, behavioral assessment, and the interview?
- Don't forget to map the process for senior leadership selection. This is often neglected. While the volume is lower, there is much at stake here. Selling top leadership talent is critical. Clarify the role, the expectations, and your message. Train those involved in the interview. Executives are notoriously bad interviewers. Make sure your follow up process is quick and candidate-friendly.
- The interview - make it effective but efficient. Make it as objective and behaviorally-based as possible. Recent research confirms that an unstructured interview is useless and possibly counter-productive. If you are using panel interviews, make sure you understand why. There are pros and cons so be sure they are effective for you.
- More organizations are following the lead of other companies and incorporating behavioral assessments as part of the hiring process. Find the right tools specific to the industry and role, and designed for hiring. Be deliberate and consistent about when and how you'll use these tools. It will, likely, vary based on the job family. High volume positions often call for short screening tools integrated with the application. For manager and leadership roles, longer assessments may be better suited for later in the process. Make decisions about how the results will be used so you add to the objectivity and consistency of the process.

Conclusion

Everyone is looking for technology solutions to every problem. The same is true when it comes to finding and choosing talent. Technology certainly plays a role, but don't discount the value of designing an efficient, effective, and candidate-friendly process. This calls for a side-by-side collaboration between psychologists, technology experts, and HR to design frictionless and engaging candidate experiences. At a time when you need top talent more than ever, you can't afford to lose good candidates or continually make poor hiring decisions.

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Hiring the wrong COO is a million-dollar mistake that can set you back years. The wrong nurse manager can hamstring a department's ability to meet its financial and patient care goals. Adding a group leader who doesn't fit limits the ability of your team to work collaboratively. Hiring the wrong person for any role at any level of the organization negatively impacts their team and the overall business every day.

When you think about your talent investments, be sure to put sufficient time and resources into designing a process that works for you and your candidates.



