

# Finding the talent you need through sourcing and networking

**K**eeping your company's various departments filled with top talent is a task that every manager faces.

Some managers are able to continually fill their open positions with top-notch people, while other ones are only able to grab mediocre employees – and they may also have the problem of having open positions for a long time, too.

## PREPARING IN ADVANCE FOR OPEN POSITIONS

It is easy to see that top quality employees make the difference in any company. This makes it essential for any recruiter to develop the right methodology in advance that will enable them to get top talent on an ongoing basis – when needed. This can be accomplished by starting to find those candidates from the moment you get promoted to fill the manager's position – and every day afterwards.

Choosing just how you are going to go about the task of sourcing, whether you will start looking within the ranks of the organization (sourcing internally) or outside (sourcing externally),



is very important. Your efforts to find the right candidate for your open position should not start with posting an ad at Monster.com – or at any other similar website or publication. Just because an employee just turned in their resignation, does not mean you need to rush into a method of filling open positions that may yield less than the best qualified employees.

A better way of sourcing new employees is to have an ongoing method that will enable you to have a list of top talent candidates from which to choose from when an opening comes available. If you expect the top talent to find your ad at a moment's notice from among a mountain of competitor's ads – you're taking a large gamble.

By constantly having a process in use that provides you with the names of highly qualified candidates, you also avoid the unnecessary and expensive problem of having open positions. It is my view and the view of many of the "best places to work" leaders that a company should continue to address turnover issues and seek to fill open positions from within the company first.

This will enable you to retain your valuable employees longer. Once a thorough evaluation of internal talent has been properly

assessed, you can then use the same tactics and strategies to search for qualified talent outside the organization. Once your ability to assess candidates internally is refined, it will be easy to use the same process to evaluate external candidates.

## DEVELOP YOUR QUALITY TALENT FROM WITHIN

When filling a job position, it is a better idea to start looking within your organization for a solution. Many managers take the opposite approach and will automatically start looking elsewhere. They may have some preconceived ideas about internal employees that causes them to think and act this way.

In reality, there may be a number of reasons why a manager will want to overlook any internal employees – no matter how good they may be. For instance, in some situations, a manager may not want to start a turf war – or aggravate one that already exists – between departments by moving an employee from one to the other. Other leaders seek to build a coalition of employees who will be faithful to them because they brought them into the organization. Some leaders, knowingly or unknowingly, have the belief that the grass is greener on the other side, and think that fresh ideas for growth must come from the outside.

Leaders need to understand that there are a number of first-class advantages when you hire from within. One of these is that an internal employee is already familiar with your corporate culture and mission. In addition, employees want an opportunity for advancement and a chance to develop their skills, which are also sure to build their job satisfaction and will increase their retention rate. Knowing that there is a possibility of being selected for advancement will provide a happier place to work, too, and they are apt to stick with you longer. By developing and refining your inter-



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nal assessment techniques, you can actually increase the level of satisfaction around the workplace, and at the same time reduce your need to constantly be on the lookout for replacement talent. If you have an ongoing talent shortage problem, then you need to evaluate both your internal training and assessment techniques and your practices for external hiring.

When using a method for evaluating internal candidates, it is important to develop one that is fair, well-organized, honest and thought-provoking. After using this process on internal candidates, it may often surprise you who you will find to be very well-suited for the position. Often you will find talent interested in your role – better than you have ever dreamed. Such an honest method of evaluation will enable you to learn more and new things about them, because chances are good that clear channels of communication with them have not been opened in the past.

### REFINED ASSESSMENT TOOLS ENABLE A FAIR INTERNAL EVALUATION

Another reason to further develop your internal assessment process is because a well-developed assessment process can remove many of the emotions that naturally will enter into the picture. It is often because of these emotional reasons that many managers choose to overlook internal employees. Greater clarity of choice can be made, however, when there is a solid assessment process involved that can evaluate individuals without an emotional bias – one way or the other.

Without a fair and non-emotional approach, those who are involved in the hiring process will often be unable to separate the individual from their past – whether good or bad. Past mistakes will always be brought up – even though they may have occurred years ago. It may also blind you to the fact that this individual's abilities may perfectly suit them for the task. Popularity and excellent talent, however, may also blind a hiring team from seeing that where the individual is now could possibly be the limit of their expertise – not having the talents that would make them especially suitable to the new open position. In order to eliminate these problems,

what is needed is a fair and well-developed assessment process that will enable choices to be made fairly and without emotional baggage. Such a process also enables managers to be able to select solely on the basis of an individual's skill set and other desirable qualities. Looking at an idea that was referred to earlier, let's consider the well-known adage "The grass is always greener on the other side." It is not at all unusual for leaders to think that external candidates will provide better results because they are working for their competitors. Now, they think, if they could only get such talent into their own organization, then it would be better for them. This is only human nature to want something that you do not already have. It is funny when you realize that the manager of your competitor's company may believe the exact same way and as a result, may be targeting your employees as well.

If you should start looking externally for new hires and overlook your current employees, you may be creating problems you do not want. For one thing, employees want an opportunity to be promoted. By not even seriously considering them at all for an open position, you are going to generate a lack of trust and a rift in relationships between management and employees. On the other hand, when you use a fair and unbiased screening process, then it is known that you at least tried to find someone from within – and it will appear that you at least took the time to look. Taking this step will make it much easier for your employees to accept it when you do go looking for external candidates.

Because I regularly hear the reasons why many people left their current employer, I can honestly say that the one I hear the most is that there was a poor relationship with their boss. The second most popular reason is because they felt that there was not real opportunity for them to develop their abilities or to be promoted any time soon. Now, when you have an employer who automatically goes to external candidates to fill job openings, you can see that this causes doubts and more problems between employees and management, which will soon lead to a more frequent turnover. Loyalty is simply diminished because internal employees are not being considered first.

### ONGOING SOURCING PRODUCES BETTER RESULTS

Sourcing needs to be an ongoing process if you expect to get the best results. Each candidate needs to be evaluated honestly and fairly according to their talent, thinking, skill-set, strengths and weaknesses.

A good example where ongoing sourcing can be seen that uses a wide variety of processes in its sourcing strategies is professional baseball. Here is one sport that is clearly committed to finding, obtaining, and developing new and current talent – wherever it can be found. Baseball teams start by continually evaluating and maintaining thorough records of each player on the team – even those that are on the bench. These records list strengths and weaknesses of each player and they are constantly updated so that they can be perpetually evaluated. Then, baseball recruiters will also be sent to look at college teams for potential candidates. They also look at players on other teams; and finally, they look for people with talent from sources that are not typically on the radar. No rock is left unturned. They may even end up choosing a player from the worst team. The idea is that it is important to see that they are always looking and that they look everywhere. They do not necessarily know from where they might find the next great baseball player. Large corporations such as Microsoft also follow similar procedures.

They want to find the best, and they will start looking internally. They first find out what their internal employees are capable of. Remember that a fair assessment must always be given in light of the current open position. It may not at all be fair if you look at older assessments for a job position that requires a different skillset. Although your company may not actually have a talent scout, your hiring manager, VP of HR, or anyone that is doing the searching and hiring is acting as a talent scout. Since you are reading this, you are probably the one that needs an ongoing process. Baseball teams have full-time talent scouts who are always looking for the best – or for those who they think could become the best. They develop a list so they know where to find the next player at a moment's notice. You can also have such a list of top talent that you can call on to fill open positions by constantly seeking out the best.

