

Opportunity Marketing Attracts the Best Candidates

Hiring and retaining top talent isn't easy. Many organizations don't realize that good marketing is as important as providing a good job, benefits and compensation.

Good marketing starts with investing the time necessary to fully understand the open position and properly recruit the top talent. Look at roles and responsibilities, outcomes, opportunities for advancement, management styles, the culture of the team and the community to present the opportunity in the most attractive manner.

By understanding the needs, wants, desires, mindset and behaviors of the talent you want to attract, you can align your existing talent pool (internal employees and external prospects) with your opportunities—and their dream jobs. It creates a foundation for long-term match.

Traditionally, job descriptions define opportunities based on the duties and responsibilities of the person leaving the position. They rarely address what type of candidate would best fit the position and what desired outcomes are associated with the position. Instead of specifying



ing additional skills a candidate should have and what goals they should reach, we typically think in terms of replacing Larry or hiring another Mary.

Powerful Position Descriptions

Detailed information helps candidates get comfortable with you, your organization and your opportunity faster. Providing information specific to the opportunity allows candidates to prepare for interviews, while reducing guesswork and information gathering on their part. When you do that for candidates and competing organizations don't—you really shine.

It starts with detailed, thought-out position descriptions, which should include these key categories:

1. Mission—the essence of the job;
2. Performance expectations or outcomes;
3. Initial goals and specific, measurable objectives;
4. Key challenges;
5. Growth opportunities;
6. Desired skills and traits;
7. Team definition;

8. Team biographical makeup;
9. Culture of the company and the team;
10. Management background and styles;
11. Location information.

Success is in the details. By ensuring these components are part of your job description, you differentiate your organization's opportunities from competitors and increase your chances for success.

A crucial aspect of the position description is incorporating desired outcomes. Make sure you clearly define the "outcomes" you expect the new hire to achieve. Examples of potential desired outcomes include money increased or money saved and by how much; numbers raised or numbers cut and by how much; percentages improved or eliminated and by how much; problems solved and what benefits will be derived and innovations developed and opportunities they will create.

As you build outcomes for the position, continually ask yourself "so what?" to help you transition from a non-descript role to a clear outcome.

How do you get people to read your position description? Write a great headline! It can be intriguing, fun, compelling, a brain teaser, bold or even corny—just make sure it gets noticed among all the clutter competing for attention. For the most part, people decide which news articles they are going to read based on five words or less—the headline. The headlines included with your position descriptions are just as important as the descriptive information within them. If you can't grab a passive candidates attention with the headline, he'll probably never read the rest of the position description.



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Patrick Ropella is Chairman & CEO of the Ropella Group an international Executive Search, Leadership Transformation, and Corporate Consulting firm. He authored the book and web-based training program, *The Right Hire – Mastering the Art of SMART Talent Management*, and has seen his content featured in many trade magazines, business publications, and industry journals. Patrick regularly speaks at webinars, career fairs, and conferences.

Follow the Leaders

How do you come up with enticing headlines? Keep your eyes open for intriguing and successful advertising campaigns. Look at what other leaders in any product or service area are doing with their advertising and pay special attention to their headlines. What catches your eye? And more importantly, what catches your audience's eye?

Keep a folder of the eye-catching ads and hold a brainstorming session. The process should provide interesting ideas and theme concepts to work with. Make sure headlines draw attention while also aligning with your organization's culture.

Once you have a strong headline, and campaign theme, consider all the mediums you can apply this concept to, such as your company website's career portal, print outreach and employment branding efforts. See how just a little extra work can really make an opportunity stand out?

Develop a Successful OMP

To take the position description to the next level, develop an Opportunity Marketing Piece (OMP). The OMP is a first class informational piece that excites prospective candidates and ensures they are fully informed about your opportunity. It outlines items thought to be of interest to candidates and their influencers.

Depending on the position, the importance of the role, and the difficulty in finding qualified candidates, the number of OMP pages will vary. Some OMPs can be as few as 3-5 pages while others can be 10 pages or more. A good amount of the information in OMPs can be pulled from your organization's website and even from community websites in your area. Complete the OMP with a compelling cover, and make sure the entire OMP is professionally formatted.

The completed OMP should be given to all potential candidates (internal and external) who have shown even the slight-

est interest in learning more about the opportunity. You'll also share it with networking referral sources that help you source prospects for your open position. Use the OMP to get as many readers interested in what you are describing as possible. The key is to hook them with "differentiating" information up front.

It all seems like a mountain of work, especially the first time you create an OMP. But a lot of what you collect and place in your first OMP can be used again. Keep in mind that if you hook potential candidates with organization information, they are likely to refer others to you or pass the information on to another qualified individual(s) they know. In other words, your OMP could go viral!

Influencers are people surrounding the talent who offer their opinions whether the candidate wants them or not. One of the OMP's advantage is that it makes it easier for the candidate your courting to get feedback from influencers throughout the evaluation process. A candidate is less likely to share information about the opportunity, especially before a final interview or offer, if he only has a verbal overview of what he's heard about your opportunity and a one-page position description. When you put an OMP in his hands, you deliver a "show and tell" piece with information that his influencers can look at on their own time as the process progresses.

By giving the candidate information up front, you address questions and eliminate concerns early on. Don't let influencers and their challenges and questions become stumbling blocks when it's time to extend an offer and get an acceptance process wrapped up. An OMP gets issues on the table quickly so they can be addressed, resolutions can be found, and everyone can keep moving forward.

Bottom line: Invest the time necessary to fully understand the opportunity you're offering. Upgrade your position description with expected outcomes, roles and responsibilities for the posi-

tion (not based on previous employees). Just as important, look for the sizzle that differentiates your opportunities from all the other competing opportunities. Package all of that information with care. Then, start advertising and promoting your opportunity to prospective internal and external employees, including the right people and as many as are realistically possible.