# Versique

# INSIDE THE ART OF TALENT ATTRACTION
## HOW TO COMPETE AT ANY LEVEL

# CONTENTS:

Amidst the many challenges
companies face when looking to hire,
knowing how to attract the *best* people
for the job is the most crucial to overcome.

## Here's how.

# LEARN TO SELL YOUR COMPANY
## TO PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES

# CHAPTER 1 LEARN TO SELL YOUR COMPANY TO PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES

You might think that hiring the right talent is all about an individual candidate selling themselves to you; in reality, it's a two-way street. The first step in attracting top-tier talent to your company is to know how to "sell" your company to a potential candidate. No matter the conditions, location, industry, job, tasks—the opportunity will align with a high performer looking for the characteristics of your company. After all, it aligned for you—why not someone else? The first task in building a story to attract potential talent is to "get your mind right." Recruiting talented people is competitive. How many games are won by players that believe they are going to lose before they begin? Engage the enthusiasm you have for your business and organization to present with confidence and conviction to potential candidates.

To create a positive candidate experience you need to develop an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) that attracts both passive and active candidates.

An EVP can help you identify the strengths of your company and determine how to position it to candidates. The first step in creating your EVP is to accumulate as much material as possible. Brainstorm what makes your company stand out by asking yourself questions like:

1. How does your organization differentiate itself in the marketplace?

2. Why do your top performing employees stay with your firm? What has their experience been? What engages these top performers to make their work meaningful?

3. Where is the organization going and how do great employees support this growth?

4. What are your company values that support a great employee experience? How do employees benefit from your company's leadership style/structure?

5. What is attractive about your rewards or recognition program?

6. What are the shared values that bring vitality and strength to your workforce?

7. What does the future hold for your company in terms of innovation and continuous improvement?

Many of the above questions lean into the culture of your organization. Spending time to define your organizational culture is very worthwhile and a lynchpin in attracting the best candidate for your company. Take the information generated from the questions above and distill it down to talking points and stories that best capture your mission, vision and values.

**Tell Your Story**

*"Stories have power. They delight, enchant, touch, teach, recall, inspire, motivate, challenge. They help us understand. They imprint a picture on our minds. Want to make a point or raise an issue? Tell a story."* **— Janet Litherland, author.**
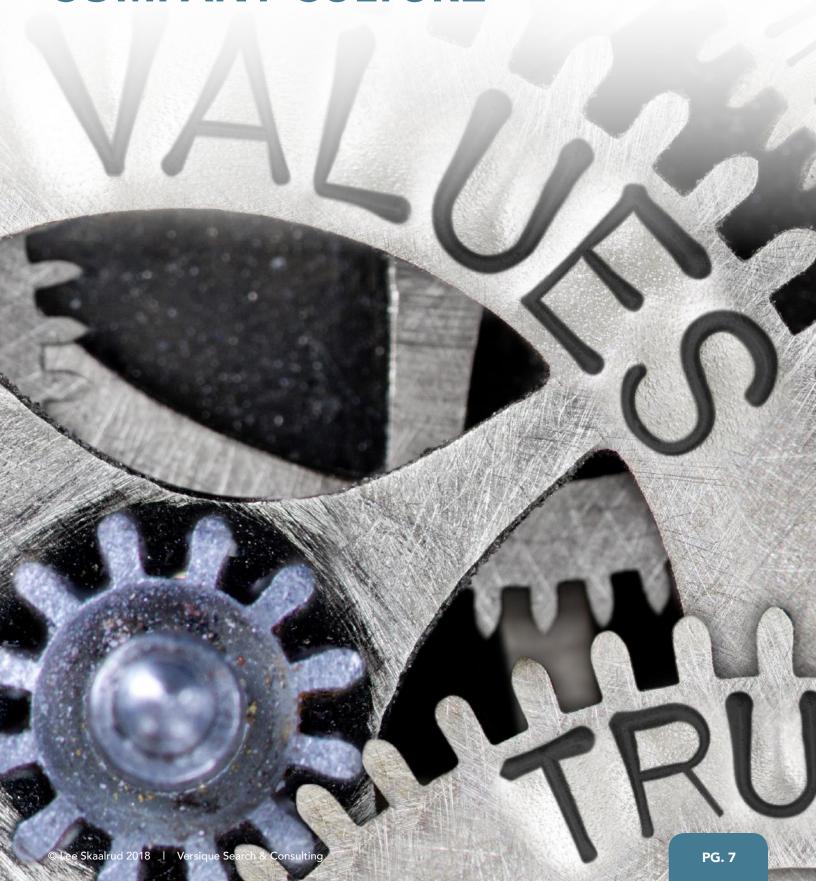
Research proves this out. Paul Zak ("Why Your Brain Loves A Story," Harvard Business Review, 2014) has done some excellent research on how the brain reacts to storytelling, attention and recall. His "experiments show that character-driven stories with emotional content result in a better understanding of the key points a speaker wishes to make and enable better recall of these points weeks later. In terms of making impact, this blows the standard PowerPoint presentation to bits. I advise business people to begin every presentation with a compelling, human-scale story. Why should customers or a person on the street care about the project you are proposing? How does it change the world or improve lives? How will people feel when it is complete? These are the components that make information persuasive and memorable."

High performers will listen to an engaging introduction of an opportunity, the organization, the challenges ahead and exciting future. Engaging talent with a meaningful EVP right out-of-the-gate—and throughout the recruiting process—will increase the talent pool available to you and the probability of success.

We'll spend the next chapter discussing culture definition and alignment to help complete the EVP and help you clearly communicate the essence of your organization.

# CHAPTER 2 CLEARLY DEFINE YOUR COMPANY CULTURE

> *"Culture fit is the glue that holds an organization together. That's why it's a key trait to look for when recruiting…before the hiring team starts measuring candidates' culture fit, they need to be able to define and articulate the organization's culture—its values, goals, and practices—and then weave this understanding into the hiring process."*
>
> **— Katie Bouton, HBR, July 17, 2015**

You want to attract someone who can not only perform the tasks of a given position, but also fit in and mesh well with your company. Ensuring a proper value-based and cultural alignment between a candidate and your organization is the key to not only attracting talent but retaining it. However, finding this match isn't always easy. While courting candidates for your business unit, department or company, communicating what drives your team and stories that reflect your values are extremely important to share with the candidate. This allows you the opportunity to check for alignment and also allows the candidate to self-deselect if there is misalignment. Leveraging assessments that accurately measure cultural alignment adds strong predictive analytics to your recruiting as well.

One such assessment is the Organizational Culture Profile, developed by O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell. It has long been identified as a leading model for capturing an organization's shared values (culture) and is the only model validated by a long term, longitudinal study. The participants in the study that aligned well to the organizational values, of their respective organizations, enjoyed a statistically significant difference in tenure, engagement, and longevity with their respective employers. Experience tells us people that "fit in" just work out better. Our goal in this chapter is to help move this from a "gut" feel to a more disciplined exercise.

Use the OCP model—illustrated below—to help organize your thinking on company culture.



You will notice that this is an "opposing values" model. As an example, an organization or person that is highly collaborative and conservative will, under most conditions, not align well with a commission only, eat-what-you-kill environment. How a person aligns to the nine opposing values of the OCP—in relationship to the group norms of the organization they are entering—is highly predictive of many organizational outcomes. The stronger the alignment, the stronger the levels of engagement, performance and tenure are likely to be.

Here is a brief summary of the value dimensions from the OCP model:

**Innovative, Agile Culture.** Risk-taking and experimenting is encouraged in this type of workplace culture. Failure is considered an important step towards success. They're often first to market, enjoying the margins and market position this affords, but they also understand that this advantage is time-limited. Innovation and pivoting continue to evolve products and create new categories to keep the advantage strong.

**Stable & Conservative.** Stable and conservative companies are often ones that are commodity-driven and impacted by large, macro-economic forces. Management does not react to "flavor of the month" or consider quick pivots or silver bullets. When times are good they are great and when the larger economy suffers, so do they. The firm knows to sock away some of the cash for when the markets are not strong. When the markets are down, the company moves into acquisition mode to take advantage of competitors who are ill-equipped to face lean times. Investing in new equipment or processes are significant decisions that have impact for years and the decision to move forward is a methodical one.

**Respect for People and Customer Centric.** These types of organizations are very "people-first." For example, an organization that still has most of the founding employees onboard would fall under this category. The organization rewards tenure, commitment and loyalty above all else. The focus is on continuously developing people, training, honoring traditions, craftsmanship and providing a great, family oriented work environment for those who join the company. When employees have an unexpected emergency on their hands, often the first call is to their manager or someone at the company.

**Outcome Orientation/Sales Centric.** These organizations consider their delivery speed and sales orientation their biggest strengths. Leadership makes sure that daily/weekly/monthly/quarterly and annual metrics are up to date and very visible. If a product is not moving, the firm will trade it out and find something in the category that sells better. They reward high performance and those that focus on outcomes rather than how it gets done. If someone is not up to the challenge, it is in everyone's best interest to help them move to where they can be successful.

**Attention to Detail, Development Centric.** For these companies, their precision, attention to detail, and analytics give them their competitive advantage. They don't feel the need to reinvent themselves every couple of years—instead they listen to their customers, understand the updated features needed to produce the next product release, and execute flawlessly. There's a strong focus on quality-assurance teams, testing every product to failure and then some. Everything is traceable back to its origin. Product reliability is unquestionable and will outlast warrantee dates by a factor of 10.

**Team Orientation and Collaborative.** This type of organization excels because of its many diverse constituencies and stakeholder groups, both inside and outside the organization. It works to develop the best solutions possible for its clients. Team members that have a versatile mindset, appreciate ingenuity, and are open to new ideas can be very successful in this environment.

**Aggressive/Hard Driving.** In this type of company, competition is everything. The mindset is that the markets may be tough and the pie is not growing so market share is taken from competitors. People that make it in this company need to be thick-skinned and self-motivated.

**Connecting Culture to the Employee Value Proposition.** Being open and effectively communicating the shared values and culture of your organization to candidates is critical on many fronts. Candidates often hear, "we are a work- hard, play-hard culture." But what does that vague statement really mean? Imagine replacing general statements like that one with a well-thought out narrative that leverages models such as the OCP. Think of engaging talent previously out of reach and what impact best-fit, high performing talent could have on profits, succession planning, culture and execution.

# CHAPTER 3 SOURCE PROACTIVELY

Identifying and attracting high-potential candidates should be as consistent and mainstream as your accounts receivables and payables process and receive just as much attention. Underpinned by a strong EVP, reaching out and proactively sourcing talent brings results. Consistent, strong sourcing activities include:

**1** Starting with a workforce plan and forecast integrated into the recruiting objectives.

**2** Developing "ambassadors" that have talent acquisition as part of their responsibilities, are held accountable and rewarded for the results.

**3** Crafting a success profile that is driven by an engaging EVP.

**4** Defined talent geographies and targets.

**5** Nurturing the high-potential candidate pool.
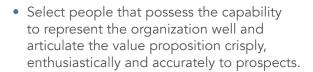
## Workforce Plan and Forecast

No matter the size of your organization, workforce planning and forecasting is the basis for the thoughtful, meaningful, proactive sourcing of talent. The plan should include details on your:

- **Current state.** Up-to-date organization charts, spreadsheets or leveraging workforce software packages to present an accurate current workforce picture. An advanced workforce plan will include a concise summary of the employee's performance and potential. A good example of this is a simple 9-box employee summary.

- **Desired state.** Based on organization growth, contraction, product/service forecasts, new product/service introduction, anticipated attrition, retirement and talent upgrades. The size and complexity of the organization determines the number of functions and granularity of the desired state picture. Lastly, criticality and impact of the positions should drive focus.

- **Gaps.** With current and desired state established, gaps should appear as an outcome. These talent gaps should then be prioritized by criticality and risk/reward to the organization.

## Ambassadors

The default notion of "who owns recruiting" is either Human Resources or Talent Acquisition. For the majority of small firms, these roles do not exist in pure forms. However, in all organizations, the ultimate responsibility for the attraction, selection, development, and retention of talent in a small business, work group, function, division, business unit or enterprise is the leader of that organization. Who represents that leader and the organization is a critical selection of and by itself

- Select people that possess the capability to represent the organization well and articulate the value proposition crisply, enthusiastically and accurately to prospects.

- For organizations that do not have a recruiting or talent acquisition function, assigning the recruiting and "first touch" responsibility is more difficult. In most cases, the hiring manager will have the responsibility.

- No matter who holds the responsibility of early communications and recruiting, this activity should be evaluated and rewarded on par with any functional task.

## Success Profile

We now have the functions identified that are critical to the organization and identified the team member(s) responsible for first contact with prospects. Arming these ambassadors with a success profile is critical. We all know that without a destination, any road chosen will get you there. This success profile will aid in proactively sourcing the right person for the position, function, work group, business unit or enterprise.

The success profile should include the following **KSAO's**:

- What people need to **K**now. This includes the technical and/or professional credentialing needed to perform the job-related activities.

- The **S**kills people can do. The tasks performed on the job such as decision making, planning and organizing, operating a CNC machine, business development, etc.

- The **A**bilities of a person. This includes intellectual capacity, psychomotor skills, intellectual curiosity and other hard-wired properties.

- **O**ther characteristics include a person's attitude, beliefs, personality characteristics, temperaments and values. This is where the culture alignment work from Chapter 2 gets tied in.

A LinkedIn profile or resume can get you the basics in terms of **K**nowledge and **S**kills. But getting a good read on a person's **A**bilities and **O**ther characteristics is much more difficult and is a key driver of employee engagement and tenure. With a solid definition and profile of cultural alignment, this exercise becomes much more productive.

## Talent Location

With a clear success profile in hand, it is now time to swing into action and contact prospective candidates. But where do you find them?

Get the facts. We all have gut instincts and anecdotal information about our talent geographies. We recognize that we are either in a target-rich environment or at a disadvantage. The obvious primary driver is geographical location of the talent you need. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is a great place to start and is public information provided by the US Department of Labor. Understanding employment levels by job title, state and Metropolitan Statistical Area gives you a good understanding of how your organization is located relative to the talent you need. This will help you determine whether a local search will suffice or if you need to recruit regionally, nationally or internationally. Firms that are rural or outstate versus firms located in high density metropolitan areas are more sensitive to the geographical impact of their physical locations.

Once you have a defined geographical footprint to recruit from you can become more granular in terms of targets. This can include trade schools, colleges and university recruiting programs. Target specific industries and then companies that compete in those industries. Understanding competitive postings on job boards, anecdotal information from industry consultants and other subject matter experts can also be added into the analysis. All together this provides an appropriate balance of bandwidth and fidelity.

## Systems

No matter the size of your organization, if you are hiring people, you need a system to track and contact. There are many analogies to the marketing and sales function that can be drawn here. The bottom line is that keeping in contact with your high-potential candidates is akin to how you nurture a prospective client from top to the bottom of the sales funnel. Much like sales and business development, it is much more difficult and expensive to secure a new client or customer versus activities that drive customer retention. Once you have a client engaged with your firm, maintaining excellent relationships supports continued commercial success. The costs associated with losing a good customer are analogous to losing a great candidate.

# CHAPTER 3 SOURCE PROACTIVELY

## Connecting with Talent

**There are a number of ways to proactively connect with talent:**

Trade school, college and university recruiting programs are a great resource if you have a fairly predictable hiring rate of entry-level candidates into your organization.

Participation and supporting trade and industry associations, trade shows, conventions and local associations.

Hosting events that showcase your organization, technology, services.

Identifying prospects via databases and online services such as LinkedIn and ZoomInfo (more detail on social media coming up in the next chapter).

Employee referrals and former employees.

Cold calling or emailing these candidates for an introductory phone conversation or, when appropriate, a coffee or lunch.

Creative combinations. For example, if you are having events to drive customers your way, why not double up and invite prospective candidates as VIPs?

# SOLIDIFY YOUR CAREER SITE, SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE, AND APPLICATION PROCESS

# CHAPTER 4 SOLIDIFY YOUR CAREER SITE, SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE, AND APPLICATION PROCESS

*"Who's more likely to see a cumbersome application process through to the end, a performer who's in high demand or an average candidate who's casting the widest net?"*

**– Allie Kelly, Jazzhr Notes, 2015**

Results from our 2016 Talent Acquisition Profile survey shows that business owners, hiring managers and prospective candidates alike ranked Career Websites, Social Media and the Application Process lower in relative importance than the Employment Value Proposition, Culture, Proactive Sourcing and Process Excellence. These same groups also indicated relative satisfaction with the performance of these dimensions.

The results of the survey suggest that career websites, social media presence and the application process for the most part be considered hygiene factors (Herzberg et al, The Motivation to Work, 1959) and not motivators. If left unattended, career websites, social media presence, and the application process could drive dissatisfaction by a candidate during the attraction phase but may not represent opportunities to further motivate or engage a candidate forward in the hiring process. Recent research on internet retailing agrees, "Applying the (Herzberg's) model to the retail environment, hygiene factors (perceptions of risk, website functionality and quality of service) are purchase preventers, while motivators (Enjoyment and Price) are purchase inducers. Sellers need to work to not only eliminate dissatisfiers, but to identify and provide satisfiers as well. Retailers must also understand that even if dissatisfiers are eliminated, shoppers may not be induced to purchase if appropriate motivators are not present. (James D. Mueller, Rhonda Mack, Journal of Business & Economics Research, Volume 1, Number 6).

## Career Site

As such, **career sites** and **social media** presence offer an opportunity to provide insight for a candidate into your organization or team. Done well, these factors offer a candidate invaluable information to evaluate the hiring organization on many fronts.

**Recruiting.com** captures this well:

"An effective career site should be a living, breathing extension of your employment value proposition. It should show candidates a true representation of your organization's work style. We believe there are four important factors when it comes to creating an effective career site:

**1. Strong message delivery**

**2. Engaging visuals**

**3. Inspiring content**

**4. Emotional connection**

If your career site doesn't reflect your organization's values, culture, and unique attributes, you may want to reexamine your efforts.

# CHAPTER 4 SOLIDIFY YOUR CAREER SITE, SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE, AND APPLICATION PROCESS

The Application process can also create "application fatigue" on the part of candidates. A great piece written by Allie Kelly, Jazzhr Notes 2015 includes the following highlights:

According to a recent CareerBuilder report titled "How Candidate Experience Is Transforming HR Technology," 60 percent of candidate respondents said that they've begun an online application and not finished due to how long and complex it was. If your application process results in applicant fatigue, you're at risk of losing the candidates you want most. Think about it: Who's more likely to see a cumbersome application process through to the end, a performer who's in high demand or an average candidate who's casting the widest net?

"What's interesting about the 60 percent of candidates who voluntarily end the application process is that around 50 percent of employers think that this is a positive sign, some feeling they've weeded out non-serious candidates and others believing that only the most talented candidates finish the application process. Employers and candidates are again on different pages when it comes to application length and time: applicants see the number of steps in an application process (both number of pages and minutes) as longer than employers do."

One takeaway is to tier the application process, and the depth of information requested, with your recruiting process. While in the attraction phase, focus on gathering only resumes for evaluation. As you progress through to the selection phase gather the more in-depth and compliance driven information as needed.

In summary, do not expect a career website and social media presence alone to motivate candidates to your organization. However, career websites and social media present an excellent opportunity to provide rich and meaningful information to your prospective candidates. In terms of the application process, be cautious on when you ask prospects for in-depth application data. Resumes will do early on while comprehensive information can wait.

# PROCESS EXCELLENCE: ATTRACTION

# CHAPTER 5: PROCESS EXCELLENCE: ATTRACTION

The outcome of excellent recruiting practices is a reliable, repeatable and successful process that delivers the right person to the right job that does the right thing. Let's put all of this together so you have a framework for best practices throughout the talent attraction process.

## Content Development

Chapter 1 focused on the fundamentals of "selling" your company to top talent. Take the time to develop an effective, rich Employee Value Proposition. Start by answering the following questions:

1. How does your organization differentiate itself in the marketplace?

2. Why do your top performing employees stay with your firm? What has their experience been? What engages these top performers to make their work meaningful?

3. Where is the organization going and how do great employees support this growth?

4. What are your company values that support a great employee experience? How do employees benefit from your company's leadership style/structure?

5. What is attractive about your rewards or recognition program?

6. What are the shared values that bring vitality and strength to your workforce?

7. What does the future hold for your company in terms of innovation and continuous improvement?

Chapter 2 introduced a robust culture model to help articulate your organization's shared values with the hopes of attracting people that align strongly to your organization. Take the time to identify and craft the principles that drive your organizational "glue" and incorporate them into your EVP.



ORGANIZATION CULTURE PROFILE

TEAM-ORIENTED

DETAIL-ORIENTED

OUTCOME-ORIENTED

INNOVATIVE

STABLE

AGGRESSIVE

PEOPLE-ORIENTED

# CHAPTER 5: PROCESS EXCELLENCE: ATTRACTION

Collecting or creating organizational stories, history, and lore that illustrate the EVP and shared valuables has impact on many fronts. Some examples:

- For the early stage start-up or emerging firm, telling stories on the challenges, technology roadmap, or vision for the future is extremely compelling to the like-minded individual.

- For the rural or geographically remote operations, stories on what attracted other high performers to the region, why the location supports the long-term efficacy of the organization, or opportunities the company and location offer can help attract candidates.

## From Event to Routine

It often seems like the recruiting efforts are very event-driven. Someone expectantly leaves for a competitor, a rock-solid veteran of the firm announces retirement, or a new customer commits to a very large, long-term contract. While these events will never go away, their impact can be mitigated by a talent attraction process that is ongoing and proactive. Converting from surprise, event-driven recruiting to a more predictable routine requires:

- Effective workforce planning that captures the current state, desired state and talent gaps within your organization.

- Identifying and nurturing ambassadors that represent your organizational well.

- Arming the ambassadors with a meaningful value proposition and engaging stories.

- Proactively sourcing talent from schools, universities, competitors, adjacent industries, and employee referrals.

- Effective systems that support and nurture the talent pipeline.

- A consistent and effective presence on social media, an excellent career site and a user-friendly application process.

Talented and high performing professionals enjoy a rigorous, well-executed recruiting process. Not just rolling out a red carpet, but engaging professionals in meaningful dialogue to explore synergy, alignment and potential.

By engaging a holistic Talent Attraction process, an exceptional candidate experience and hiring the best talent will become a regular occurrence and expectation. Your organization can be at any stage of the growth curve, play in any industry, be local or international, rural or metropolitan, small or large—and a winning candidate experience will allow you to compete with any firm for top talent.

Now that you are attracting great talent, you need to select the best of class. Please keep an eye open for our sequel, "A Complete Guide to Talent Selection" coming soon.

**Take the secure and private Talent Acquisition Profile Survey and assess your recruiting best practices.**

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**About The Author**

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