

# Versique

## ATTRACTING THE RIGHT TALENT: 4 SECRETS FROM TOP RECRUITERS

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## INTRO:

### The Secrets of Talent Attraction

“

*The secret of my success is that we have gone to exceptional lengths to hire the best people in the world.*

– Bill Gates

”

It's no secret that your company's greatest assets are its people. No matter your industry, if you have the wrong people at the helm, it costs your company time, money, resources, and your overall reputation. Hiring has become increasingly difficult amidst the proliferation of the gig economy and other new trends in employment; you have to do more than just post an opening to a job board when you need to hire someone new. You need to know the tactics that will build awareness around your brand and attract the right talent to your organization on an ongoing basis. But how do you do it? **This ebook will outline four recruiting secrets that will help attract top talent to your organization.**



**SECRET #1**

# **SELLING YOUR COMPANY TO PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES**



## SECRET #1 SELLING YOUR COMPANY TO PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES

You might think that hiring the right talent is all about an individual candidate selling themselves to you, but companies that attract the right people know it's a two-way street. You may expect to post a job opening online and have applications stream in right away, but to truly get the right person for the job, it requires more of a proactive, strategic approach to recruiting. You need to know how to "sell" your company to a potential candidate. Clearly defining what your company stands for, where it's going, and how a potential candidate will fit into the mix is essential in marketing your company to prospective employees.

In order to "sell" your company to prospective candidates, start by doing these three things:

1

Develop an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) that attracts candidates who are both passively and actively job seeking

2

Tell a compelling and positive company narrative that can circulate whether you're actively hiring or not

3

Write clear, attention-grabbing job descriptions

### 1. Develop an Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

An EVP can help you identify the strengths of your company and determine how to best 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 within the marketplace?
2. Why do your top performing employees stay with your firm? What has their experience been?
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?
5. What is attractive about your rewards or recognition program?
6. What does the future hold for your company in terms of innovation and continuous improvement?
7. What opportunities are there for career advancement? What is the potential growth path?

Many of the above questions lean into the **culture** of your organization. Spending time to define your organizational culture is crucial in attracting the best candidates 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.

## SECRET #1 SELLING YOUR COMPANY TO PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES

### 2. Creative A Positive Company Narrative + Learn To 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 selling your brand to prospective candidates and employees, this is especially applicable.

Throughout the application and interview process, what kind of story are you telling? You need to engage prospective candidates with a meaningful company narrative right out of the gate. What does your company stand for? How have you grown over the past few years, and where do you see the company going in the future? How does your company improve the lives of others? These are the compelling details that make your company story persuasive and memorable.

The more you spread this message, the more it will permeate the culture. People working for competitors will get word, and even if they're not looking for a job they'll start to identify your company with certain values and expectations, making them ideal future candidates. A huge part of telling your company story relies on social media marketing and how you present your organization on your website and career page. We'll cover more on that in a few chapters, but identifying what that story is and how it looks is crucial beforehand.

Engaging talent with a meaningful company narrative right out-of-the-gate—and throughout the recruiting process—increases the talent pool available to you and the probability of success.

### 3. Write Clear, Attention-Grabbing Job Descriptions

Having unclear job descriptions can be a major deterrent to potential candidates. If you use vague buzzwords that don't really define the role, they won't get a sense of what their job will actually entail. Be honest and concise while still providing some details about the day-to-day tasks the position involves. Use industry-specific keywords, not just your own internal vernacular, and incorporate some of the verbiage and values from your EVP and company narrative.

You're crafting your brand in order to sell it to potential candidates, and you need to sell each particular job to a candidate as well. Make sure you know exactly the kind of candidate you're looking for and understand what they're looking for in terms of desired title, job functions, and responsibilities.



**SECRET #2**

# COMPANY CULTURE MATTERS... MORE THAN YOU THINK



## SECRET #2 COMPANY CULTURE MATTERS...MORE THAN YOU THINK

Culture fit is at the heart of what holds an organization together—so it's natural that you should look for it when hiring someone new. But before you can ensure a candidate will align with your culture, you need to define what your company culture actually is. You want to attract someone who can not only perform the tasks of a given position, but also mesh well with your company. 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. This allows you the opportunity to check for a culture fit with your candidate and also allows your candidate to self-deselect if there's a misalignment.

Going beyond using a “gut feeling” to identify a culture fit is important. You need an actual framework to define your company culture so you can spot when a candidate is a potential match. One way to define your company culture is by using an assessment called the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP), developed by O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell. It has long been identified as a leading model for capturing an organization's shared values (culture). 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. Using this framework can help you transition from just going with a “gut” feeling to creating a more disciplined practice.

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



Taking a look at this graphic, you'll notice that it's 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.



## SECRET #2 COMPANY CULTURE MATTERS...MORE THAN YOU THINK

**Here is a brief summary of the value dimensions from the OCP model. Look these over and decide which one best describes your company culture.**

**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" ideas or consider quick pivots or silver bullets. When times are good they are great and when the larger economy suffers, so do they. 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 Oriented 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 with a specific cultural description that gives them a crystal-clear picture of what it's like to work for you.

**SECRET #3**

# ABS: ALWAYS BE SOURCING



## SECRET #3 ABS: ALWAYS BE SOURCING

Here's something most companies fail to realize: sourcing needs to be a constant priority. 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. You've heard of the ABCs (always be closing), right? When it comes to recruiting, you need your ABS: always be sourcing. How do you achieve this? Here are some initial steps:



### Workforce Plan and Forecast

No matter the size of your organization, workforce planning and forecasting is the basis for the thoughtful and 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 your organization.



## SECRET #3 ABS: ALWAYS BE SOURCING

### 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.

## SECRET #3 ABS: ALWAYS BE SOURCING

### Talent Location

With a clear success profile in hand, you can now 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 a positive relationship supports continued commercial success. The costs associated with losing a good customer are analogous to losing a great candidate.

## SECRET #3 ABS: ALWAYS BE SOURCING

### 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?



Some companies go as far as including a metric for their management team specifically on the number of interviews conducted per week or month.



**SECRET #4**

# **SOLIDIFY YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEB PRESENCE**



## SECRET #4 SOLIDIFY YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEB PRESENCE

After you've established your EVP and learned how to best sell your company to your candidates, it's time to shore up your social media and overall web presence—including streamlining the application process itself. If left unattended, career websites, a poor social media presence, or a cumbersome application process can deter top talent from your company. When done correctly, they allow you to create magnetic content that proactively attracts talent to you.

### Career Site

Done well, your career site should not only list those detailed job descriptions mentioned in chapter 1, but also include information about the culture and values of your organization.

**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.

### Social Media

Nearly every brand relies on social media for its inbound marketing efforts, and your company should view the hiring process as no exception. If you want to build brand awareness and create a positive narrative around your company, you have to create an engaging social media presence. Make sure your company posts on the social media platforms that your audience is most likely to connect with, and include posts about company culture, special awards, the benefits of working there (have you seen our new standing desks? #healthyatwork), behind the scenes details about exciting projects or developments, and other initiatives. Think back to your cultural alignment: what kind of workplace culture do you have and who are you seeking to attract? Post material that aligns with that brand and be consistent about it.

In general, Facebook and Instagram are great places to highlight your workplace culture and news, while LinkedIn is a good place to share articles on thought leadership around your industry. Most candidates will check out a company's social media platform or website before applying, so you need to make sure these platforms are up-to-date and reflect the positive company narrative you're trying to tell.



## SECRET #4 SOLIDIFY YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEB PRESENCE

### Streamline Your 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**

If your application process is too lengthy or cumbersome, it can 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."

When you're competing for top talent, it's important to act fast throughout the entire hiring process. Companies that attract the best candidates streamline the application process so they don't inadvertently turn away some of their best options. One option is to tier your application process and the depth of information requested. For example, in the attraction phase, focus on gathering only resumes for evaluation. As you progress through to the selection phase, you can gather the more in-depth and compliance-driven information as needed.

In summary, 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 more in-depth information can come later on.



**CONCLUSION:**

# **BEST PRACTICES ON IMPLEMENTING THESE**



## CONCLUSION: BEST PRACTICES ON IMPLEMENTING THESE

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?

Start to tell your company narrative. Use your EVP and company narrative to attract top candidates for the role, incorporating some of your main values and strong points in your job descriptions and letting ambassadors help re-tell that story in the real world.

Chapter 2 introduced a cultural 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.



## CONCLUSION: BEST PRACTICES ON IMPLEMENTING THESE

Collecting or creating organizational stories, history, and lore that illustrate the EVP and shared values 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 recruiting efforts are very event-driven. Someone suddenly 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 both 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 company narrative that promotes your brand's reputation.
- 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 know some of the top secrets to attract top talent to your organization and you've determined that you're ready to hire, how do you hire the best talent in the least amount of time? Check out our free guide to determine the best hiring strategy for your company.



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