

Softworld feature article: Implementing an effective e-recruitment strategy

What are the key points to consider when deciding whether to implement an e-recruitment strategy? Bill Shipton, Chairman of the [Association of Online Recruiters](#) looks at the benefits of the Internet as a “must have” candidate attraction strategy and highlights examples of organisations that have made significant time and cost savings through managing the recruitment process online.



Many medium and large sized organisations have used the Internet to try and recruit new staff. Many of those organisations will have mixed views about its effectiveness as a recruitment medium. Indeed, much of the criticism of e-recruitment has been centred on volume of response. Despite the lower candidate acquisition cost than other more traditional means (print advertising or recruitment consultants), some will say the Internet creates as many problems as it solves.

However, this view of e-recruitment is far too narrow, and overlooks the wider benefits it can bring to a progressive company. There are, in my view, four "strands" to e-recruitment:

- candidate attraction
- employer branding
- process management, and
- talent pool engagement.

Any organisation that is using the Internet for each of these strands will be maximising the benefits that this extraordinary medium can deliver and outstripping its competition in the battle to attract and hire the best talent.

Internet vs offline advertising

The Internet will never completely replace print advertising as a means to attract talent. But, the fact that 5.8 million* jobseekers in the UK have already applied for jobs online, and 9.7 million* expect to find their next job online, suggests that the Internet is a “must have” in any organisation’s candidate attraction strategy (*Workthing E-Recruitment Study 2003). And of course, the opportunities on the Internet are more varied than in the offline world. Generalist and specialist job boards, email marketing, search engine marketing, viral marketing and banner advertising are among the many techniques employed by today’s e-marketers. The recruiter is limited merely by their imagination in terms of what is possible online.

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It is no coincidence that most recruitment consultancies now rate the Internet as their most productive source of candidates. Many have realised significant cost benefits of sourcing candidates online, and yet those savings are not being passed on to customers. It is always worth asking a recruitment consultancy where they source their candidates. Then ask yourself whether you couldn’t find those candidates directly at a considerable saving.

Employer branding

Where the Internet can really deliver significant differentiation is around employer branding. Your corporate career portal should be the destination for any recruitment marketing activity, be it offline press advertising or online campaigns. But it is essential that employers use their career portals to convince the candidate that they are an employer of “choice”. Remember that you will not be the only employer they are considering. How your organisation portrays itself online and how it conducts itself throughout the recruitment process will have a direct impact on whether the candidate ends up accepting an offer.

Managing the recruitment process online

This last point leads me on to the importance of good process management. Managing the recruitment process online enables a far better candidate experience. For instance, the candidate should know immediately by e-mail that their application has been received and is being considered. But the real benefits come in the form of faster time to hire, reduced administration, improved quality and most importantly lower cost per hire. The key is to enable recruiters to recruit rather than administer, and let the technology take care of the transactional elements of the process.

The Tussaud's Group, the leading leisure attraction company, reported that time to hire was reduced by 66% after implementing an e-recruitment system.

Likewise *Arcadia*, the leading fashion retailing group, reduced their cost per hire by 64% in the first year of managing recruitment through their corporate career portal.

These sorts of savings are really significant and any organisation that fails to leverage the benefits of managing its recruitment online will lose ground to its competitors, both in terms of the quality of hires and the impact on the bottom line.

Talent pool

The final strand of any e-recruitment strategy should be effective engagement with the talent pool. A talent pool is a group of candidates who have ever applied to work for an organisation, whether in direct response to an advertisement or on a speculative basis. It should also include an internal audience of current employees.

Talent pool engagement will involve regular communication with candidates, in the form of e-newsletters. They should inform the audience of any news within the organisation, and why the candidate should continue to consider the organisation as a potential employer.

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This is very relevant for companies who may not currently be recruiting, but who continue to receive a high volume of speculative CVs. Rather than gathering dust in a filing cabinet, those CVs should be put to work, encouraging the candidates to continually visit the corporate career portal and update their details. As and when the organisation wishes to start hiring, they will have a ready pool of candidates, who have already bought into the employer brand, and are ready and willing to apply for vacancies. The costs savings can be really significant. Very few UK organisations have recognised the importance of this activity and yet it will have to become a key part of their recruitment strategy in an ever-tightening marketplace.

So many elements of e-recruitment have now delivered demonstrable success to many organisations, yet the number of organisations that have a truly coherent e-recruitment strategy remains small. As the UK economy grows, and the impact of the post baby boom demographics start to bite within the labour market, recruiters will need to bring together all the elements of an e-recruitment strategy not just to win, but also to survive.

Bill Shipton will be speaking on "The Online Talent War - Strategies to Win in E-recruitment" at the forthcoming [Softworld HR & Payroll event](#). The seminar is at 10.30-11.30 on 4 March 2004 at the Grand Hall, Olympia, London. Find out more about the free [educational programme](#) and stay tuned to [HR Zone's Softworld homepage](#) for regular show news and updates.

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