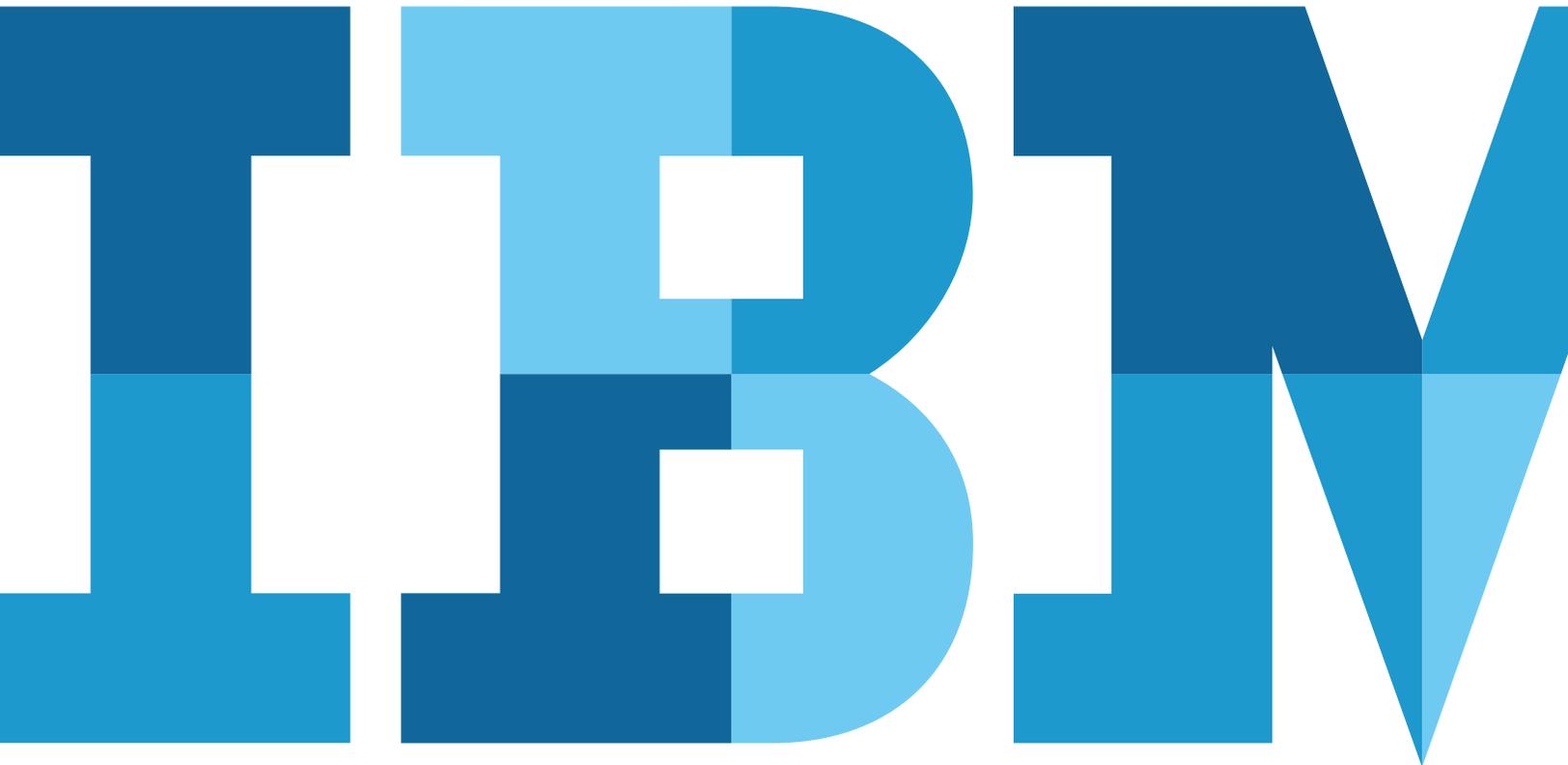


Recruitment is marketing

The future of talent acquisition

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Some of us may remember when recruiting was about pulling names from a Rolodex and dialing a phone – when the classifieds were an effective means of recruitment. Then the job boards came along with hundreds of thousands (and now millions) of pages dedicated to job postings. Job boards changed the game. And while this was a good thing, due to their popularity, job boards are often cluttered and disregard how to appeal to quality candidates.

Enter social media – simply defined as the creation and exchange of user-generated content that includes email, blogs, instant message (IM), Facebook, LinkedIn, photo sharing, dating sites, file sharing and even recruitment technology systems. Social media has changed how we approach almost everything from life to love to business – so why should it not change recruiting?

For some companies, it has. But for most, it has been a difficult transition. Questions of confidentiality and privacy, management, usage, productivity, analytics and return on investment (ROI) all get thrown around as roadblocks. But it is hard to argue against social media when Facebook and LinkedIn collectively have over 1 billion active users worldwide. But, setting up a company Facebook page or LinkedIn Career Page will not entirely solve the problem of recruiting the right talent. To reach that the right talent, we need multiple tools, strategies and people to recruit the right talent.

Too often we focus only on tools that push jobs to the web, automate the application process, launch a Facebook page or career site and expect traffic to come to us. But no amount of search engine optimization and job board placement is going to pull the right amount of quality candidates. Instead, flip your approach and think of yourself as a brand manager. Great brand management or brand building boils down to one, knowing your audience and two, understanding the value your brand delivers. Apply those two simple facets to recruiting and

you get, who are we trying to hire and why would someone want to work here. To feed your talent pipeline, your recruitment technology system and your recruiters must have a way to attract and connect with people, not just find them. This goes beyond Facebook; it is mobile, it is advertising and it is about approaching recruiting with a strategy that rivals that of consumer marketing.

Understanding the tools and tricks that are available to you is crucial in this interconnected, savvy and social world. We will discuss why this social phenomenon has rocked the recruiting world and how to create a strategy to address it through attraction and connection. You will learn about consumer online marketing tactics, why your career site is important and the significance of candidate relationship management. The important thing to remember is that we are not just going to focus on Facebook and LinkedIn. While they are the behemoths of social media, they are not the only answer. We will cover how to create multi-faceted strategies to attracting and connecting with the right talent.

So why is making the transition to building true attraction and connection strategies such a struggle? There are a few reasons. First, the talent acquisition world has focused on recruiting for its entire existence, which makes sense, because to hire, you have to recruit. In response, the industry created recruitment technology systems to automate the process of recruiting, to stay compliant and increase efficiencies. It was an amazing improvement. For the first time ever, workflows and standard job descriptions became a reality. And now assessments, HRIS and onboarding integrations are commonplace.

But none of these additions addressed candidate attraction– defined as creating awareness of your company within the talent pool. Recruitment technology systems, in base design, were meant to do nothing more than automate the hiring process and make it as efficient and compliant as possible. We have added some flair to them since the 1980s like job aggregation, reporting and analytics, mobile approvals and

posting to social networks, but even with all those improvements, they still cannot place recruitment ads, manage a social strategy or set up search engine optimization (SEO) landing pages.

For the actual recruiting process, we typically employ agencies, create Boolean search strings, use LinkedIn recruiter accounts, staff internal recruiters, hire an RPO vendor or post to job boards – all necessary tools. But none of these tactics go beyond finding the existing 16 percent of active candidates (Weddle, n.d.) – some who are qualified and a lot who are not. Keep in mind that 16% represents the workforce that is in some state of work transition, which would leave 84% of the workforce who are not active looking, right? Wrong, and according to a 2015 Salary.com study, 50% of people are looking for a job daily, and that is regardless of their employment status. The good news, everyone is interested in a better offer, so it's about getting your message in front of the right candidates.

Recruitment technology was inherently created to do one very specific thing – help recruit. But we need to stop expecting that recruitment technology systems will, for example, generate ads or create SEO landing pages – without some drastic changes. We also need to recognize that agencies and recruiters may not be in the business of understanding how to place targeted ads to passive candidates, or maintain a Facebook page. That is why we need to look at how we attract and connect with new talent.

Creating multi-faceted online attraction strategies

When it comes to talent attraction, it is important to think outside of the box. It is time to start defining target talent audiences and creating an attraction plan around their specific online consumer behaviors. Do they read the paper each morning? Do they check ESPN twice a day? Do they write or contribute to blogs weekly? Do they spend time reading the

tech section of CNN news? Almost all this information is attainable at a fee, and if that is outside of your budget, you can do a little internal research. Talk to your top performers and find out what makes them tick. How did they come to your company? How do they stay current with what is going on within their industry? What message would really resonate with them?

This is the same approach that consumer branding uses when trying to attract customers to a product. It is the same approach we need to take as talent acquisition teams. Your company, your jobs and your benefits are products that you need to sell. To do it right takes research, messaging and reallocation of funds currently spent on traditional methods, like job boards. If you sell the right message, and place that message in the right environment, you will attract and connect with the right candidates.

Google is always looking for extremely smart engineers to hire and the company is willing to try creative new methods to attract these individuals. Google placed a single billboard on California's South 101 highway in Silicon Valley. The billboard featured a difficult math equation – the solution to the equation led people to a website with even more equations to solve. After solving the equations, the visitor was asked to apply for a career at Google. Google used a genius marketing effort, with social appeal to attract and connect with its target audience before even recruiting them. (Google, 2004).

Zappos took an altogether different approach, but nonetheless a clear focus on marketing their employment brand. Zappos' recruiting team outlined that they were not delivering real value back to the business. They were unable to spend quality time with candidates, were unable to “build long-term sustainable relationships with people” (Mike Bailen, senior HR manager from Zappos). Zappos pinpointed the business problem—more than 31,000 applications received in 2014, keeping in mind that they were only able to hire 1.5% of those applications. They used data to conclude the glut of those

31,000 candidates were coming from job boards and most were unqualified. So, they stopped using job boards and shifted to mechanisms that helped them put the candidate first. Their first focus was to rebuild the Zappos career site to connect with people from a cultural perspective. They invite talent to look “inside Zappos” giving them an idea of each department and allowing them to become a Zappos Insider. Once a candidate is a Zappos Insider, Zappos is able to pipeline their individual skills and talent and match them to possible openings, and build a relationship with the candidate. In addition to the career site, Zappos is investing in employee referrals, targeting advertising and headhunting, all with the aim to deliver value to the business and the candidate.

The amazing thing about the Internet is it enables us to try again quickly, even if we fail. In the words of the online analytics guru, Avinash Kaushik, “The cost of taking risk on the web is low. You can try an idea. As soon as it is live, data starts following. You can take dramatic risks, at very low costs and learn big.” (Kaushik, 2009) In other words, be willing to try something new when it comes to recruiting; many quality candidates are out there, you just have not cracked the code in attracting them yet. There are multiple tools available in the recruiting world like pay per click advertising, retargeting and contextual targeting. Do not let the usual suspects of job boards be your only choice. Below are some interesting options available for those interested in reallocating budgets to new and interesting options.

Online display advertising

Many advertisements you see on websites (the banners and boxes with interactive or static images and text) are called display advertising. Most often, online advertisements are placed on websites via an ad network, or company who aggregates ad space from its network of various sites. Ad networks are able to use consumer online data to sell ad space that best fits their customers’ advertising needs. Ad networks and websites use strategic insight about their online users so that advertisers can place relevant ads. Below are some of the

most popular insights and targeting methods available to us.

- Behavioral targeting uses information collected from an individual’s web-browsing behavior, like previous sites visited and specific content viewed, to build a common audience behavioral profile. In essence, advertisers are able to buy the behavior of the audience.
- Contextual targeting is used to match ads that include keywords or selected topics to sites within a given ad network. Ads are contextually matched to concepts on a page, rather than just simply the individual terms on a page. (Google.com/adwords).
- Retargeting uses a pixel to keep track of people who visit a site. Once visitors leave the site, the pixel can, in essence, follow their online path and display an ad to them as they visit other sites.
- Geo-targeting is the method of determining the general location of a visitor, by zip code or IP address, and serving ads that are relevant to that visitor’s physical location. Geo-targeting is especially helpful if a company is not willing to pay relocation fees and wants to only recruit within a local area.
- With such targeted tools, finding the right match to a job becomes infinitely easier and more cost effective – no more post and pray.

Pay per click on Facebook and LinkedIn

Remember the approximately +1 billion users on Facebook and LinkedIn mentioned earlier? Well, you can place advertisements in front of them. Based on the amount of profile data on both networking sites, you can create targeted recruitment ads within Facebook and LinkedIn. You can select who you want your ad to be seen by location, interests, skills, education, gender, age, etc. After uploading an image, entering some text, supplying your website link and setting a budget, your ad is ready to run. The brilliant part is you only pay when

someone clicks on your ad. Make sure that you log in daily to check the analytics so you can optimize the ads to perform at their very best.

Search engine marketing

Search engine marketing is a form of Internet marketing that seeks to promote websites by increasing their visibility in search engine results through the use of paid placement, contextual advertising, social media marketing and search engine optimization.

But did you know that search engine optimization can only take you so far? There are two key components to SEO – clean code and relevant content. “The goal is to be relevant to the user – and then think about search engine strategy,” said Chris Koller, president of IdealGrowth, a digital advertising agency in Dallas. (Cited in Wood, 2011). Focus on building a great career and mobile site, and optimize them based on popular search terms. Then, when it comes to content in your recruitment technology system, build SEO landing pages to help increase visibility of specific jobs in your system. But do not expect that those pages will compete against large online job boards such as CareerBuilder and Monster. Remember, SEO is only one cog in the search engine marketing machine.

These tactical options discussed open up your recruiting machine to untapped target audiences. They are highly targeted, cost effective and quickly deployed. If you are worried about drumming up the funds to pay for a new recruitment campaign, think about running a recruitment marketing assessment or audit to evaluate what investments are returning talent and at what costs. Understanding what is and is not working can help repurpose funds that enable you to try new recruitment strategies.

Building a connection – Lead Management

Nurturing and building a relationship with your leads is just as important as attracting them— remember that 31% of

applicants never hear back after applying and 44% feel the lack of response from recruiters is THE most frustrating part of the recruitment process (Salary.com, 2015). There are multiple resources that enable you to build relationships with your leads and search for talent at the same time. Most lead management tools have the capability of integrating with an applicant tracking system and social networks, enabling you to quickly connect with leads, and many allow for the input of key word search criteria to scrape the internet and job boards for relevant talent profiles.

Once you have a talent pipeline, your recruiters can begin building relationships through email campaigns, direct mail and text messaging. The important part is to create a strategy around how and when you interact with that talent pool. For example, when interfacing with a student candidate slate, start by wishing them success during finals week, or sending a Happy Holidays message before reaching out with specific job offers. Crafting a strategy for dealing with newly sourced talent is vital in building your employment brand and helping ensure that candidates remain interested – even when you are not recruiting. Many lead management tools have evolved to allow you to automatically send communication based on workflow logic and the lead’s action or inaction so that good leads do not slip through the cracks.

Connecting with your career site

When candidates visit your career site and start the application process, they are expecting an authentic and easy-to-use experience. In fact, 83% expect you to have a really good career site (Salary.com, 2015). They may want to browse jobs, share jobs on your site with friends on their social networks, tweet jobs to their network or establish Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds for your jobs. They may want to identify people in their network who work at your organization and connect with them. This can benefit both the candidate and the organization by enabling both to gauge cultural and skills fit. When candidates reach the application stage, they want the process to be as straightforward, fast, and transparent as possible. They may wish to use their social network profile

to streamline the application process. In addition, more candidates than ever are searching and applying for jobs on their mobile devices, Being able to enable candidates to learn, share and converse on your mobile-optimized career site and within your recruitment technology system makes the potential of converting them to applicants that much higher.

Managing a social media strategy

There is only one hard and fast rule to managing a social media strategy, whether you are in consumer advertising or HR – you have to start with a goal in mind. Brian Solis, a principal of Altimeter Group, a leading research-based advisory firm, puts it best, “Today, a notable number of businesses are approaching branded social channels from a ‘ready, fire, aim’ approach. This method conjures a façade of achievement when in fact, any progress, if at all recognized, is short term and shoddy at best,” (Solis, 2011). Understanding how your HR and recruiting team fits into the framework of your overall corporate social strategy is critical to your team’s success.

Make sure that your marketing team knows and understands what you are trying to accomplish on social networks where they may already have a presence. One of the best approaches is to have a target audience, mission, content strategy and staff in place before you even set up a Facebook page or YouTube channel. Social media strategy and management takes commitment and planning. Those employment brands that excel with social networks are the ones that post more than job opportunities. They create a sense of culture with career fair updates, pictures of company events, polls, recent awards, employee quotes and strive to respond to questions with a 24-hour period.

A mobile strategy

Your recruiting strategy, your career site, your Applicant Tracking System, all need to be mobile—you know that, there are countless data points to prove it. What the numbers really mean is the recruiting process should be available anywhere,

anytime, on any device. Amazon doesn’t ask a user to add a product to their cart on their smartphone and then finish purchasing the product on their laptop, they designed the experience to allow the user choice in how they shop and buy. Thankfully HR systems are now able to function seamlessly on all mobile devices, making a true mobile experience a reality.

Creation of Message, Content and Creative

Developing a plan is an important step, but how do you get an ad created or a new career site built? Who develops the content you post on social media channels? There are a couple ways to approach the creative development your team will need to execute a recruiting strategy.

Team up with Internal Marketing

The external brand developed and curated by your marketing team is core to your employment brand. Having Marketing understands and supports the differences between the external brand and the employment brand will make your talent acquisition team’s job infinitely easier. Consider approaching your marketing team to help develop the assets and message you need to promote your recruiting strategy. Often the marketing team is also willing to share already created assets that you can utilize to build your campaigns.

Work with an External Agency who specializes in Employment Branding

Your marketing team may not have the time nor interest to support your recruiting strategy and employment brand. There are multiple agencies that specialize in Employment Branding and Recruitment Marketing. Ensure the agency has a process and record of developing compelling and authentic employment brands. Your recruiting strategy deserves consumer-grade creative and execution.

Hire a Talent Acquisition Employment Brand Specialist

Depending on the size and scale of your needs, you may be able to hire a team member with marketing and creative experience to manage your recruiting strategy. This person can

serve as a liaison into your recruiting team and/or your marketing team to brainstorm, set strategy, execute and track your plans.

Get Creative with the Team you Have

Sometimes you will be surprised by the hidden talents on your own team. Set up a few creative sessions where you can define your core issues, evaluate your competition's recruitment strategies and employment brands, define your target audiences, brainstorm creative ideas, audit your own career site for usability, analyze current recruiting tactics return on investment, to name a few. Use those sessions to set priorities and assign projects to team members to execute.

Consider your Talent

We talk a lot about finding the right talent, and sometimes we need to turn that question to our internal teams. Are our Talent Acquisition teams, especially our recruiters able to be successful as marketers? Recruiting is marketing is all about creativity, iteration, courage and flexibility. Does your existing team have the right talent and skills to achieve the outcomes you need? Make sure you are honest when evaluating the skills of your team, as their willingness to accept and execute a new strategy will ensure your success or failure.

Putting it all together

Your recruiting strategy should be an integrated partnership between strategy and tools. There is no secret sauce. However, if you broaden your approach and your definition of recruiting, attraction and connection, the goal of finding the right talent becomes increasingly attainable. Try creating a multi-faceted approach to talent attraction using target audiences and ads. Create a robust strategy to connect with talent in your lead management tool, social network, and career site or recruitment technology system. Be willing to change and try new tactics, even if it means starting small. There are countless ways to approach a truly social strategy for recruitment – when done right; they yield great results that can actually prove ROI. Embrace that recruiting is marketing and change how your

team finds, attracts and connects with the next great employee for your company.

For more information

To learn how to build a smarter workforce, visit: ibm.com/smarterworkforce

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