

Ways to Broaden your Staffing Strategy

Every recruiter knows that there is no “magic bullet” when it comes to finding the right candidate for an open position. In fact there are so many different tools and techniques for staffing being discussed and debated that it is easy to become confused regarding which to use, or spend endless time debating the merits of one tool over another.

The idea of this article is not to convince you that any one technique is better than another, nor is it to point out the latest trend in sourcing. Its sole purpose is to give you a solid list of proven techniques for sourcing via multiple technologies and even through plain word-of-mouth.

1) Know your competition

Probably the most important thing to consider before you start sourcing is to answer the question “Who are our competitors in this industry”? This seems like such a basic thing, but take a minute and think about it. Do you really know all of your company’s competitors in all of the business segments you recruit for? Can you sit down and quickly make a list? If you can’t, you may want to do some homework. Don’t just look at your large competitors. Small firms may be “under your radar” but may be a valuable source of talent.

Even if you think you know who your competition is, consider asking your hiring manager where many of his successful employees originally came from. Not only could you learn of other competing companies, but also find out which of them have proven to yield high-value hires in the past.

2) Know how they are organized

Once you know who your competitors are, knowing how they are organized is the next logical step. How are their groups structured? What departments do they have, and where are they located geographically? Who is managing others and who is doing the actual work? How many of the type of people you are looking for actually work at that company? If you are seeking engineering talent, do you know if the company has such people in the U.S., or are they located overseas where recruiting for U.S. positions can be very difficult?

There are many reasons for wanting to know this information. The company you are working at may call their lower level management “Senior XXXXX” instead of “XXXXX Manager”. Conversely at other companies, an individual with a “Senior” in their title may just be someone who has been with the company longer, or any other number of reasons. Calling a Manager after you have done your sourcing at one company and finding out that they have the responsibilities equivalent to a Director at your company is a waste of your valuable time. Be sure you are sourcing the right people. Make sure they are functionally equivalent, and don’t just have the same title as the position you are trying to fill.

There are many resources for general company information. Hoovers, by Dun & Bradstreet, is a popular paid service that provides not only basic company information, but will give you the locations of branch offices, number of employees, and sometimes a little basic structure on the companies. Some information from Hoovers.com is available at no cost. There are also other sites that offer a scaled-down version of this information for free. Now that you have built a target list of companies, and understand their basic structure, you are ready to begin your sourcing efforts.

3) Start with the cheap and easy solutions

Start with the easy and/or inexpensive options first. Look through your ATS or database. A potentially perfect fit may have applied for a different position in the past, or may have been overlooked. This can be very effective for finding “active” candidates, but if you can’t find the type of person you are seeking

this way, or if you are looking for a “passive” candidate who is currently working for a competitor, you will need to consider other options.

Some internet tools are also great at finding “low hanging fruit”. LinkedIn is a favorite of recruiters because of its ease of use and large inventory of people. Many users not only provide a snapshot of where they have worked in the past, but will occasionally discuss their current role and responsibilities. Often a little time spent on LinkedIn can produce some very viable candidates quite easily (and for very little net cost).

The downside to tools such as LinkedIn is that many users have let their profiles fall out of date – and they may not reflect what they are currently doing or even the company they are currently working for. Other users may have multiple profiles. Many profiles lack details regarding a person’s responsibilities, making it difficult to determine if a particular person is even a rough fit for your opening. Many professionals will not even be listed in LinkedIn, for a variety of their own personal reasons, but may be a perfect fit for your open position. Also remember the fact that if you can see their profiles, then many other recruiters can see them as well.

4) Ask for referrals

Another option is to simply ask for employee referrals. If you have a person at your company who used to work for a competitor – preferably one of your ideal target companies - ask him or her if they might know of anyone there who is in the role you are seeking. This person may even be able to make an introduction for you.

Also, once you start contacting potential prospects, don’t be afraid to ask for referrals. Many times, even if someone is completely uninterested in changing employers, they may be able to happily refer you to a co-worker or a colleague at another company.

5) Seek experienced professional help

Search firms are obviously another way to broaden your pool of names, usually quite substantially. There is a price associated with such services that you will not face while browsing your ATS or in LinkedIn, but the guarantee that they are functionally relevant and reachable by phone or email can usually more than make up for the cost.

6) Consider looking outside of your industry

Have you looked beyond your competitors to companies in other industries that may have people with skillsets similar to what is required for your open position? As an example, assume you are seeking to fill a position for an internal auditor. Your tech company has many competitors, but you can’t seem to find the person you want at these companies. In a case like this, why not think about recruiting from an accounting firm? Not only will they have qualified auditors, but since many of them travel, they might be interested in a job opportunity that lets them spend more time at home. This is just a hypothetical situation, but many job functions really do translate easily across industries.

There is no real “final step” to sourcing. Know your competition, use multiple sources for information, consider outside assistance, and don’t be afraid to ask for referrals. The more techniques you can use to find qualified talent, the higher your chances are of filling your opportunity quickly and cost effectively.

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Our policy of putting "strategy first" when undertaking client engagements has consistently led to timely and cost-effective solutions, accurate intelligence, and satisfied clients. For these reasons and more, RW Stearns has long been recognized as the premiere solution destination for hiring managers, recruiters and strategic planners around the world.

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