

# Top Ten Tips for Recruiting During the Recovery

## By Jamie Liddell

The recovery is underway (we hope); and with the improving economic landscape come new [job opportunities](#)

and new possibilities for those looking to take on new staff to cope with the demands of increased activity and a generally more favourable outlook. In order to give a helping hand to organizations wondering how best to tackle the new and improved employment market, SSON has reached out to experts from around the world for their advice. The result? An early (and hopefully extremely useful) Christmas present in the form of our Top Ten Tips for Recruiting During the Recovery. Take it away, folks...

### **1. Don't take the easy route just because it's easy**

The downturn may have been very hard work, but the recovery shouldn't mean kicking back and living the easy life – especially if you want top-quality talent. Even for those with the most laudable work ethics there might be a temptation to look for recruiting shortcuts to make space for the welter of other work that comes with improved markets. However, cutting corners in recruitment could leave you with employees who simply don't cut the mustard in the long run.

"There is no getting away from the effort required to recruit the best people from a pool of job seekers. If favourable conditions happily mean that some good CV's land on your desk unannounced, don't settle for them just because they are easy. Put in the marketing efforts to bring in a large number of candidates. Do the necessary hours of interviewing and filtering. Taking a shortcut invariably means taking a gamble and will leave a nagging doubt that you may not have hired the best candidate out there," says Seb Donovan of Top Employers Publishing, a publisher of job market analysis and resources.

### **2. Don't rely on job-boards to do your work for you**

Online job boards can be a fantastic resource for recruiters – but if you rely on them you're probably going to be scouring them for yourself before too long. The recovery will see increased hiring activity the world over, and nothing's going to stand you in better stead than solid, coherent and active networking. Simply putting vacancies up in cyberspace will work well for the very lucky few but will spell disaster for the rest. Use the boards, of course – but don't JUST use the boards.

"While there may be a strong temptation to take a 'post-and-pray' approach to recruiting, I would strongly advise against it," says Greg Bennett, global practice director for The Mergis Group. "The road to recruiter success is littered with the bodies of recruiters who waited for something to happen. Posting [jobs](#) on the various boards and then waiting for a miracle – the right candidate – to happen is a recipe for failure. If posting is done at all, it's to add to the pipeline that comes from PROactive recruiting not REactive recruiting."

### **3. Get a move on!**

We might be coming to the end of the year (and, for many, the festive season – not renowned as a time of intense recruiting activity) - but resist all temptations to put off your recruiting drive until 2010's well underway. If you succumb to such lures you might be giving precious ground to your enemies in the war for talent. Come on: what are you waiting for?

"Organizations planning to recruit in 2010 need to set the wheels in motion now. The market is recovering and 2010 means new budgets and projects for the vast majority of organizations. Now is the time to plan your resource, engage with suppliers and position your brand in the marketplace. January is a busy time for job seekers and your competitors will be making plans to increase headcount and resource projects. Don't miss out on the good candidates: position yourself now so you can move efficiently and quickly to secure the best talent available," urges Ben Wilson of Rethink Recruitment.

### **4. Be crystal-clear on your needs**

It might sound obvious, but before starting your recruitment process, ensure you're absolutely certain about what you want from your future employee/s, and where you're prepared to negotiate. Tales abound within the recruitment community of firms who decide to expand headcount without actually getting round to firming up what, exactly, they're looking for. Be clear on your needs; understanding what you're looking for will mean understanding how to look for it – and find it.

"One unfortunate consequence of a recession is large unemployment numbers. When the economy starts to recover, this can be both good and bad for a recruiter. The good news is there are many qualified, highly skilled candidates who are looking for work due to restructuring, downsizing and closures. However, there are also many candidates just looking for a paycheque who may not be overly selective in their search. It is crucial you not only spend time ensuring that candidates are the right fit for your role, but also that your role is the right fit for the candidates. Passive candidates could be more challenging to 'woo away' from their stable job – now is the time to brush up on your selling and negotiation skills. Establish the 'must haves' before starting to search the large number of resumes you will screen and determine the best places to search and post your role-job boards, associations, networking etc. With a little preparation before jumping into your search, you will be on your way to finding your perfect new employee!" advises Shelly Horgan, recruitment partner at the Kirwan Group.

### **5. Don't get blown off course by bad news**

The recovery may be underway in much of the world but it's almost certainly not going to mean plain sailing (look how some bad news coming out of Dubai threatened to knock global markets back down into the doldrums). Your recruitment efforts need to proceed according to your plans and your timetable rather than being directed by the gloomier prognostications of the press. There's a reason you develop strategies for this kind of thing; there's also a reason why you don't hand over the responsibility for drafting those strategies to the tabloids...

"It can be very easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of attention surrounding recruitment market conditions. Many media stories report on changes to employment numbers, the current recruitment climate and focus on stories which resonate with current headlines. Instead of getting caught up with these distractions, ensure that you focus on diligently following best practice regardless of what happens to be currently in the news. It may sound boring, but recruiting in an upturn should be little different from recruiting in a downturn. If you have a strategy that worked before, don't change it just because market conditions are different this time around," says Seb Donovan of Top Employers Publishing.

## **6. Manage technology – don't let technology manage you**

As in all aspects of business, technology can work great wonders in recruitment – but it can also make work infinitely more complex (and occasionally impossible) for those who either can't use it properly or don't have the bandwidth to use it optimally. Avoid becoming a slave to your systems; you want to retain your ability to think clearly and act correctly without being ground down in the cogs.

"When all said and done, the number of tools available - and more importantly recruiters' ability to effectively understand and manage all of them - makes anyone's job difficult. Consider investing in a CRM tool or partner with a company or outsourced provider who uses one. This can really have an impact on visibility within the online marketplace, effective management and candidate communication, compliance and search," advises Zachary Misko, Global Director, KellyOCG – RPO.

## **7. Some candidates may not want permanent contracts (so can you adjust?)**

The responsibilities and expectations of both employer and employee were shifting long before the onset of the financial crisis. In many cultures the idea of a 'job for life' has long disappeared (while in many others it was never there in the first place). Employees have adjusted to this new paradigm just as have those employing them; nowadays the best talent might be more than happy working on a part-time or freelance basis, and companies looking for the best talent – and who isn't? – have to realize that they may need to make significant adjustments in terms of their hiring practices to cater for this new mindset.

"The job losses we've witnessed and consequent erosion of a sense of 'job-security' mean that highly-skilled technology experts increasingly seek to be paid on a contract daily or hourly-rate basis; this promotes the chance to be paid more favourably relative to an employee whilst giving the freedom to work between various organisations on a project-basis without falling victim to a redundancy situation. Organizations may prefer to hire permanent staff in the recovery but they should not be surprised if the most suitable candidates (skills-wise) prefer to remain contracting," warns Robert Richards of Devonshire Communications.

## **8. Recruit the best not the cheapest**

There's nothing like a good old-fashioned false economy to really put the skids on your hitherto exhilarating recovery. OK, so budgets post-recession might still be pretty tight – but you're hiring because you want to take on people who'll propel your organization up to the dizzy heights, not because you fancy cutting down on

your [payroll](#) team's downtime (and what are they doing with downtime anyway?). Picking the cheapest option could look good for about a week; it'll look pretty bad once you're back hiring a few months down the line and picking up the incompetence-induced pieces at the same time.

"More than ever it is vital to secure the best people for any positions that become available," says Rob Grant of Dragonfly Recruitment. "Whilst there is the temptation to go for the cheapest candidate or the cheapest agency it would be foolish not to explore the other so-called 'more expensive' options. There is no commitment until the candidate starts and the right person will, in all likelihood, cover those additional costs in no time at all."

## **9. Use your database of old contacts – even if they're happily employed**

A recruiter's database is his or her personal goldmine – and don't think it won't come in handy even if every last person on the list is already in a role (which they won't be). Making calls to previous contacts could yield plenty in terms of referrals or advice on particular sectors. Obviously you'll need to grow your list at the same time – but a lot of that growth could well come from reaching out to people you've known, and worked with or for, in the past.

"If you've been recruiting for over a week you must, surely, have a database so use it. After 15+ years of recruiting I've got a pretty substantial database and it almost always yields a few good leads and occasionally even a dead-on match potential for the job I'm working. Reaching out to old contacts is smart because it forces you to keep your contacts fresh and aware of your efforts on their behalf. If they're happily ensconced somewhere or not really a solid match for this role, update your info on them and do a WDYK – who do you know? Simply ask them for a referral or recommendation. Sometimes candidates – especially if they come from a job board (another reason I don't rely on them) will ask for a bonus or finders fee for referring someone. I have one response to that. I simply tell them that my referral bonus is exactly equal to what they'd like THEIR friends to charge to give out their name for a possible job. Usually they realize that their greed is likely to get them nowhere and they offer up a name or two. If they don't, move on and realize you've got a candidate whose only concern is themselves and that's good to know... probably NOT an 'A' candidate, IMHO," says Greg Bennett of The Mergis Group.

## **10. Remember: the competition is recruiting too...**

You're hiring – but you're not the only one. Remember that in this newly revitalized job market you don't just have to think about taking on new staff: you need to be sure your existing staff aren't going to head out the door, tempted by a better offer. Otherwise you might end up having to recruit extra staff to replace those you weren't expecting to lose in the first place – not the best way to enter what's supposed to be a better time for all...

"The market is recovering and budgets and headcount are finalized. With the market dynamics now shifting and opportunities becoming more prevalent, it is key to ensure your staff are happy and content in their role. Naturally, your competitors will be sourcing new headcount and salaries are stabilizing. Ensure your key staff are happy: don't lose them to a competitor who is adapting to the market conditions," warns Ben Wilson of Rethink Recruitment.

Jamie Liddell has worked in journalism since he was a 17-year-old cub reporter for The Tico Times, Costa Rica's highly regarded English-language weekly newspaper. Holding an MA in English from Clare College, Cambridge University, Jamie came to the Shared Services & Outsourcing Network from the world of overseas property publishing where he worked on the industry's best-selling publications for the UK and Ireland, and gave seminars at consumer and b2b exhibitions and conferences internationally.