

Quorum

Is It Hard to Find and Hire Qualified People for Positions You Need to Fill? - Stop Recruiting and Start Building a Talent Pipeline

In a survey of Human Resource Professionals conducted by Quorum Associates and Research in Motion, 92% of respondents said finding qualified candidates was “extremely difficult”. An Opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal dated June 13th 2011 by Jeff Imeltt and Ken Chenault stated:

“There are more than two million open jobs in the U.S., in part because employers can't find workers with the advanced manufacturing skills they need. The private sector must quickly form partnerships with community colleges, vocational schools and others to match career training with real-world hiring needs.”

On October, 13th of this year, Jonathan Vizcarra writing for the web site Technocrati, arrived at similar conclusions. Mr. Vizcarra wrote:

“Siemens Corp in the US has over 3,000 jobs open all over the country. Caterpillar and Motorola at any given time have 200 job openings. Some companies report job vacancies from a low of 6 to a high of 200. Some of these positions are left unfilled for at least nine months. Average starting salary? US\$89,000 a year. What's wrong with this picture? “

Vizcarra goes on to say:

“The problem is that there are few qualified people applying for the jobs. Companies are having difficulty finding applicants with the correct job skills. There are fewer American students taking math and science courses than before. Students in Math, engineering, technology and computer science accounted for 11.1% of graduates in 1980. That share dropped to 8.9% in 2009. In this situation, unemployment is a structural problem. Workers lack the skills needed to fill the jobs. US graduates do not have the correct skill set to start with.”

This brings to mind a definition of insanity: insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting a different result each time. Typically, a company posts a brief job description on its web site, various job boards, and social networking sites; then wades through a mass of resumes and cover letters. The company has no control over who sees the ad. The company has no idea if the people they want to hire have looked at the opportunity. Every time there is

Quorum

a position to be filled, the above is repeated, often with less than mediocre results. I call this process “transactional hiring”.

Part of the reason that companies hire this way is because historically, companies have been able to find enough people, with enough of the skills and experience the company needs, to get by. But that is no longer the case. Prospective employees have been able to find work based on a static set of skills and experience. This too is no longer the case.

If you think of a company as a pond and its people as water, then on one side you have a stream of fresh water flowing in filling the pond, and on the other side a stream of water flowing out. What is important here is the concept of flow; people come and people go, like water moving through a pond. So the question becomes how to keep the pond full with good quality water.

Like water flowing through a pipe, employers may want to set up a talent pipeline. A talent pipeline is a regular flow of potential employees who have the skills, education and experience the company needs. A successful talent pipeline is a positive, affirming, and encouraging process that tries to identify individuals with the drive and motivation to update their skills and maintain their professional competence over time.

To find and attract the people you want, you must first be very clear about who you are, why you are hiring, what are the requirements of the position and skills necessary for success. You must also be explicit about how success in any position will be objectively measured. The next step is to design, develop, and implement a process that produces a flow of individuals who “ultimately” have the skills and abilities needed to succeed. I use the word “ultimately” because at first many candidates may not meet the requirements.

If specific knowledge and or skills are necessary, tell the candidates that they will be tested on these skills or knowledge as part of qualifying for the position. If it turns out that they lack certain skills, share with them local resources where they can get the skills. Make it clear that if they have the drive and motivation to develop and acquire the necessary abilities, they are welcome to come back and reapply for the position.

A properly developed talent pipeline relies on and leverages training resources that are available in the local community. These include local community colleges, and vocational schools. All these resources are eager to engage with local businesses and provide them with individuals who meet their needs. There are also online resources available which Candidates can use to update their skills in math and science. One such example is Kahn Academy (www.kahnacademy.org). Another great resource is www.greatcourses.com. To be clear, this

Quorum

is not a cost to the employer, but to the candidate. When individuals come back, let them reapply, be encouraging. If they meet the requirements, they will have demonstrated one more important quality, a drive and motivation to work for your company.

Companies that are successful in hiring and retaining good people, invest in those people, through good times and bad. The best way to ensure you have the skilled employees you need is to retain the skilled employees you have. A properly developed talent pipeline helps identify key skills and uses talented existing employees to help develop those skills in existing as well as new employees.

Increasingly clients have come to Quorum for help addressing issues around recruiting, talent development, and employee retention. Consequently, Quorum now has a menu of services it can offer clients to help them change how they go about defining what they really need, develop processes to find and identify individuals who meet those needs, guide them through the development of a talent pipeline, then identify and help develop follow on programs that enhances the value of each employee.

Please give us a call if you would like to talk about the above. We are here to help.