



# Recruiting Strategies and Tactics to Attract Top Talent

**WHITE** paper | Business Development Series



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As part of Pacific Continental Bank's commitment to helping local businesses and organizations, the bank produces a series of biannual white papers. These papers are intended to provide general best practices and ideas for readers to consider on timely business topics. The information may not always represent the practices of Pacific Continental Bank. For a full list of white papers in the business development series, visit [www.therightbank.com/resources/business-resource-center](http://www.therightbank.com/resources/business-resource-center).

- *Technology Throughout the Lifecycle of Your Business*
- *Mastering the Evolution of Your Business*
- *Managing a Diverse Workforce*
- *Strategic Time Management and Your Business*

Owners and managers at companies across many industries report difficulty in attracting and retaining great employees. According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 2015 was the most difficult hiring period in four years. This has presented challenges, but it has also helped create opportunities. At companies of all sizes, business owners and managers are now being forced to re-evaluate how they make decisions related to the entire hiring process, from how they advertise open positions to how they make offers to candidates. This re-evaluation process drives companies to develop new, creative programs that look beyond traditional hiring strategies and tactics, helping owners and managers discover great, new employees and retain current talent.

## Understand the Audience

Successful business owners and HR staff realize their business has different audiences. Customers clearly are one form of audience, but so are vendors, partners, employees and prospective employees. Knowing each group's wants and needs is critical to achieving a company's goals.

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A subject that comes up in any current article on hiring practices is Millennials, people who were born between 1980 and 1998 and reached adulthood around the turn of the 21st century. As a generation, they're one of the largest in the workforce and by 2030 they'll represent 75 percent of all employees. Millennials, as opposed to Gen Xers who are inclined to be focused more on salary and retirement benefits, tend to have slightly different expectations of employers than previous generations. They look for companies that are aligned with their own values; they want a coach, not a boss; and they want balance and democracy in the workplace. At first glance, some of these preferences may seem challenging to

address. However, if done correctly, many changes in the workplace can help employees — no matter what generation — become more productive. These innovations can also help companies improve through implementing the ideas of employees who engage directly with customers or products.

Rebecca Stutzman, HR consultant at Eugene, Ore.-based Syte Consulting Group, says that employers must figure out who they are as a company in addition to understanding their audience. They need to know their vision and what makes their company different, and then look for ways to tie this back to the type of employees they want to attract. She explains that companies can host talks or reach out to colleges to not only attract job applicants, but also to have conversations that demonstrate that they know the audience they're recruiting.

Understanding what prospective employees want from a job and an employer is the first step in successfully recruiting new talent and retaining staff. What prospective employees look for and want in a job may be dependent on their age, but nearly all employees share a desire for opportunities to learn and grow, as well as a manager and management system that invests in employee development. These characteristics can help make a company known for having a positive company culture.

## Update Recruitment Strategies

Companies of all types are discovering that previous recruitment methods are not producing their desired results, causing businesses to rethink their entire hiring process. Below are some recruiting strategies companies should consider implementing.

### **Make social media a recruitment engine.**

An SHRM report entitled "Using Social Media for Talent Acquisition—Recruitment and Screening," shows that as of December 2015,

84 percent of organizations use social media to recruit, and that number is increasing. However, with so many companies using social media, hiring managers must do more than set up a company LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook page. Social media demands more than just posting positions to be filled. Businesses must post regularly about what it's like to work at their company, provide industry information and engage with others. It takes an active, long-term approach to compete with other employers' social media outreach efforts and to build a following that can yield future results.

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A company's internet presence, beyond its social media activity and website, should not be overlooked. Review sites like Glassdoor.com, Indeed.com and others do more than just let businesses post help wanted ads; they let current and past employees as well as candidates post anonymously about their experiences. Prospective job applicants and current employees can read this information, which may affect a company's morale and reputation. Managers and business owners should be monitoring what is said about their company on such sites to help protect and manage their reputation.

#### **Use technology to reach high quality candidates.**

More than 43 percent of job seekers use their smartphone when searching for jobs and this number is expected to rise. Companies must optimize their websites for mobile visitors, especially their career and job site pages, so candidates are able to apply for a job via their smartphone or tablet.

Companies are also using technology, such as Skype, to interview candidates who don't live nearby. In addition to job searches, the low cost and ubiquity of teleconferencing and online collaborative tools

make it feasible to remotely employ top talent, for full- or part-time positions, who live beyond standard commuting distances. While not practical for all companies and positions, it's an option worth considering for those that have this ability.

**Increase the speed of the hiring process.** The most talented candidates often receive multiple offers and cannot wait long before making a decision. Additionally, an overly slow, deliberative hiring process can be misinterpreted to imply that the company is sluggish in its business decisions. Just as businesses want punctual employees, employees want managers who respect their time. Here are some ways to achieve this:

- **Prioritize recruitment of the most difficult to fill positions** where candidates often receive multiple offers.
- **Identify unnecessary delays in the hiring process** and show those responsible how it affects the company's ability to hire top talent.
- **Measure the correlation between hiring speed and new hire quality** to reveal whether slow hiring reduces quality and vice versa.

**Utilize your best resources.** A company's suppliers, customers and partners are often the people who can truly endorse a company, beyond the people who work there. This group of people are also more likely to recommend applicants they're confident in and use it as an opportunity to demonstrate their value. Jeremy Reynolds, third-generation owner of Reynolds Electric, a full service electrical contractor in Eugene, Ore., says he does not limit referral bonuses to employees. His company also pays referral bonuses to vendors and subcontractors, so when they're looking to make a hire, they ask the people they trust to help them find qualified candidates. This approach also costs less than an unfilled position or engaging a recruitment agency.

**Implement training programs.** Companies that have difficulty finding qualified employees can help nurture and grow their own talent. This can be in the form of training programs that equip current employees to take on more challenging roles or internship programs that can help identify new employees. Such programs can also help retain current employees by enabling them to develop their skills and knowledge.

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*Flexibility, however your company defines it, can improve your employees' quality of life beyond the security of a paycheck.*

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**Contact candidates directly.** Some industries make it simple and cost effective to contact prospective candidates. For instance, the state of Oregon makes names and addresses of licensed electricians publicly available. Reynolds Electric uses this information to mail letters to experienced candidates when they're seeking new employees. Not all states publish lists of people who work in all business sectors, but names and contact info can be found through other organizations such as industry associations, LinkedIn or elsewhere. Reaching out directly to qualified candidates can be a quick way to make either a great hire or to get a recommendation.

**Build relationships and network.** Relationships with other attendees made at trade fairs and industry events can also provide a great resource. The person who asked that excellent question during a seminar may be looking for a new job next year. Erin Koss, principal at Syte Consulting Group, says that when it comes to finding top talent it's all about who you know, and that means getting out there and being a part of your industry.

## Think Beyond Compensation

Job candidates look at many factors besides salary, which can provide employers with additional ways

to reward employees. By offering a total package, companies can differentiate themselves from other businesses and move the conversation toward benefits that go beyond salary or an hourly wage. Below are some ideas to consider.

**Flexibility is the secret weapon.** How do smaller companies compete against larger ones with deeper pockets? By doing what larger ones can't. Managers and owners at small- and medium-sized businesses say that the flexibility they offer employees is something money can't buy. Ways to be flexible include more than rethinking traditional business hours; it can be letting employees telecommute on certain days of the week. Or it can be letting employees bring their pets to work, or allowing them to wear casual office attire, or instituting a *Family Comes First* policy that allows employees time off if their children are sick or to schedule time to be at their child's school play. Sherri Bennett, the executive director of YWCA Clark County, says her organization lets its employees bring newborns up to eight months old to work, which is something that new parents greatly appreciate. Flexibility, however your company defines it, can improve your employees' quality of life beyond the security of a paycheck.

**Some health care is better than no health care.** Insurance can be expensive, there's no way around it. Rebecca Stutzman found employees lean toward a plan with smaller monthly payments and higher deductibles rather than having to pay for health insurance entirely out of pocket. Companies not currently offering any health insurance benefits should take another look to see how they can provide this benefit. For example, Jeremy Reynolds re-evaluated Reynolds Electric's health insurance policy when he discovered the probationary period prevented candidates from accepting job offers. In response, Reynolds cut the time that new employees become eligible for health benefits from 90 days to no more than 30

days; coverage now starts the first day of the month following the month an employee is hired.

**Perks and benefits should align with mission and values.** Employees — especially Millennials — want to be part of a movement, and a company's values and mission statement can help them feel that they are taking part in one. A company's values can be given real meaning through perks and benefits. For example, American Express's values include *Respect for People* (We value our people, encourage their development and reward their performance) and *Good Citizenship* (We are good citizens in the communities in which we live and work). Reimbursing employees' continuing education and self-improvement classes, even gym memberships, demonstrates *Respect for People*. Letting employees take paid time off to volunteer in the community puts *Good Citizenship* into action.

## Put Processes in Writing

Business owners and managers don't think twice about drawing up a written agreement when hiring new employees. But not everyone keeps a set of guidelines when it comes to how to advertise open positions, or how to set up interviews and make offers. Erin Koss says process is everything. It doesn't have to be complicated, but it needs to be documented — particularly for business owners trying to do everything or department managers who may not fully understand recruiting best

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practices. Rebecca Stutzman adds that it's also important to train managers on how to properly screen and interview candidates in ways that make the best use of time. She also says that a set of written interview instructions can help keep

everyone on track. Doing so can also protect the company as managers and owners need to know what questions are legal to ask. Additional information and guidance can be found online. A good place to start is SHRM, which has a presentation of appropriate questions to improve the interview process.

## Conclusion

It's unlikely the struggle to engage top talent and skilled labor will disappear anytime soon. That's why business owners and managers have modified their human resources and hiring practices, processes and programs to reflect changes in the market. Companies must find their own unique approach to setting themselves apart from others going after the same talent pool, and use that difference to expand their recruiting strategies and tactics. The effort to move beyond conventional forms of recruiting, and to offer more than a paycheck, can demonstrate a company understands employee motivations, wants and needs. These changes in attitudes and actions can increase the probability that an ideal candidate will accept a job offer, and that current employees will remain with the company — all of which can make a business more competitive.

For further reading on this topic, check out our other Business Development white papers focused on *Managing a Diverse Workforce*, *Becoming a Best Place to Work* and *Recruitment and Retention Tactics to Enhance Business Development* at [therightbank.com](http://therightbank.com).

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## About Pacific Continental Bank

For more than 40 years, Pacific Continental Bank has served the Pacific Northwest with a focus on building long-term business-banking relationships. And along the way, we have forged a strong reputation as a proven business resource and proud civic partner. Pacific Continental Bank's strength lies in our extensive expertise in banking community-based businesses, professional service providers and the nonprofit sector. This expertise means we can help clients tackle the financial issues specific to their enterprise. What's more, clients have access to local bankers who have the authority to make decisions for them on the spot.

Pacific Continental Bank maintains a strong connection to the communities where we operate. The bank empowers its employees to actively engage in fostering an environment where all community members can flourish. We endeavor to work with local nonprofit organizations and community-based businesses, ensuring more dollars stay close to home. The bank supports hundreds of nonprofit organizations in achieving their missions — both philanthropically and through direct participation.

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