OVERVIEW

On June 14th 2016 The Alternative Board put together a panel of digital recruitment specialists to discuss how to find more candidates using online tools. The panel was moderated by Tristram Gillen - Customer Success Manager: Global Accounts, LinkedIn.

Panelists included:

- Leah Daniels – VP of Alliances & Business Development at Appcast
- Scott Piro - Talent Brand Consultant, LinkedIn
- Chuck Smith – President, NewHire

The lively discussion focused only on attracting candidates and covered three areas:

- Making your company attractive to applicants
- Finding more candidates
- Maintaining a positive candidate experience

This note summarizes the discussion and highlights takeaways from the event.

MAKING YOUR COMPANY MORE ATTRACTIVE TO APPLICANTS

Do the Ground Work Before you Advertise

The major reason most recruitment efforts in small companies fail to generate the results their leaders want is because they don't do the ground work to make themselves attractive to applicants. Major mistakes are:

- Using the same approach to find candidates you use to find customers. They aren't the same thing at all as the things that will attract customers are not those that will attract people to work for you.
- Failing to brand your company online to have a chance to make you attractive to the applicants you really want to attract.

The secret to finding employees is to do the work up front to be very clear about the benefits of working at your company.

Develop an Employee Value Proposition

The Employee Value Proposition is a document that answers the question "why people work for you" or defines your culture in the statement "why is this a great place to work". It will form the basis of your job advertisements and is very useful in setting up a 'jobs' section on your website.

Start by surveying employees who have worked for you for more than 2 years and ask them:

- Why did you decide to take this job?
- Why have you stayed?
- What do you like most about the company?
- What have you learned?

This is something that can be set up very easily on Survey Monkey. From the answers, you can create a written Employee Value Proposition summarizing what they said. Your employees are authentic in a way that management never can be, and the more you quote exactly what they say, the better and more effective your statement will be.

Don't be put off doing this because you are worried about what your employees will say. Bad feedback or a low response rate will alert you to a bigger problem….and you may be pleasantly surprised by what you hear when you ask these kind of questions.

Create an Employment Page on Your Website

Research shows that people interested in a job at your company spend up to 45 minutes looking up your company, and that includes looking your website. Having a really good page that talks about, and demonstrates, your company culture is a terrific opportunity to tell people what they should expect if they decide to work for you. It is your opportunity to attract the people who will fit your culture and weed out the people who don't.

This page should be called something like *"Life at xyz"* or "A day in the life". Using the statements from employee responses to the survey, create headlines that highlight why this is a great place to work. It should cover answers to the survey questions and you can make it authentic by using the words your employees used.

It is also a great idea to take the better survey answers and create *videos* where the employees tell their story about why they work for you. The object here is to create engaging, authentic employee stories that tell people why they joined, what they like and how they have grown while working at your company.

Check Your Reputation Online

While this may not seem relevant to small companies, there are increasing opportunities for people considering working for you to find out about you from other people.

The best known of these is *Glassdoor* which enables employees to post comments about what it is like to work at your company. It also contains posts from people who have applied to your company and had an experience, either positive or negative, that they want to share.

This is something that *Indeed* is starting to do as well, and it is essential that you know what people are saying about you as you can easily lose candidates if you don't work to address negative reviews. In responding it is important not to become defensive or engage in battle, but always treat people with respect however unreasonable their perspective seems to you.

There are two actions to take to identify when people are talking about you or your company

- Set up a free employer account on Glassdoor so you can check reviews there
- Set up Google Alerts so that you know every time anything is said online that Google finds

FINDING MORE CANDIDATES

Define the Job Clearly

It is essential that you do the groundwork to define the job. This shouldn't simply be a wish list describing the sort of person you want, as these wish lists may end up describing an impossible job. Instead, it should be a description of what success looks like in the job. To do that, you need to define the five Key Accountabilities that the person doing the job will be responsible for, and create the advert around that.

Create an Effective Advert

The first step in finding the right people is creating an effective advertisement. This should focus on the *benefits* of working for your company rather than the *features* of the job.

Research consistently shows that when people are making the money they feel they deserve, money falls way down the list of what is important. The items above money are:

- Recognition
- Job satisfaction
- Working for a good boss
- Personal growth

It follows that your job advertisement should address these hygiene factors. These are the benefits that will bring people to you, and that's why your survey questions should address these factors. The most powerful driver that separates the best performers from the mediocre is the desire for personal growth. That is why the survey question 'What have you learned?' is particularly powerful as this will tell you how to attract people who want career growth.

The features are what are typically contained in the Job Description which tells people what why they will be doing but nor how they will feel doing it at your company. These details need to be in your advert, but beware making it a job description.

The benefits will stem from your Employee Value Proposition, and your job advertisement should be heavy on your culture and how people feel working at your company. Instead of just telling them what they will be doing, tell them what they will have to do to be successful and how that will lead to personal growth.

Job advert Tips

The panel identified the following tips on dos and don'ts for writing job ads:

- When you write your advert, avoid talking in the third person. When you use "you" language they see themselves in the job, so say 'you' instead of 'The candidate' or 'The applicant'
- Be clear in the job titles that you use. You may have internal jargon to describe jobs, but today's online world depends on people being able to find your job advertisement. Beware industry jargon and jargon titles such as "sandwich artist" for a Subway worker

- Avoid writing adverts that are too short or too long. We have left behind newspaper advertising where your advert reads like a telegram, but writing a novel will put people off. Online advertising is an opportunity to describe the job, so do that succinctly.
- If you include $ range you will get a 20% better response

Sweeten the Pot

You may choose to add sweeteners to your offering, but this is not a blanket statement as Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers will find different things attractive. Some sweeteners that might be effective are:

- Benefits (Boomers)
- Flexibility (Millennials)
- Volunteer days (Millennials)
- Maternity and paternity policies (Gen X)
- Recognition, Appreciation
- Flex Time – longer days and a half day off
- Pizza party once a month

Finding Active Lookers

Active lookers are those who have don't have a job or those who have decided that they need a change. They will generally have their resume together and be motivated. Depending on their circumstances, may well be in a hurry to find something.

These are the people you will find by advertising on the various job boards. The best of these currently is Indeed, which currently has 40% of active job seekers. The problem is that there is a hidden cost because Indeed charges per click. Job seekers can't see your advert in any detail until they click, and only 7% of clicks result in an applicant.

Finding Passive Lookers

Passive lookers are those who haven't yet got around to looking for a new job. In a world where 70% of people leave their job because of issues with their manager, you need to catch them on a day when there has been an episode that may push them to be receptive to leaving.

To find these people, you have to be proactive, and always looking for the right candidates. This implies that you should have a continuous recruitment process to have a chance to find these people. The best p[lace to do this is on LinkedIn, and there are several strategies for accomplishing this. You can reach out directly and there is also a growing number of LinkedIn

recruiters who will approach people on your behalf.

Passive candidates are probably looking for content on LinkedIn and you can energize your staff to help you find people. It is a powerful strategy to empower your employees to speak on behalf of the company. Your staff are your greatest resource, and they are more authentic than you can be, and their potential reach is greater than yours. Make sure they are active on LinkedIn, as this is a great strategy for finding passive applicants

MAINTAINING A POSITIVE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

Every Position is a Micro Market

Every time you advertise it is an opportunity to brand your company. Starbucks identified that a large percentage of people who applied for jobs were customers, and if they treated them poorly in the application process it could have a negative impact on their business.

This is increasingly important with the growth of social media, and how candidates perceive you may affect even a relatively small business. Unhappy people tell their story and you have potential for market backlash if you don't give people a positive experience.

Pre Application

People will be impressed if they perceive that you have an authentic, easy process that isn't overly taxing. It is important that your advert is succinct, and that you don't make people jump through hoops with overly long questionnaires that contain seemingly irrelevant questions

Develop a questionnaire to filter candidates and use it to sift resumes. Follow up by phone within 24 hours of them submitting their application and make sure that you develop a consistent, friendly process to move them through.

Post Application

Communication is essential. Even if you have candidates that you think aren't a good fit for the job you have open, keep them on the hook and treat them like people.

Beware fear of engagement with applicants who don't exactly match your criteria for this job and keep the lines of communication open.

After the process is complete and you have hired the applicant, ask them for feedback on your hiring process. You might also consider surveying unsuccessful candidates to ask them what they thought of your process. Although in many cases this may not be appropriate, it does send a powerful message about your professional approach.