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## Strategies for Attracting Talent

August 11, 2008 | Craig Sebastiano



A competitive talent acquisition program is crucial to attract and retain skilled workers, but a report finds that a shortage of skilled talent in the workforce and changing demographics within the organization is making it harder to align the skills on hand with the business at hand.

Aberdeen Group's report, *Talent Acquisition Strategies: Employer Branding and Quality of Hire Take Center Stage*, finds that 88% of organizations say competition for skilled labour is the overriding pressure driving them to invest in talent acquisition programs.

And another 83% say they are investing in talent acquisition programs because of a shortage of skilled talent in the workforce. In response, organizations are changing and enhancing their traditional recruiting methods.

More emphasis being placed on enhancing a company's brand and reputation in the market, on proactively searching for so-called passive candidates, and in marketing to younger workers through social networking sites, such as Facebook and MySpace.

In addition to external pressures, organizations face their own internal struggles when it comes to effective talent acquisition. The top challenge, according to survey participants, is future workforce planning—cited by 46% of all organizations.

The task of managing a talent acquisition program is getting especially difficult as competition for highly skilled workers intensifies, and more candidates slip through the cracks of traditional recruiting methods.

“Best-in-class organizations are more aggressive at communicating job openings and job role needs with current staff,” says the report. “This is especially important, since employee referrals are cited as the top source for finding desirable talent.”

A successful talent acquisition program involves far more than deciding what skills and attributes are needed from candidates and finding new sources for them. It also involves the ability to measure and assess how well new hires perform their roles during the first year on the job.

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The report recommends that employers should have processes in place to determine what level of performance the new employee should be at in three-, six-, and nine-month timeframes, measure the candidate against those milestones, and evaluate any gaps in performance that need to be addressed.

“How well an organization is able to measure performance on the job of new hires,” the report says, “and use that information to improve the recruiting process will play a major role in the success of the talent acquisition program.”

The success of a talent acquisition program requires inward action and reflection. Bringing new employees on board will be of little value if they don't want to stay. Best-in-class organizations are putting more emphasis on career development, leadership training, and flexible work environments.

Also important is the effort to respond to individual worker needs. While such workplace benefits as flexible schedules, telecommuting and job sharing are not practical for all organizations, they are becoming more common.

There are a few actions that employers can embrace to improve their ability to attract and retain talent. Organizations should explore new marketing outlets, begin onboarding efforts earlier, obtain manager input, and solicit feedback from new hires.

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