Things to do when Hiring Virtual Talent

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Introduction

Ascertaining a candidate's organizational fit has traditionally fallen into the realm of pre-employment screenings and behavioral-based interviewing. But today's highly selective, employer-driven job market often favors pipeline-building and profile-based recruiting over traditional just-in-time hiring methods.

Couple these trends with an increased emphasis on long-term, throughput metrics (such as quality of hire) over the more traditional, short-term analytics (such as days-to-fill and cost-per-hire.)

The result puts the onus of matching the right candidate with the right manager increasingly on the recruiter. This remains one of the most subjective, and therefore complex, components of successfully placing a candidate during the search process.

Technology has certainly become an integral part of today's hiring process. In fact, it's now feasible for a job applicant to not visit the worksite or even shake hands with his or her future boss until right before –-- or even after -- receiving a job offer. In fact, virtual recruiting has the potential to save time and money in an age when recruiters and companies are often inundated with hundreds -- or even thousands -- of resumes for review. Yet it also raises legal and practical considerations.

Employers who follow a few best practices with their virtual recruitment strategy will have the most success -- and fewest missteps -- when it comes to using technology with new recruiting strategies.

In some ways, virtual interviews raise the same legal issues as traditional recruitment strategies. Whether the interview process is conducted by a recruiter, a prospective supervisor, or an on-line "pre-screen" computer program ,interview questions must not violate EEOC guidelines to maintain a legal hiring process. Also, interview questions cannot discriminate on the basis of a candidate's protected characteristics, including race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.

Because virtual interviewing provides employers with the opportunity to ask each candidate the same question in the exact same way, helping to reduce the chance of a misstep on the part of the interviewee. By the same token, however, an improperly worded interview question or unlawful subject matter that's included in the virtual interview could create widespread problems.

As with traditional recruitment strategies, employers should work with employment lawyers and human resource professionals to insure that their interviewing techniques and questions are lawful and appropriate and their interviewers and decision-makers are trained in non-discrimination practices.

Reaching a Wider Selection of Candidates

For companies that are concerned about reaching a diverse applicant pool or demonstrating that they are an "equal opportunity employer," virtual technology can actually help employers to recruit across a much wider area.

For example, Job Search Television Network allows companies to create a "virtual open house" for interested job applicants. "With a virtual open house, employers can easily market themselves to potential employees all over the country without having to spend the time and money attending in-person job fairs," explains Lindsay Stanton, Senior Vice President of Sales and Strategy. "Candidates simply log in and are connected with a recruiter for a real-time, "face to face" discussion about the company at issue."

Using tools such as the virtual open house allow employers to target job candidates from faraway places, helping to diversify the applicant pool. It can also help level the playing field between those applicants who have the opportunity to speak to a recruiter and those who would otherwise have to submit a resume without any personal contact. "When a recruiter has a plethora of resumes to review, having "met" a candidate at a virtual job fair helps make a connection that wouldn't be there otherwise," says Stanton.

Get Appropriate Waivers and Releases

Just as you would in other situations, you'll want to find a reputable vendor "if you want to use video interviewing or online pre-screening to find top talent," says Kevin Grossman, founder and principal of Marcom HRsay. "The company should provide consent forms and disclosures that inform candidates as to what exactly is being recorded, whether it is voice-only, voice and image, or simply the answers to questions they type into the computer." Grossman adds that a proper disclosure will also explain how the recording will be used by the prospective employer.

Also, be aware that some virtual recruiting tools may implicate the Fair Credit Reporting Act. If an employer uses an outside company to pre-screen applicants, the vendor may be considered a "consumer reporting agency", in which case both vendor and employer are required to meet a number of legal requirements which include having candidates sign a release.

Virtual Recruiting Tools for both Large and Small Companies

If your company is new to virtual recruiting, the multitude of available products and tools can be daunting. Employers who have built their reputation on personal relationships may worry that automation will be at odds with their culture-based recruiting strategy.

Experts agree that virtual recruiting will never completely replace the in-person interview, but that when used appropriately for targeted purposes and positions, it can add value to every hire.

"Virtual recruiting is particularly useful -- even for a smaller company -- at the screening stage," explains Grossman. "Using an online screening product, where an applicant logs in and answers a series of "gatekeeping" questions, helps narrow the field to qualified applicants without using a lot of man-hours."

Dianne Michels, CEO and founder of Serendipity HR, agrees. "Online screens are a useful tool for getting a large amount of consistent information from a number of candidates, so you can decide who to take to the next level."

Michels cautions employers to be more selective, however, when using virtual interviewing products. "For some jobs and some organizations, you can only assess the intangible "fit" of a candidate with an in-person meeting," she explains. "And remember, you may need to sell your company to the candidate too, and it's hard to communicate culture and environment over a video screen."

To combat that concern, Grossman suggests using virtual interviews to hire for positions that will utilize video technology on a regular basis. "'Face-to-face' with a customer means something different in today's business," he explains. "Customer service, sales, marketing and business development roles already conduct a lot of business "virtually." Grossman says that companies will want to hire employees who are comfortable with the medium for these types of positions.

The Importance of Onboarding in Virtual Recruitment

Once hired, employees who have been "virtually" recruited may have a more difficult time feeling connected to their employer, particularly if they have never visited the workplace. It is up to the employer to make certain that these employees are taken through an onboarding process to ease their transition.

"It's important to make all new employees feel like they are an integrated part of the workplace, says Michels. "But when you are talking about someone who might not have visited the office before being hired, a well-planned onboarding process can mean the difference between a successful employee and redoing the job search next year."

Even with these challenges, Grossman sees virtual recruiting as an efficient and effective way for employers to create a 'short list' of candidates to meet face-to-face before making a final decision, adding, "This combination of automation and individuality gives companies the most opportunities to find top talent that fits their workplace and culture."

Many companies use remote-worker programs to recruit and retain prized talent, but telecommuting's appeal fades quickly when companies struggle to hire and keep productive virtual employees. The challenges of identifying candidates who will perform at a high level in office jobs are multiplied exponentially when hiring for home-based jobs.

Although organizations generally screen for job and culture fit, a successful telecommuting program requires evaluating candidates' fit with the environment. Nearly a decade of research points to five qualities employees must possess to be successful in virtual offices.

Regardless of the job or corporate culture, remote workers must be independent, self-motivated, conscientious, comfortable working in social isolation, and capable of solving problems (e.g., technology-related issues).

When thinking about how to hire and retain these types of candidates, start by looking at some common hiring and retention pitfalls that can undermine telecommuting programs.

First, companies tend to focus heavily on a candidate's job-relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities, while neglecting the individual's suitability for remote work. Second, some companies reward high-performing employees by allowing them to move from an office to their homes. Unfortunately, these merit-based programs usually suffer setbacks because companies assume that someone who is successful in one environment will deliver results equally well in any environment — and research indicates that it's just not true. Finally, the most common candidate screening tool is the employment interview. Extraverted people generally perform better than do introverts in job interviews, but extraverts are less likely to be successful working in socially-isolated settings.

Many business leaders assume that work-from-home job candidates tend to be more skilled than traditional job applicants. Our research suggests that candidates applying to office- and home-based jobs have nearly identical knowledge, skills, abilities, and personality characteristics. However, this same research shows that it's common for 300% more applicants to apply for home-based jobs, giving hiring managers the ability to be more selective during the screening process. The net result is that home-based workers — having been vetted from a larger pool of candidates — are more capable and better skilled on average than traditional employees.

Know The Intentions

The intentions behind working from home have to be very solid and stable in order to derive the capability of the employee. Hiring managers should know that more solid the intention of staying at home, more are the chances of the employee being very committed to the work. The best of example is when the prospective employee have to strike a good work life balance and want to spend more time with kids or family. One of the reasons is also when the employee does not want to travel all that much.

Test The Skills

Hiring managers have all the authority to go ahead and test the skills of these virtually operating job candidates. The basic thing is any day being technologically –friendly and one has to test that to make sure it it there to the degree that the company wants it to be. So, there are always video interviews and tests based on making video and uploading them. Another important skill is being a communication specialist hence analyzing that part also goes unsaid.

Past Behavior Matters

To know how your prospective employees work it is best to prod them on the projects they have done. Ask them about their experience there; on which segment they stressed on, their know-how about the brand and client, what all they put in and how well were they performing with a team. Knowing all this establishes

something about how the talent seems to be working or what their working mode is. More so, go the depth of the matter and find out the nitty-gritty to know the best about them.

To successfully hone in on the right candidates for a home-based job, the following are recommended steps:

Step 1: Take time to understand the job, culture, and the environment in which the job will be performed. No job exists in a vacuum, so understand the working conditions as well as the drivers and inhibitors of success.

Step 2: Conduct a review of all jobs, their goals, and how they contribute to the company's success. The information will tell the story of what it takes to be successful as a telecommuting employee.

Step 3: Identify psychometric assessments to measure the qualities it takes to be successful. These assessments should have a history of empirical validation and should measure competencies required by the job, culture, and environment.

Step 4: Conduct an empirical study using data to connect the dots between personality, skills, and abilities as well as the key success factors of the jobs and work environment. An empirical study will ensure the results are specific to the company and its environment(s), rather than relying on a generic one-size-fits all model.

Step 5: Draw conclusions about the characteristics that distinguish success from failure. This company-specific information will differentiate the business and its environment(s) from its competition.

Step 6: Create a review schedule to evaluate the performance of the pre-hire process against key goals and business drivers every three to six months. Ensure that assessments and business strategy remain inextricably linked.

Conclusion:

Hiring productive virtual employees is not easy, but it can be done. A successful hiring process takes time, data-based methods, and dedication to ongoing analysis to ensure it delivers lasting value. It also requires a strong management team to provide the support, professional development, and leadership home-based workers need to feel connected to the company and its mission.