

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe the purpose of recruiting.
- Explain what recruitment “spillover effects” are.
- Understand what makes a recruiter more or less effective.
- Describe the various strategies used to attract applicants.
- Describe how recruiting guides and the EEOC’s best recruiting practices promote recruiting consistency and quality.

Social Media Recruiting at United Parcel Service

United Parcel Service (UPS) is one of the world’s largest package delivery companies. UPS wants to better connect with and engage potential recruits, and increase the return on investment of its recruiting efforts.¹ UPS also wants to improve its employer brand and align its recruiting strategy with its technological image, and address their high volume, part time, and seasonal hiring needs more cost effectively.²

UPS posted a series of videos on its Web site profiling a day in the life of various UPS employees. When the videos began getting a lot of views and social media sharing that led to job applications, the company decided to get more deliberate about its approach to using social media to source and recruit.³

UPS asks for your advice on how to effectively recruit quality candidates using social media and other methods. After reading this chapter, you should have some good ideas to share with the company.

The global consulting firm Watson Wyatt found that an excellent recruiting function increased a firm’s total market value (the dollar value of all of its stock) by over 18 percent.⁴ Unfortunately, many companies don’t have a formal recruiting strategy. As we have stressed, recruiting the right talent is critical to a firm’s performance. The Container Store is consistently ranked as one of the best companies to work for. One of the company’s core principles is “one equals three,” meaning that one great person is more valuable than three good people. The firm recruits intensively to help reinforce this principle.⁵

In addition to getting people in the door, recruiting can have an important symbolic aspect. After going through a rigorous recruiting and selection process, a new hire can feel that he or she is joining an elite organization and is one of the few who “made the cut.” This creates high performance expectations, and sends the message that people matter.⁶

Recruitment can and should be a source of sustainable competitive advantage.⁷ The Corporate Executive Board found that nearly 80 percent of the variability in quality of hire is due to recruiters’ capabilities and attitudes and the way they are managed, including workload, development, and performance management practices.⁸ Recruitment is vital to the business model of companies like Enterprise Rent-A-Car, which promote almost entirely from within and regularly open new locations.⁹ Valero Energy even calculates how good and bad recruiting affects the company’s earnings per share.¹⁰ Not attracting the right applicants risks organizational failure.

This chapter will cover recruiting and how applicants react during the recruiting process. We will also discuss what makes recruiters effective and the different strategies companies can use to attract applicants. Finally, we discuss how to make quality recruitment activities more consistent throughout a company. After studying this chapter, you should have a good understanding of the important role recruiters and recruiting activities play in the staffing process.

WHAT IS RECRUITING?

The recruiting function’s purpose is to help the organization employ a talented group of employees who contribute to the company’s business strategy so the firm can achieve a competitive advantage. As you learned in Chapter 1, recruiting refers to all organizational practices and decisions that affect either the number or types of individuals willing to apply for and accept job offers.¹¹ This includes converting the leads generated during sourcing into job applicants,

generating interest in a company and its jobs, and persuading candidates to accept job offers extended to them. The recruiter is the personal link between the staffing needs of the organization and the labor market and must support the organization's needs and recruiting objectives to be effective. As we discuss next, one of the most important outcomes of any recruiting effort is how applicants react to the recruiting process and to recruiters.

HOW APPLICANTS REACT TO RECRUITING?

An important goal of recruitment is to give every applicant a positive feeling about the organization. Thus, effective recruiting requires considering the applicant's perspective and needs. Because the outcome of recruitment—employment—depends on the results of a series of decisions made by both the organization and the individual, the perspectives of both parties are relevant. A single positive recruitment experience is often insufficient to impress and attract job applicants. One study found that applicants who experienced more recruiting stages with positive information, including a campus career fair, an interview, and interacting with employees during a site visit, had more positive reactions to the organization.¹² Next, we discuss why it's so important for applicants to feel like they were treated fairly during the recruiting process as well as the consequences this can have.

Fairness Perceptions

Organizations expect applicants to be sincere and honest when seeking positions with them. Likewise, applicants expect employers to consider them on their own merits and to make a sincere effort to match their skills with job openings. Both parties expect one another to be professional and conform to commonly accepted hiring practices.¹³ In addition to being treated fairly, applicants expect the private information they disclose to employers to be protected.

Three types of perceptions of fairness affect how applicants react to the recruitment and selection process.¹⁴ **Distributive fairness** relates to the perceived fairness of the hiring or promotion outcome. If someone gets the job or promotion, he or she tends to find this outcome fair. If someone does not get the job or promotion, he or she tends to find this outcome less fair. The vast majority of applicants will not receive the job offer or promotion. Consequently, organizations will already have one fairness "strike" against them at the end of a recruiting campaign.

Procedural fairness relates to people's beliefs that the policies and procedures that produced the hiring or promotion decision were fair. Organizations have much more control over applicants' perceptions of procedural fairness than they do of distributive fairness. Giving job applicants the opportunity to showcase their talents¹⁵ as well as respecting their privacy¹⁶ will improve how fair they believe the process to be. Different screening devices can also be perceived as more or less fair. For example, applicants tend to believe interviews, résumés, and work-sample tests are more procedurally fair than honesty tests and personal referrals, although these beliefs appear to vary across countries.¹⁷ Applicants also tend to react negatively when there are delays in the recruitment process.¹⁸

Interactional fairness relates to people's perceptions of the interpersonal treatment and the amount of information they received during the hiring process. Honesty and respectful interpersonal treatment during the recruitment process enhance applicants' perceptions of interactional fairness.¹⁹ A warm and informative recruiter²⁰ will also tend to have a positive effect on applicants' reactions. Thus, by virtue of how well firms hire and train their recruiters, organizations have a great deal of control over how applicants perceive interactional fairness.

Spillover Effects

Spillover effects are the indirect or unintended consequences of an action. How applicants are treated has spillover effects that extend beyond the recruiting activities they experience. When unhappy job candidates tell potential customers or job applicants about a bad recruiting experience they had, it can have spillover effects on the organization's performance and its ability to recruit candidates effectively in the future. Similarly, if applicants were forced to wait extended periods for prescheduled interviews, met unprepared and distracted interviewers, felt the selection process was unfair, or were made to feel unimportant or unwelcome, would they still want to do business with the company or apply for another job with it in the future? Probably not. Now

DISTRIBUTIVE FAIRNESS

the perceived fairness of the hiring or promotion outcome

PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS

people's beliefs that the policies and procedures that resulted in the hiring or promotion decision were fair

INTERACTIONAL FAIRNESS

people's perceptions of the interpersonal treatment and amount of information they received during the hiring process

SPILLOVER EFFECTS

the indirect or unintended consequences of an action

suppose the applicants were greeted by name, given a quick tour of the facility, treated respectfully, interviewed on time by prepared and enthusiastic recruiters, and heard from the company when it said it would follow up. Most applicants treated this way are likely to reapply with the firm and continue to do business with it.

Addressing how applicants react throughout the hiring process is a critical component of managing any spillover effects of the process. Many firms treat job candidates as if they should feel privileged the firm is even considering them for a position and treat rejected candidates as if it were the end of their relationship with them. The impersonal treatment often given to rejected applicants by many organizations indicates that these potential spillover effects are often overlooked in the recruiting process.²¹

Recruitment (and the spillover effects associated with it) does not end when a job application is received. Until either the organization (or the candidate) removes the person from further consideration, or the individual is hired and reports for work, recruiting keeps him or her interested in pursuing the opportunity. Just because a recruit has formally applied for a job does not mean that she or he will remain interested and see the hiring process to completion. Recruiters should help candidates continually feel excited about the opportunity and ultimately be willing to accept a reasonable job offer.

Recruiters should always treat résumés and employment inquiries with respect and respond to them quickly. Even if a company is not currently hiring, mistreating an applicant could dampen his or her interest in future opportunities with the organization. As obvious as this may seem, it can sometimes be difficult to execute, particularly during periods of rapid expansion when the firm is trying to hire a lot of people. Responding to the large number of people responding to job postings, particularly those posted on the Internet, can be difficult or impossible. For a fee, some Internet businesses will instantly mail an applicant's résumé to over 1,000 headhunters and organizations. The job of sorting through these résumés can be enormous. Worse yet, a large proportion of them don't meet the requirements of the positions posted, increasing the screening burden placed on the organization.

Valero Energy focuses heavily on creating a positive job candidate experience, even when people apply with the company via the Internet. The firm sends at least three personalized e-mails to each candidate throughout the application process. When a candidate is rejected, he or she receives a postcard in the mail after the job is closed.²² Valero knows that many people not hired for current openings have the potential to become great employees in the future. Sending them follow-up messages and encouraging applicants, who might be a good fit with positions other than the ones to which they applied, to apply for other positions can increase staffing effectiveness.

Although recruiters are often very busy, unresponsive recruiters are often seen as incompetent rather than overworked, risking a negative spillover effect for the company. Wachovia Bank believes that e-mailing candidates quickly when they have been rejected, and giving them the reasons for the rejection, has improved applicants' experiences with Wachovia's hiring process and their perceptions of Wachovia's recruiters.²³

Effectively using technology can improve applicant reactions and promote positive spillover effects. For example, letting applicants use mobile apps from companies including HireVue and Wowzer to record their responses to prerecorded interview questions can appeal to smartphone-savvy college students and busy semi-passive and passive job candidates. Hiring managers and recruiters also like the ability to view the interviews when it fits their schedule. Using social media or text messaging to spread the word about job openings to people who opt in can quickly and efficiently inform targeted recruits of career opportunities. Next, we turn our attention to what makes recruiters effective.

WHAT MAKES A RECRUITER EFFECTIVE?

The recruiter is usually the first person with whom potential applicants have contact. Thus, he or she is one of the most important players in the hiring process. One study of business and engineering graduates looking for jobs showed that in over one-third of the cases, the primary reason a graduate chose a particular company was because of the firm's recruiter.²⁴ A potential applicant who is "turned off" by a recruiter might decide not to apply at all. Although currently unemployed people might persist despite a negative encounter with a recruiter, passive job seekers, many

of whom are extremely talented, will be less likely to do so. In fact, when it comes to passive job seekers, the missed hiring opportunities experienced by lesser-skilled recruiters can cost firms the most money.

People often have limited information about organizations and jobs. In the absence of information, they will often rely on the traits of the recruiter and the recruiter's behaviors as *signals*. The recruiter's competence, any recruiting delays that occur during the process, and so on—all signal applicants about an organization's characteristics.²⁵ The type of recruiter deployed also seems to make a difference. For example, a firm can signal that it is demographically diverse by deploying a recruiter from a minority group. Some companies choose people other than recruiters to meet with applicants, which can also send a signal. If an actual hiring manager or the CEO of the company is doing the recruiting, this will send a signal that the job is important to the company. For example, as Microsoft's CEO, Bill Gates spent half his time on recruiting and would personally call college seniors to recruit them to work at Microsoft.²⁶

Researchers have concluded that the extent to which recruiters influenced job seekers depended on the degree to which recruiters were seen as reliable signals of what it would be like to work for the company. The signaling function of a recruiter was concluded to be less important when job candidates had considerable information about the organization and/or if the recruiter was from human resources and not from the applicant's functional area. This reinforces the idea that recruiters should be selected and trained to be knowledgeable about the job opening, be effective in communicating this information, be perceived by applicants as trustworthy, and positively reflect what it is like to work for the company.

Another important reason to focus on recruiters is that these people are setting the standard for talent for the company. The caliber of talent they pursue and pass on for further consideration will determine the success potential of the company. For many organizations, frontline recruiters make the vast majority of applicant-screening decisions.

The Recruiter's Characteristics

Individuals may make inferences about the attractiveness of a job or the probability of receiving a job offer based on recruiter characteristics. These inferences can influence the decision to pursue the job. Research suggests that recruiters with the characteristics summarized in Table 7-1 are likely to be more successful. Regardless of whether the recruiter is internal or external to the organization, this core set of competencies seems to be important. When the recruiter is from the applicant's functional area, these effects are even more likely to occur.²⁷

Although there is little evidence that recruiters' personal characteristics (e.g., race or sex) are important, recruiter behaviors toward applicants and their perceived knowledge of both the job and the applicant do influence applicant attitudes and behaviors.²⁸ Recruits often perceive the typical recruiter's preparation as inadequate with respect to knowledge about both characteristics of applicants and characteristics of the position being filled.²⁹ Recruiters must be familiar with the job, knowledgeable about the job and organization, and be motivated to do a good job recruiting qualified applicants. To accomplish these objectives, the organization can choose a recruiter who has previously worked or currently works in the target position, or it can train a recruiter on the information needed about the job and organization.

Although research has found the largest impact of recruiter behaviors to be on overall applicant impressions of the recruiter rather than on applicant intentions to pursue or accept

TABLE 7-1 Desirable Recruiter Characteristics³⁰

- Familiarity with the job and organization
- Good listening skills
- Good communication skills
- Good social skills
- Intelligence
- Self-confidence
- Extroversion
- Enthusiasm about the job and company
- Trustworthiness
- Credibility

job offers, the research has overwhelmingly been done with undergraduates who are active job seekers. The costs of lesser-skilled recruiters in terms of missed opportunities to make a good hire are likely larger among more passive job seekers whose initial recruiter experiences are more important in their ultimately becoming applicants at all. A potential recruit who is happy with his or her current position with another employer is likely to be more put off by a negative experience with a recruiter than a potential recruit who has already decided that the recruiter's organization is where she or he would like to work. Given that recruiter research has generally not directly manipulated recruiter behaviors, it is also possible that the effects of recruiter behaviors in attracting college undergraduates would be stronger in the presence of recruiter training and better recruiters in general.³¹ Organizations need to collect their own data and understand how to leverage their recruiting function to produce new hires who are the best possible fits with the organization's goals.

SIGNALING Because people often have limited information about organizations and jobs, in the absence of objective information they may rely on traits of the recruiter and the recruiter's behaviors as *signals* of aspects of both the company and the job opportunity. Job candidates often interpret recruiter behavior as a signal of their chances of getting a job offer.³² Applicants interpret recruitment experiences, including perceived recruiter competence, recruitment delays, and the gender composition of interview panels, as symbolic of broader organizational characteristics.³³ Applicants may form negative impressions of the organization and turn down job offers if a poor recruiter is considered representative of the organization as a whole.

As we discussed, the choice of the person sent to recruit can be taken as a signal of the importance of the job, with higher-level recruiters, the actual hiring manager, and the CEO being considered reflective of more important jobs than staff recruiters. The recruiter may also be a signal of demographic diversity in the organization if the recruiter is a demographic minority. Because recruiter behaviors affect applicant attraction indirectly through influencing applicant perceptions of job and organizational attributes,³⁴ it seems likely that recruits infer characteristics about the organization from their experiences with the organization's recruiters. The fact that recruits are more put off by poor recruiter behavior when the recruiter is a hiring manager rather than a human resource representative suggests that recruits may make stronger generalizations about the job and organization from experiences with people in the organization who are closely linked to that job, such as the hiring manager. This further emphasizes the point that, as recruiters, hiring managers can have a large impact on the success of a staffing effort.

A RECRUITER'S DEMOGRAPHICS AND ATTITUDES Does the similarity between the demographic characteristics of the recruiter—including his or her age, gender, race, rank, and function—and the demographic characteristics of the applicant he or she is recruiting affect a job's attractiveness? Consumer marketing research suggests that responses to influence sources (e.g., recruiters) similar to the recruit may be more favorable than responses to dissimilar sources.³⁵ But do women respond more favorably to female recruiters and men more positively to male recruiters? The data seem to indicate this is not the case. Although studies have tended to look at only a single, or at most a few, demographic characteristics, they indicate that similarity to the recruiter does not necessarily lead to more favorable applicant attitudes toward the job or organization.³⁶

However, a recruiter's behavior toward applicants and applicants' perception of the recruiter's knowledge can have a big impact on how attractive a job is.³⁷ Unfortunately, at least one study found that recruiters were more likely to leave applicants with a *negative* rather than a *positive* impression of an organization.³⁸ Apparently, applicants seem to believe many recruiters are ill prepared.³⁹ Recruiters can do a better job if they are familiar with the position and are knowledgeable about the organization. To help them better understand these facets of recruiting, the organization can choose a recruiter who has previously worked or currently works in the target position, or the company can impart this knowledge to the recruiter via training.

Instead of a recruiter's demographics, it's more likely that the key to successful recruiting is the recruiter's *ability to relate to a recruit's value system and motivations*. Recruiting requires persuasion on the part of the recruiter and the ability to sell the organization and its opportunities to the recruit.⁴⁰ Research has focused on superficial demographic characteristics when what may be important is the recruiter's ability to relate to and empathize with recruits and to communicate effectively with them by identifying and appealing to what is important to them.

Providing preliminary support for this proposition, one study found that management graduates seeking jobs gave higher ratings to recruiters with attitudes similar to their own.⁴¹ Although limited research has been done on this subject, organizations should evaluate for themselves whether or not this seems to be a factor and use this information to hire the best recruiters for different positions. This may mean sending different recruiters to different recruiting events to maximize their ability to establish a rapport with applicants. Some organizations even try to match recruiters' alma maters with the universities from which they are recruiting, and recruiters' hometowns with the hometowns of applicants. The better connection a recruiter can make with applicants, the greater the chances of an organization's job offers being accepted.

Take, for example, the job of recruiting nurses for pharmaceutical sales representative positions. Recruiters who personally relate to the rewards and challenges of nursing and who can communicate in a more compelling way the features of the job are more likely to appeal to nurses than those recruiters who have little understanding of the nursing profession. Profiling information about desired applicants' motivations and value systems can also be used to devise training material for recruiters. If the match between the recruiter and the recruit's value systems can be identified, the recruiters can be trained to better relate to applicants and present the job in the most attractive way.

DEVELOPING RECRUITER PROFILES Whether a recruiter is internal or external to the organization, understanding the recruiter characteristics most likely to attract desired applicants can enhance recruiting effectiveness. One way to do this is to create a **reviewer profile** of the individual recruiters who have been the most effective in the past. Over time, organizations can track applicant reactions to different recruiting styles and messages, and profile the skills, characteristics, and backgrounds of its most effective recruiters for different positions.

For example, a firm might find after conducting such an analysis that external recruiters do a better job when hiring speed is a priority and the level of the position being filled is relatively high. Internal recruiters might be a better choice when it's more important to keep hiring costs down. When recruiting new graduates with different degrees, recruiters with different backgrounds might be more effective. Analyzing this type of information can help an organization better specify who should do the recruiting and what the job specifications should be for recruiters targeting different positions.

MATCHING THE RECRUITER TO THE TARGETED APPLICANT In some cases, a firm might first identify someone whom they would very much like to hire, then strategize how to best attract them to join the organization. Often the targeted individual is currently employed and not looking to switch jobs. In this situation, it is critical that the choice of recruiter be made after considering whom the targeted individual is likely to best be persuaded by. A cold call by a recruiter from the human resource department is not as likely to stimulate the interest of the individual as well as a professional colleague in the hiring organization, or even the CEO. Persuasion is an important recruiter skill, and in order to persuade an individual to consider leaving a job she or he is happy with, the message must come from a trusted and respected individual to maximize the chances that it be given full consideration.

When the dean of Rutgers's Division of Life Sciences wanted to hire someone who could make Rutgers University preeminent in genetics research, he started by contacting the top people in the field of genetics. These contacts repeatedly recommended the same person. The dean then aggressively recruited the person by tapping a Rutgers agricultural geneticist who had worked with him decades earlier to help convince him that he should join Rutgers. The dean even went so far as to contact the man's best friend from childhood and persuaded him to put in a good word for Rutgers. Ultimately, despite not initially having any interest in returning to the East Coast, where he grew up, the scientist was persuaded to accept the position.⁴² Just as a recruiting message should be tailored to best inform and address the needs and concerns of each applicant, the recruiter should be chosen based on his or her ability to communicate with and persuade each recruit to consider the organization as their employer of choice.

The Different Types of Recruiters

So far, we have looked most closely at internal recruiters employed within their firm's human resource departments. However, there are other types of recruiters. Next, we look at some of the different types and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

REVIEWER PROFILE

a profile of the skills, characteristics, and backgrounds of the most effective recruiters for different positions

RECRUITERS FROM OUTSIDE OF THE STAFFING FUNCTION As we have explained, internal recruiters do not have to originate from a firm's human resource department. Research has found that an information source's credibility is influenced by the source's expertise and trustworthiness.⁴³ Therefore, it may be effective to find technically trained employees who are interested in recruiting and make them recruiters—for example, use engineers to recruit engineers, accountants to recruit accountants, and so forth. This should maximize the recruiter's credibility because the person currently works in the position being filled. It is also often easier to train technically qualified people how to recruit than it is to teach recruiters technical knowledge. By using employees as recruiters, applicants can also better assess their fit and comfort level with the job opportunity.

Some of the top U.S. corporations assign their primary recruiting responsibilities to their line managers rather than human resource professionals. For example, the managing director of the investment-banking firm CS First Boston spends half his time on recruiting. Senior managers at the pharmaceutical giant Merck devote considerable time to recruiting.⁴⁴ In addition, as we have indicated, the involvement of an organization's top leaders in its recruiting and selection programs can signal applicants that the company considers recruiting the right people to be a priority and takes its talent seriously. This will obviously increase the organization's attractiveness.

Although using line managers as recruiters can work for many companies, it can be impractical to take employees out of their regular jobs to serve as recruiters. Effective recruiting also requires more than technical job knowledge. Oftentimes recruiters can be trained sufficiently to explain a job to applicants and answer their questions. Compared to line, or hiring, managers, recruiters are also in a better position to answer broader questions about the organization's policies and benefits and identify other positions in the organization for which recruits might be a good fit. By contrast, there may be some highly specialized positions, such as engineering or medical research, that require a recruiter to be well versed in appropriate jargon to fully communicate the job requirements to potential applicants as well as screen candidates. In this case, it is the recruiter's role to help minimize the time the manager has to spend off the job recruiting.

EXTERNAL RECRUITERS Hiring external recruiters is generally more expensive. However, if an external recruiter can fill a position faster and with a better hire than internal recruiters, the increased cost might be well worth it. External recruiters often have more extensive networks of potential candidates to tap for job openings. Many of these recruiters specialize in particular types of candidates or industries, which can give firms greater access to larger, more highly qualified applicant pools. However, external recruiters generally lack the depth of knowledge about an organization that internal recruiters possess. Obviously, this does not mean that external recruiters are unable to identify good potential applicants. It *does* mean that the firm needs to spend more time communicating recruiting-relevant information to them.

Providing external recruiters with continuous feedback about the quality of their previous hires is an important step toward improving the staffing process. Generally, the longer-term the relationship between an organization and an external recruiter is, the better the recruiter will be able to identify and attract high-potential talent for the company—especially if he or she receives feedback from the firm. Unfortunately, many organizations provide their external recruiters with little feedback.

Because external recruiting fees can run as high as 40 percent of a new hire's first year compensation, organizations have begun hiring external recruiters to join their internal recruiting staff. In just six years, GE has built an internal recruiting staff of 500 who use LinkedIn and BranchOut to fill most of its openings, including about 10 percent of its senior professional and executive positions. These recruiters were also able to complete most searches in about 73 days, compared with the average 170 days most external recruiters need. GE still relies on outside recruiters when required for confidential searches or very specialized jobs, but it has saved approximately \$100 million a year in search fees by bringing this recruiting talent in-house. Because the recruiters now better understand what it is like to work at GE, they have also been able to find hires who better fit its culture.⁴⁵ Similarly, it is Coca-Cola's internal recruiters who do approximately 95 percent of its global executive recruiting. Coca-Cola executives hired by its inside team are hired approximately one-third faster and are half as likely to leave as those hired by external recruiters, and candidate diversity is twice as high.⁴⁶

Other Factors Influencing a Recruiter's Effectiveness

Many factors can influence a recruiter's effectiveness and performance. Some of these factors are controllable by the recruiter, and others are not. There are some situations and some positions for which even the most talented recruiter will have difficulty identifying and attracting qualified applicants. For example, a poor employer reputation due to lack of funding and substantial job stress have created serious recruiting challenges for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. In addition, the time-consuming hiring process that isn't recruiters' fault often causes it to miss out on good candidates who aren't willing to wait that long to learn if they get the job.⁴⁷ Figure 7-1 illustrates some of the primary factors that have an impact on the effectiveness of recruiters. Next, we discuss each.

THE LABOR MARKET Surpluses and shortages of talent can have a large impact on how effective recruiters are. Their skills are likely to be tested when the labor market is tight and job seekers have the luxury of choosing from among multiple job opportunities. In this situation, recruiters will need to "sell" the job and organization to potential applicants. Of course, when jobs are scarce, organizations generally have an easier time attracting quality talent. If a company is the only employer in town, recruiters will also have a much easier time attracting applicants. Even in a loose labor market in which applicants are plentiful, recruiters sometimes find it difficult to attract the right kind of talent. Although the labor market's characteristics can affect the challenge of their assignments, recruiters still have a big impact on the success of most recruiting efforts.

THE ORGANIZATION'S CHARACTERISTICS In addition to the state of the labor market, the nature of the organization in terms of its size and visibility can also influence the effectiveness of recruiters. Smaller, lesser-known organizations often have a harder time recruiting, in part because potential applicants have not heard much about the company and either never hear about job opportunities or choose to apply elsewhere. Whether the firm is seen as a desirable place to work will also influence its ability to attract potential applicants. For example, recruiters for an organization that has just been responsible for a large environmental disaster are likely to have a harder time attracting applicants than recruiters for a socially responsible company that engages in philanthropic activities. A recruiter can do a great deal to educate targeted applicants about the nature of the work and organization and put the firm on an applicant's "radar screen," so to speak.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JOB The nature of the job being filled can also influence a recruiter's success. Some jobs are less desirable because of the work they involve, their location, hours, and so forth. For example, recruiting for night shifts and repetitive work can be more difficult than recruiting for day shifts and for jobs requiring a variety of skills and activities. Attracting applicants for a position that pays less than comparable positions in the same

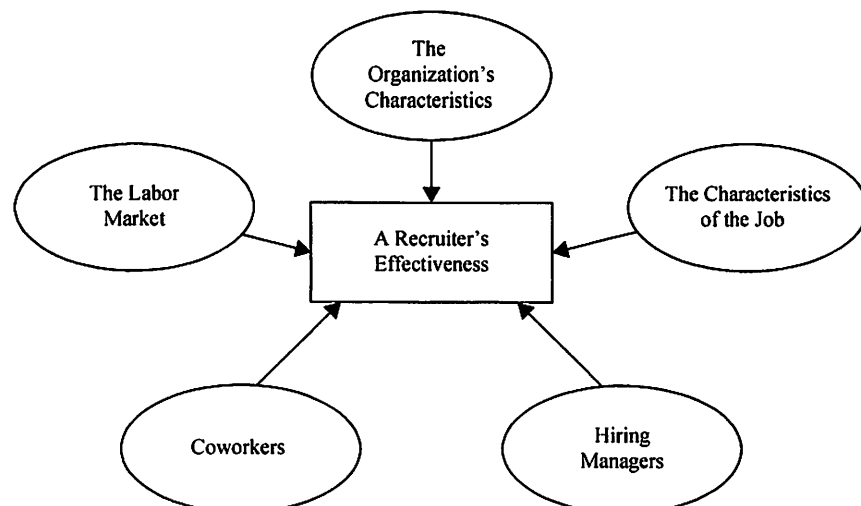


FIGURE 7-1 Factors Influencing a Recruiter's Effectiveness

geographic area will also be harder. Improving job characteristics can often enhance recruiting and retention efforts. Trucking company U.S. Xpress identified poor directions as a top cause of driver dissatisfaction. To better attract and retain its drivers, U.S. Xpress made the job easier to perform by adding global positioning devices to all of its trucks. Clearly, a firm can improve the chances that its recruiters will be successful by improving the characteristics of the jobs they are trying to fill.⁴⁸

HIRING MANAGERS Once a new employee starts work, his or her boss, coworkers, the work itself, and organizational policies and practices usually assume much greater importance than the recruiter on outcomes such as job performance. Recruiters can only do so much to attract talent. If the hiring managers with whom they work do not reinforce the organization's desirability, the efforts of even the most talented recruiter may be wasted. For example, a promising recruit might be very enthusiastic about a potential opportunity after meeting with a recruiter but be turned off by an unprofessional hiring manager. In fact, applicants seem to be *more* put off by poor recruiting behavior exhibited by hiring managers than by recruiters. Hiring managers must see recruiters as partners and reinforce rather than undermine their efforts.

Hiring managers also need to understand the competencies, styles, and traits the organization is seeking. If hiring managers are screening for characteristics different than those being recruited for, a large number of qualified candidates are likely to be rejected for the wrong reasons. One large U.S. company identified a group of hiring managers that had the highest candidate rejection rates. It turned out the managers had been rejecting qualified candidates due to reasons unrelated to the firm's selection criteria including inappropriate dress, limited eye contact, and poor posture. The company determined that the financial cost of this mistake amounted to over \$100,000 in applicant processing and candidate assessment, not including the cost of losing people who would have been good hires.

In addition to qualified candidates not being recruited and hired, if recruiters fail to make hiring managers aware of the basic legal requirements they need to follow during a staffing effort, the firm can be hit with lawsuits. In one of its judgments, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit concluded that leaving managers with hiring authority in ignorance of the basic features of discrimination laws is an "extraordinary mistake" for a company to make.⁴⁹ Of course, recruiters usually receive legal training with regard to discrimination laws, but hiring managers are sometimes overlooked despite their being integral to the recruiting process.

Because the hiring manager will be the supervisor of new hires, she or he will also play a large role in the applicants' decisions. Enlisting the highest levels of management as recruiters can also help attract top talent. Ralph Larsen, former CEO of Johnson & Johnson, traveled to key college campuses to recruit top talent.⁵⁰ Because top research talent is difficult to find and attract, California business leaders solicited the governor's help in recruiting top talent that could produce more innovations and products for California's high-tech industries. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger called top professors across the United States to offer them a chance to work for the University of California.⁵¹

COWORKERS Just as hiring managers can dissuade candidates from accepting job offers, so can the candidates' prospective coworkers. Potential hires often seek out current and past employees to learn about the realities of the job and organization. Thus, every employee and former employee can serve as a recruiter, and often do whether they intend to or not. The Container Store's enthusiastic employees do a great job converting the company's customers into employees. However, if in another organization customers consistently hear employees complain of low pay, poor working conditions, and bad supervision, they are not likely to seriously consider the organization as a potential employer. Unhappy employees are not likely to refer friends and family members to an organization in which they do not enjoy working, nor plan for lengthy careers with the organization themselves.

Because any employee can affect a potential applicant's decision to pursue employment with an organization, it is wise for companies to recognize employees' potential recruiting impact and do what they can to ensure that their impact is positive. Giving employees information about how to refer a potential employee to the correct place in the organization and recruiting materials to distribute can facilitate applicants' information search. Hewlett-Packard, for example, invests a considerable amount of time and money training and sending small teams of

engineers and managers to recruit their future coworkers. The idea is to give applicants a sense of fit with the organization's culture so that they can make informed decisions about pursuing the firm's job opportunities.⁵²

The characteristics of a newly hired person's coworkers can also affect a recruiter's success. If coworkers don't support a new hire's efforts to perform his or her best, the new hire will not live up to his or her potential. Coworkers sometimes pressure each other to maintain certain production levels, and discourage new hires from trying to become "rate busters" by exceeding the group's production norms. Coworkers or team members can also create an unpleasant environment for an unwelcome new hire, increasing the chances that he or she will quit. This sometimes happens if the group's preferred candidate is not chosen. The group might also fail to help a new hire succeed on the job, despite the person's ability and motivation to do so. This can be unintentional, but it underscores why it's important for HR personnel to follow up with new hires. The goal is to ensure that they have the tools, training, and support that they need to succeed. In short, recruiters can help identify high-potential employees, but employees need the resources and opportunity to live up to their potential.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPING RECRUITERS

If different recruiters do not look for the same competencies, values, and experience in potential applicants, many qualified applicants are likely to be overlooked, and many undesirable applicants are likely to be encouraged to apply. Recruiter training and development helps to ensure consistency in terms of what recruiters screen for and the messages they communicate about the job and company.

Not much research exists about the amount of training recruiters receive, but surveys suggest that many recruiters receive very little.⁵³ When they do receive training, it tends to focus on administrative and procedural (paperwork) issues.⁵⁴ However, the research that does exist has made it possible to identify training areas that are likely to make recruiters more effective. Table 7-2 summarizes these key areas. Next, we discuss each in more detail.

Recruiting Knowledge

A recruiter's knowledge can be enhanced in a number of ways. For example, when UPS analyzed the characteristics of all of the workers in one of its districts, it found that employees tended to cluster into five distinct groups. By understanding the demographic and psychological characteristics of each group—their ages, career stages, and so forth—and by identifying the type of information each group responded to, UPS was able to train recruiters to tailor their recruitment pitches to appeal to applicants from each group.⁵⁵

Interpersonal Skills

Recruiters can be trained to develop better interpersonal skills and behaviors. Because applicants with limited information about the organization to which they are applying may infer characteristics of the organization from their experience with the recruiter, recruiters should be trained in how to reflect the company's culture and values, how to project warmth and empathy, and how to gain an applicant's trust. Training can also improve a recruiter's listening and communication skills.

Presentation Skills

Presentation skills can be helpful to recruiters attending job fairs, recruiting on college campuses, or making any sort of formal presentation of the organization's job opportunities. Many potential

TABLE 7-2 Recruiter Training Areas

- Recruiting knowledge
- Interpersonal skills
- Presentation skills
- The organization's goals and recruiting objectives
- Legal issues
- Multiple assessments
- Applicant attraction

applicants' first exposure to an organizational representative is at a formal presentation. If the presentation is sloppy or doesn't communicate enough meaningful information, they may decide not to apply to the organization. Training can even improve an informal pitch to a potential recruit.

The Organization's Goals and Recruiting Objectives

More important than a recruiter's background or whether the recruiter is internal or external to the organization is that she or he has a strong sense of the organization's goals, business strategy, and recruiting objectives. For example, Canada's Scotiabank Group integrates its diversity goals into all aspects of its staffing program. Diversity objectives are a part of its recruitment, interview, and selection program for both its hiring managers and recruiters. Hiring managers learn appropriate questions to ask in a selection interview as well as recruitment strategies for creating a diverse workforce.⁵⁶

Recruiting quickly at the lowest cost requires different recruiter skills and behaviors than does recruiting for the top talent available in a given profession. In some cases, the recruiter will be expected to evaluate and screen applicants. In other words, he or she will serve the dual purposes of recruiting and selecting. In other cases, the recruiter will be expected to only answer general questions posed by recruits or to focus on stimulating targeted people's interest in the position. Fortunately, both internal and external recruiters can be easily trained with regard to an organization's business strategy and recruiting goals.

Legal Issues

Legal training is critical to establishing and maintaining a consistent, effective recruiting and applicant-screening system. This is important if an organization ever has to defend its recruiting and staffing practices in a court of law. For example, as you learned in Chapter 3, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) extends many rights to workers who wish to form, join, or support unions. Employers also cannot discriminate against pro-union applicants. "Salting" occurs when union organizers seek jobs at a nonunion company in order to persuade the workers to join a union.⁵⁷ Because an employer violates Section 8(a)(1) of the NLRA by making statements that union applicants will not be hired,⁵⁸ interviewers must be trained in how to appropriately respond to salting tactics.

Salting is only one of the many legal situations firms have to deal with. Firms also have to minimize the chances that any illegal discriminatory recruiting is taking place. Training can also help recruiters become aware of any biases they have and give them tools to minimize the likelihood that they will discriminate unintentionally.⁵⁹

Multiple Assessments

Recruiters and hiring managers can also be trained to assess candidates for positions other than the one currently being filled. Even if the company isn't currently looking for a particular candidate's skills and expertise, the company may need these competencies in the future or in a job other than the one being recruited for. In addition to training recruiters about how to profile candidates not currently being hired and assess their fit with multiple positions, recruiters can be trained in the creation and use of a special talent database that might be referenced in the future for other openings. Through relationship marketing, recruiters can keep in contact with candidates in the database and maintain their interest in the company, much as Valero Energy does.

Applicant Attraction

After identifying where good applicants are, recruiters can then be trained to disseminate effective recruiting messages to active job seekers as well as to passive job candidates to attract them. As we have mentioned, passive job candidates often require more active recruiting. Attending trade shows and professional conferences and networking with potential applicants can help a recruiter develop relationships with them that can be tapped in the future. How to start conversations with potential applicants and how to tactfully introduce the idea of considering alternative employment opportunities with the recruiter's organization can be practiced. Training can also enhance recruiters' persuasion skills and ability to sell the job and organization.

RECRUITING METRICS

How does a firm know if it has selected the right recruiters and trained them well? Standard efficiency-oriented recruiting metrics include hiring speed, number of hires achieved per recruiter, and the average cost per hire. Although these metrics can be useful, they are not always tied to a business's strategy and may not be the best recruiting outcomes to track. Take, for example, one major software company that assembled a recruiting team to attract senior software architects—the key employees in its business. Because the cycle for hiring these individuals can exceed five years, the firm does not measure its recruiters on the number of jobs they fill as much as on the number of qualified individuals they identify and the relationships they create with them.⁶⁰

Indeed, because some positions have a greater impact on the company than do others, some firms prioritize or “weight” key positions more heavily in their overall assessment of how well individual recruiters have performed. However, if a firm's resources are limited, the company sometimes assesses only the staffing results of its key positions. Because the performance of even great recruiters can be compromised when they're working with difficult hiring managers, sometimes firms make adjustments for this factor as well as other uncontrollable factors recruiters face.⁶¹

The following is a list of strategic metrics one HR expert recommends measuring.⁶²

- **New hire job performance:** The on-the-job performance ratings for new employees 6 to 12 months after being hired.
- **New hire failure rate:** The percentage of new hires in key jobs who were terminated or asked to leave.
- **Turnover of new hires:** The percentage of employees who voluntarily quit within their first year, or the average tenure of new hires compared to the firm's typical tenure.
- **Manager satisfaction:** The percentage of key managers who are satisfied with the hiring process and the candidates.
- **New hire satisfaction:** The percentage of applicants and new hires in key jobs who are satisfied with the hiring process.
- **New hire time to productivity:** The time it takes for new hires to meet the firm's minimum output standards.
- **Training success:** New hires' scores on any mandatory initial training tests they are given.

Tracking the outcomes recruiters achieve can help a firm to identify areas that can be improved. If the best recruiters can be identified, it can also be possible to identify what makes them successful (profile them) and use this information when hiring and training other recruiters.

Setting Recruiters' Goals

Recruiters' goals must be consistent with the organization's objectives and staffing strategy. An organization usually sets specific goals for their recruiters' activities at job fairs, conferences, interviews, and so forth, including communicating the employer's value proposition, screening candidates, and generating candidates' interest in the position and organization. For a recruiter to pursue the organization's goals, the organization's goals must be known by the recruiter and be consistent with the recruiter's personal goals. Recruiters are likely to have their own goals and motivations, including being liked, hiring people from their alma maters, and enjoying a break from their normal work routines.⁶³ Monitoring their behavior is usually very difficult for organizations, particularly when the recruiter is working off-site. This makes it even more important that goals of recruiters are aligned with the goals of their firms.

Many recruiters know very little about the success of their recruiting efforts other than the number of positions they have filled, their average time-to-fill for a given position, and so forth. However, an organization's recruiting goals are likely much more complex. Although many possible metrics exist to evaluate recruiters' effectiveness, their performance is not likely to change unless they receive feedback as to how they are doing and how they can improve. Giving them feedback also helps to reinforce what they've learned through training, and helps recruiters identify and self-correct their performance shortcomings. Without this feedback, recruiters cannot know what they should be doing differently.

For the feedback to be most effective, clear goals that are based on the organization's key recruiting objectives should first be set for recruiters. If the organization is interested in hiring customer service representatives to staff a new telephone center as quickly as possible, the

company's goals balancing hiring speed with acceptable levels of job performance should be established. If the open position is a "feeder position" for a more important position, recruiter goals linked to new hire promotability may also be included. It is important to think through both the intended and unintended consequences of any goals to ensure that the proper recruiter behaviors and outcomes are being motivated. Giving recruiters feedback on their performance relative to their goals can help them understand what they need to do differently as well as identify recruiters' development needs.

Giving Recruiters the Incentive to Meet Their Goals

One study found that only about one-fourth of in-house recruiters receive incentive pay based on their own, rather than company-wide, performance levels.⁶⁴ Too often, however, recruiters are rewarded for short-term goals such as the number of jobs they fill or the total compensation of the people they recruit. If hiring speed is all that is rewarded, the quality of a firm's new hires is likely to be lower than if both new hire quantity and quality are rewarded. At Advanced Technology Services (ATS), a company that maintains complex factory equipment for major manufacturers including Honda and GE, quality of hire is more important than the number of hires or the time to hire. Accordingly, ATS recruiters are evaluated on their hires' one-year retention rates.⁶⁵

Given that the rewarded behaviors and outcomes are the ones recruiters are most likely to pursue, it is imperative that the firm's incentive system be well designed and well tested before being rolled out. This can help eliminate any unintended consequences of the new system. For example, a study of how Navy recruiters reacted to a recruiting incentive plan that included quotas, prizes, and other standards found that recruiting productivity was highest in the period immediately prior to the quota/prize cutoff date and lowest immediately afterward. Additionally, the average quality of the people recruited fell as the cutoff date approached,⁶⁶ which was not the intent of the incentive system.

Although recruiting productivity as measured by the total base compensation of new hires and the speed with which they are recruited can be criteria to use to reward recruiters, using them in isolation does not motivate recruiters to hire the best possible talent. An effective incentive system aligns the goals of the organization with the recruiters' goals. Rewarding recruiters for recruiting good employees who remain with the firm and perform well can do a great deal to align the hiring goals of the organization with the recruiter's personal goals. For example, the telecommunications company T-Mobile gives its recruiters quarterly bonuses pegged to their individual performance goals. The goals, which must support the firm's corporate-wide goals, are drafted by recruiters and approved by T-Mobile's managers.⁶⁷ If a recruiting function is team based, it is important to link the team's rewards to behaviors that support the effectiveness of the entire team. A balanced incentive plan that considers all the organization's long-term and short-term strategic hiring goals will better motivate recruiters to meet the organization's multiple goals.

GLOBAL RECRUITING

Organizations must sometimes recruit talent from other countries. This typically requires both a global marketing and applicant attraction strategy as well as shared services, including a consistent employment brand and a centralized technology system. It is also helpful if leaders throughout the organization use a consistent language when discussing talent issues, and a common process for assessing talent around the world.⁶⁸ Candidate processing and hiring activities including sourcing, candidate evaluation, and compliance are typically managed locally.⁶⁹

DEVELOPING APPLICANT ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

Having a great job opportunity does not always translate into sufficient numbers of quality applicants. Applicants must be attracted to those opportunities before they are willing to apply. One popular model of applicant attraction⁷⁰ developed by Professor Sara Rynes suggests that applicants gather information about potential employers to assess the types of rewards the firms offer and to determine whether their skills meet the job's requirements. They also look for signals that help them identify the culture and climate of the organization. This helps potential applicants

assess their likely fit with the job and the firm. When applicants are attracted to a firm, they are more likely to apply for jobs, accept job offers, and remain with the company over time. Next, we discuss the role of organizational image, employer brand, and the recruiting message in applicant attraction.

Developing the Organization's Image and Brand

Given the limited amount of information most applicants have early in the job search process, initial application decisions are largely based on general impressions of organizational attractiveness.⁷¹ Every organization has an **image** for itself and its products, whether it is proactive in establishing it or not. The first words or images that come to mind when someone thinks about a particular company generally reflect the company's image. However, the image a person has about an organization is his or her general impression of the organization based on both feelings and facts, and may not be accurate.⁷² An organization's image may be positive or negative, weak or strong, clear or vague, and images can vary from person to person and change over time.⁷³

Organizational images can influence recruiting outcomes⁷⁴ but have been found to differ across subgroups of individuals. In one study, corporate executives and college undergraduates disagreed in their overall corporate image ratings.⁷⁵ Executives based their image assessments on economic performance indicators and detailed knowledge of the companies in their industry. College students' image assessments, on the other hand, tended to be influenced more heavily by exposure to, or familiarity with, the organization (using its products, knowing someone who works there, seeing the organization's advertisements, etc.).⁷⁶ Not surprisingly, being exposed to a greater amount of positive information about the organization enhanced the organization's image as an employer and increased undergraduates' intentions of pursuing employment.⁷⁷ College undergraduates' image assessments of organizations as employers were found to be malleable and independent of their assessments of the organization's corporate image, suggesting that organizations that do not have high-profile corporate images may still be able to compete successfully for undergraduate students in the initial stages of their job choice through the use of recruitment messages that establish a positive image for the organization as an employer. Because different subgroups of people base their corporate image assessments on different factors, different methods may meet with differing success in altering an organization's image among different groups, and different information about the organization may need to be provided to appeal to different types of recruits.

A **brand** is a symbolic picture of all the information connected to a company or its products, including its image. Organizations often try to link their images and consumer brands with their business strategies. For example, for many people Nieman-Marcus, Goldman Sachs, and Tiffany's probably conjure images of elite, high-quality, and expensive products and services. When you think of Walmart and Dell Computer you probably think of low-cost goods and high-efficiency work processes. These companies created consumer brands for themselves that reflect their business strategies. Brands are often represented by symbols including names, logos, slogans, or designs. Image and brand recognition are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of communications, advertising, design, and media exposure.⁷⁸

Developing the Organization's Employer Brand

Firms often craft **employer brands** to reflect what they offer as employers and to manage internal and external perceptions of what it is like to work there. An employer brand answers the question, "Why should I work here?" and influences people's intentions to apply for jobs.⁷⁹

Many factors, including recognition in "best employer" surveys, ethics violations, environmental accidents, and corporate philanthropy, may affect an organization's image positively and negatively. Most people want to be members of an organization that has a favorable image.⁸⁰ Research has consistently found that the more favorable a company's image and brand are, the more people are likely to consider the organization attractive as an employer and respond to its recruiting advertisements.⁸¹ This suggests that newer or lesser-known organizations with weak or nonexistent brands will have greater difficulty attracting applicants using passive recruitment sources, such as newspaper advertisements, than organizations that are more widely known and favorably thought of. Companies such as IBM, Johnson & Johnson, and Nike invest a lot of

IMAGE

a general impression based on both feelings and facts

BRAND

a symbolic picture of all the information connected to a company or its products

EMPLOYER BRAND

reflects what a company offers as an employer and helps manage internal and external perceptions of what it is like to work there

money building and maintaining a certain employer brand. Rich Floersch, McDonald's executive vice president of worldwide human resources, states, "I really believe that the strongest employment brand that you can have is one where employees say they are proud to work for their companies. Our goal is to continue to build that sense of pride."⁸²

Attracting the right employees and maintaining their commitment to perform at a high level is an important part of building and supporting a firm's customer brand for its products. Likewise, the strength of the consumer brand plays an important role in attracting the right people to work for the company. Once employed, the pride they share in the company's external reputation helps maintain their loyalty and commitment to deliver on the company's brand promises to its customers.⁸³

An effective employer brand differentiates a firm from its competitors, and is appealing to targeted applicants. It is also critical that the company deliver on its employer brand promises. In the age of Vault.com and other Internet sites where employees share their experiences with one another, what a firm promises versus delivers to its employees will generally be widely known. If people join an organization expecting that the firm holds certain values and will provide a certain type of employment experience, they are likely to leave if their expectations are not met. The goal of employer branding is not to fool potential applicants but to effectively communicate the firm's message of what it intends to provide as an employer.⁸⁴ As one employer branding expert said, "The purpose of the employer brand proposition is not to invent a further set of values, but to help to ensure that the purpose and value statements that currently exist are translated into something relevant and meaningful to employees, and made consistent with the values the organization wishes to project externally."⁸⁵

Jo Pieters, global vice president of recruitment for Philips in the Netherlands, states, "In my view, winning the war for talent means primarily focusing on retention of your current talent and following that, building a strong position in your key labor markets. Therefore, a brand that is only visible in external communications is less valuable than a brand that is truly lived inside. Each and every employee should act as an ambassador of your brand and that requires a strong and recognized internal and external employee value proposition."⁸⁶

Lucy Chang, talent acquisition senior manager for Sun Microsystems, Hong Kong, adds, "I am a strong proponent of employer branding. It is the basic fundamental of any recruitment strategy. You have to know who you are as a company, your messaging, and what is your competitive advantage against other companies. It is a long-term strategy, which I think many companies fail to recognize."⁸⁷ Table 7-3 contains some popular companies and their employer brand slogans.

It can be worthwhile for any organization to evaluate its brand among its targeted applicant pools and take steps to make it as strong and positive as possible before launching a recruiting campaign. One study found that the three most effective branding techniques used to appeal to college graduates were building relationships with key faculty, appearing at campus career fairs, and supporting the activities of student organizations on campus.⁸⁸

Many organizations spend a lot of money to try to influence their overall image and their brand as an employer. For example, Hewlett-Packard, Home Depot, and McDonald's have all run television advertisements designed solely to promote their brands as employers. Merrill Lynch spent around \$150 million in a single year in image ads to reinforce its new brand as a tech-savvy company.⁸⁹ Even as early as 1990, U.S. companies spent over \$1.4 billion on advertising intended just to create a favorable impression of themselves.⁹⁰

If an organization wants to distinguish itself as an employer, focusing on influencing its symbolic meaning as an employer can be an effective strategy⁹¹—for example, whether the company is thought of by applicants as trendy, prestigious, or innovative and its jobs thought of positively in terms of their location, pay, and benefits. Given the power repetitive marketing

TABLE 7-3 Employer Brand Slogans

Johnson & Johnson: "Small Company Environment, Big Company Impact"
Eli Lilly: "Innovation Has a Face: Our People"
Medtronic: "Careers with a Passion for Life"
Abbott Labs: "Inspired to Achieve. Make a Difference in Your World"
Sharp: "From Sharp Minds Come Sharp Products"

messages have, recruiters and employees should be trained in how to consistently and clearly promote the employer's brand at every opportunity. One expert believes that managers should market their companies to applicants the same way they would market their products to customers. He suggests that managers arm themselves with a brief pitch designed to attract talent at the drop of a hat. Like an entrepreneur's pitch, this speech should be concise and compelling, and should answer the questions: How is the company different? What is its vision? What is its competitive advantage? Why should a talented person join? What benefits does the company offer?⁹²

Proactively establishing a positive employer brand takes time to do well, and can be expensive.⁹³ In addition to developing the image and the branding strategy, print advertising campaigns, a Web site, radio and television commercials, and even articles in targeted magazines may be created. The Boston Consulting Group's (www.bcg.com) site for new consultants and Federated Department Stores's Retailology (www.retailology.com) site for college recruiting are good examples of how to promote a desirable employer brand online. The "working at Google" videos on YouTube promote Google as a unique experience where you "enjoy what you do, where you do it, and the people you do it with." Some organizations' product advertisements, including Microsoft and Siemens, are designed clearly to attract talented people to work there. Because they can highlight the organization's facilities, employees, customers, products, and work processes, employer brand advertisements can be effectively shown on television, too. Companies including Verizon and Home Depot have developed TV "commercials" that "sell" their employer brands to viewers. Employer brand advertisements can be particularly helpful for smaller or lesser-known organizations that lack name recognition.

Cleveland-based bank National City Corporation evaluates job candidates by seeing how they perform in a computerized simulation of specific job-related tasks. The simulation also reinforces the company's brand by showing recruits what it's like to be an employee at the company. One company representative states, "We think it creates a unique impression that lets us stand out among our peers in the industry.... It gives us a way to share our story and what we're all about."⁹⁴

Magazines and other publications and organizations periodically assess employers in terms of how good they are to work for. This can significantly enhance a firm's employer brand. *Fortune* magazine's annual lists of the "100 Best Companies to Work For" and the "Best Companies for Minorities," *Working Mother* magazine's annual list of the "100 Best Companies for Working Mothers," and the American Association of Retired Persons' list of the "Best Employers for Workers over 50" are good examples of such assessments. How an organization is reputed to treat its employees is likely to have a particularly strong effect on how likely it is to attract applicants. This explains why many organizations are eager to appear on lists such as these.

But being an employer of choice can create challenges as well as opportunities. Many organizations are not prepared to handle the increased volume of job applicants resulting from being named an employer of choice. In the month following the announcement that Edward Jones was number one on *Fortune* magazine's annual "100 Best Companies to Work For" list, the number of job inquiries jumped by nearly 63 percent. The company claims that it was all because of the *Fortune* story and that it did nothing different in its outreach activities.⁹⁵

The increased job seeker interest resulting from a positive brand is not necessarily a negative, but it does increase the burden on the organization's selection system. There is no guarantee that more applicants mean higher applicant quality. However, engaging in a targeted recruiting effort to fill a particular opening can help a firm manage the number of applications it receives and increase the quality of its applicant pools. Meanwhile, the organization's positive employer brand should allow it to improve its interview and job offer acceptance rates. Another downside of such lists is that once a company is on a "best companies to work for" list, it risks negative publicity and negative reactions from existing employees if it later falls off the list. Although many employers actively try to be named to these lists, the competition for developing ever-creative and ever-increasing employee benefits might not be something the organization wants to commit to. This chapter's Develop Your Skills feature describes how to develop an employer brand.

Developing the Recruiting Message

Like a firm's recruiters, image, and employer brand, the recruiting message communicated to potential applicants will affect the number and types of them that will apply. In addition to communicating the nature of the job opportunity that the company is offering, the message can create or reflect the company's brand as well.

Rather than simply stating the core requirements of the open position, it can be more effective to craft the recruiting message in the most appealing and effective way. Even the physical design of the recruiting message or ad can affect the success of a campaign.

Companies that develop recruiting campaigns and ads for organizations have conducted research on how well different recruiting materials attract the attention of potential applicants—including the different styles of the ads, colors, fonts, and sizes as well as how they're positioned on pages (in the case of print ads).⁹⁶ More rigorous, scientifically grounded research on recruitment materials is lacking, though.

In any case, the factors that affect what does and does not get the attention of applicants can change rapidly. What was novel and effective a year ago may be obsolete today. Therefore, any conclusions researchers draw from research such as this are likely to have a short lifespan.⁹⁷ Moreover, because competitors can copy an organization's recruiting programs, a firm constantly needs to be innovative when it comes to its recruiting campaigns.

In terms of the message itself, understanding the goals and values of the targeted applicants and crafting a recruitment message that appeals to them is especially critical in a competitive hiring market. Successful companies are increasingly adapting their employer brands to target different targeted recruits with different values, needs, and ambitions.⁹⁸ For example, older workers' lifestyle goals often differ from Generation Y's lifestyle goals, and higher-achieving college students place greater importance on interesting and challenging work than do other students.⁹⁹ Stressing the most appealing features of the job being recruited for should improve the organization's ability to attract each subgroup of potential applicants. Recruiting brochures that highlight how important teamwork and diversity are to the firm can have the effect of attracting more women and minorities.¹⁰⁰ Statements in a newspaper ad about company policies, scheduling flexibility, and a targeted equal opportunity statement can similarly influence older workers' attraction to an organization.¹⁰¹

UK retailer Tesco explicitly divides its potential frontline recruits into three segments: those joining straight from school, students looking for part-time work, and graduates. A separate section of the company's Web site is devoted to each group and presents recruiting materials tailored to that group.¹⁰² Oil services company Schlumberger became one of the industry's leading recruiters of female engineers by introducing flexible work practices and communicating them during its recruitment efforts.¹⁰³

Although there are relatively few studies on the best types of information to include in a recruiting message, taken as a whole the research suggests that recruiting materials should be informative, address a range of job or organization characteristics, and provide specific information about those characteristics.¹⁰⁴ More detailed job postings have been found to be useful in "weeding out" unqualified applicants through self-selection, increasing the efficiency of the recruitment and hiring process.¹⁰⁵

DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS

How to Develop an Employer Brand?

A positive employer brand differentiates you as an employer. An employer brand should capture the essence of what it is like to work for your company and appeal to prospective employees. Here are four steps in developing a positive employer brand:¹⁰⁶

1. *Analyze* the current perceptions of your target audience. Answering questions such as "Why should I want to work for us?" or "Why are we different or unique as a place to work?" can help you understand your strengths as an employer and identify the characteristics you want to play up in your brand. Because people often stay at an organization for the same reasons they joined it in the first place, understanding why employees stay can also help an organization identify its competitive advantage as an employer.
2. *Align* your employer brand with your firm's policies, practices, culture, and values. Use aspects of the corporation's values, culture, and image to appeal to potential applicants as well as current employees.
3. *Communicate* your story clearly and consistently. Generate favorable publicity such as news stories about your organization featured in various media. Incorporate employer brand elements into the firm's job advertisements and product packaging, and encourage employees to spread the brand via word of mouth. Consider sponsoring scholarships, events, or donating products or equipment to universities at which you would like to portray a strong employer brand.
4. *Measure* and improve your branding effort by periodically repeating step 1 to see whether people's perceptions of the company have changed. Establishing metrics up front can help you assess whether or not your efforts are working.

Also, as we mentioned earlier, providing more or less information in the recruiting message and/or job listing has been found to have an effect on whether or not applicants will apply to an organization.¹⁰⁷ General ads that include limited job attributes have the potential to appeal to a wide variety of job applicants and generate a lot of applicants, but they also tend to increase the number of unqualified or inappropriate applicants. Ads such as these can also be unappealing to job seekers who are highly focused in their job search strategies.

Information that is particularly unusual or extreme compared to the other job alternatives tends to receive greater attention than attributes set nearer to average levels.¹⁰⁸ Preliminary research evidence also suggests that job seekers use a subset of the total number of organizational or job characteristics as noncompensatory screening factors, rejecting all employment opportunities that do not meet their minimum standards on these characteristics, and are willing to make trade-offs among other characteristics. In particular, salary levels,¹⁰⁹ location,¹¹⁰ and type of job¹¹¹ are common noncompensatory screening variables for which other job and organizational factors cannot make up. Although no job factor is a noncompensatory screening variable for all job seekers, research has found that jobs tend to be rejected more frequently if they fail to meet minimum requirements on these factors regardless of other job characteristics. It also seems that some job factors, particularly high compensation levels, can offset less desirable features of a job and organization. For example, high compensation levels have been found to offset the negative effect of employment-at-will statements,¹¹² and having an explicit EEO policy has been found to help offset the negative effect of application questions that could appear discriminatory.¹¹³

Providing specific information about a job's location, the type of job, and salary levels in recruitment materials can save organizations the time and expense of processing and screening candidates who are ultimately not likely to accept job offers once they learn this information. Providing more information and providing more specific information (e.g., the exact starting salary rather than "competitive salary") have been found to influence the decision to apply to an organization.¹¹⁴ It is important to remember that if some potential applicants are not likely to ultimately accept job offers or to stay with the organization as long as the organization would like, it is not necessarily a limitation for recruiting practices to dissuade these people from ever applying. Table 7-4 summarizes the practical implications of recruitment research findings.¹¹⁵

Developing Realistic Job Previews

When communicating the nature of the work and the organization, organizations have a choice of how objective to be. Some organizations embellish the nature of the work and the reality of working in the organization, making the job seem far more positive and enjoyable than it necessarily is. As we have mentioned, research has found that slanting recruiting information can be

TABLE 7-4 Practical Implications of Recruiting Research Findings¹¹⁶

The following is a summary of the practical steps firms should take to improve their recruiting efforts:

- Hire recruiters who are personable, informative, and trustworthy.
- Make a firm's initial recruiting activities (brochures, on-campus recruiting efforts, and so forth) as attractive to candidates as the firm's later recruiting activities.
- Provide applicants with enough accurate information about the job and organization so that they can assess their fit.
- Ensure that all the firm's communications send a positive message about the company's image and attractiveness as an employer.
- Provide clear, specific, and complete information in recruitment materials and messages to prevent candidates from making erroneous inferences.
- Create a positive organizational image in the minds of applicants, both before and during the recruiting effort.
- Respond quickly to applications and inquiries.
- Treat candidates fairly and considerately throughout the recruiting process.
- Enhance applicants' perceptions of fairness, train recruiters to explain the company's selection procedures, keep candidates informed, and avoid communication delays.
- Communicate values of the firm that are consistent with the values and needs of each applicant.

detrimental to an organization.¹¹⁷ Particularly in a strong labor market when other job opportunities exist if the job is not what they expected, “conned” employees are likely to perform poorly and leave the organization. A 2012 survey of 2,300 new hires found that 51 percent regretted their employer choice and 88 percent were looking to make a change. Their chief complaint was that the hiring process did not realistically or accurately describe the job.¹¹⁸

Other organizations opt to disclose to applicants as little potentially undesirable information as possible to reduce the chance that the applicants will lose interest in the position. The feeling is generally that if the organization told applicants what it was really like to work there, they would not want the job. This focus on getting candidates to accept job offers without their thoroughly understanding what they are getting themselves into can be misguided. Other companies try to help candidates understand the organization and job. Companies, like the restaurant chain Cracker Barrel (<http://careers.crackerbarrel.com>), have put interactive features on their Web sites to expose potential applicants to their culture and give them insight into what it is like to work there.

Realistic job previews (RJPs) involve the presentation of both positive and potentially negative information to job candidates. Rather than trying to sell them on the job and company by presenting the job opportunity in the most positive light, realistic job previews strive to present an honest and accurate picture.

The most common mistake made when initially developing a realistic recruiting message is a tendency to emphasize only the potentially negative features of a job. The purpose, however, is not to present a negative picture but to present a *realistic* picture of the job, presenting both potentially positive and potentially negative aspects in as objective a way as possible to allow prospective applicants to self-select into or out of consideration for the position. Aspects and attributes of a job are, by nature, objective, and any positive or negative interpretation of them should be left to the applicant. For example, rather than stating that the job is high pressure, communicating that the organization is particularly seeking detail-oriented people with a sense of time urgency would be more appropriate.

There is no such thing as a “bad job,” only a bad job for a particular individual given his or her interests, competencies, and values. Presenting objective information about a position and letting people self-select into it knowing what the job will really be like helps get them into the right jobs and increases the likelihood that once employed they will stay in those jobs and perform well. The goal is not to deter candidates by focusing on factors that might be perceived negatively, but to provide accurate information about the job and organization.¹¹⁹ IBM’s careers Web site has highly interactive multimedia including “day in the life” videos, Digg, live chat, business-unit specific information, and flash video.¹²⁰ Some companies even provide online video tours of their facilities.

If a common reason for employees leaving the organization is that the job isn’t what they expected, this is a good sign that the recruiting message could be improved. Firms that experience such a situation can often use an RJP to try to reduce their turnover rates.

John Wanous,¹²¹ a professor of management and human resources, has identified three functions that are served by an RJP:

1. **Self-selection:** Giving applicants a more balanced picture of the job and organization allows them to opt out of the application process if the opportunity is not a good match for them. RJPs do not necessarily make large numbers of applicants more likely to drop out of the application process, and the applicants likely to be lost after communicating realistic information about the job and company are not likely to have been successful hires anyway.¹²²
2. **Vaccination:** RJPs may work by “vaccinating” employees’ expectations and allowing them to develop coping mechanisms to deal with unpleasant or unexpected aspects of the position. When encountering these aspects on the job, the employee is prepared for them and is less negatively affected by them.
3. **A commitment to the choice:** If employees are informed about the negative aspects of a job before they accept employment, they cannot claim that they did not know about them.¹²³ Thus, they may be more committed to the choice they have made—that is, they may be more inclined to stay in their positions because they realize they willingly accepted the job despite knowing its realities.¹²⁴

When the Swedish home furnishings company IKEA entered the U.S. market, many new hires quit after a few months due to the difference between IKEA’s values and the typical

REALISTIC JOB PREVIEWS (RJPS)

provide both positive and potentially negative information to job candidates

expectations of U.S. employees. One of the issues was that IKEA values equality and does not give employees job titles or clear job descriptions. To reduce the high turnover rate, IKEA changed its recruiting strategy from one focused on hiring the best qualified people to emphasizing the company's values and providing RJPS to let poor fits self-select out. This successfully lowered turnover rates and helped IKEA open several successful U.S. stores.¹²⁵ Apple's Web site makes it clear that it is looking for hardworking, committed individuals with a strong attention to detail. Cisco Systems' Make Friends @ Cisco program uses employee volunteers to answer phone or e-mail queries from job seekers who would like more information about working at Cisco.

Giving applicants the opportunity to self-select out of the hiring process if they do not perceive themselves to be good fits with the position or organization increases the likelihood that the applicants ultimately hired will be good fits and will be better employees as a result. Given the relatively low cost associated with the development of an RJP, they may be useful for organizations trying to reduce turnover rates for jobs which departing employees say were not what they expected when they accepted job offers.

Some companies have used RJP's to counter inaccurate employer images. Fast food giant McDonald's has responded to critics in the United Kingdom who claim it is a poor employer by launching a poster campaign using the slogan "Not bad for a McJob," which details the benefits and flexible hours the company offers. It is the first time the company has tried to combat the negative misconceptions that have been associated with the title "McJob" ever since the term was used by Douglas Copeland in his best-selling novel *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*. A McDonald's executive believes that a huge gap exists between the external perception and the internal reality of working at McDonald's and states, "Our employer reputation isn't justified; we have to accept that this association exists and correct it."¹²⁶

Communicating a realistic picture of the job does not have to be expensive or difficult. The focus is not on aspects of the work that are already visible, or obvious, to applicants, but on aspects of the work not likely to be known by an outsider—say, the fast pace of work, high performance expectations, pay, and benefits. The process of compiling information about the job or organization that candidates will find more and less attractive begins with understanding what the firm's current employees like and dislike about the job. Surveying them might indicate that they like, say, the above-average pay, relatively low educational requirements, generous benefits, and the fact that they are done with work by 2 p.m., which allows them time to spend with their families or to work at second jobs. Information collected from employees who recently resigned can help a firm understand what they did and didn't like. All this information can then be synthesized into a realistic recruiting message that is not so lengthy that it overwhelms applicants.

Of course, the best thing to do with a job that has potentially undesirable characteristics is to take the necessary steps to improve it before recruiting candidates. Perhaps poor supervisors can be trained, pay and benefit levels can be raised, or safety and working conditions can be improved. In other words, providing realistic job information about a bad job is no substitute for providing a better, more appealing job opportunity.

Developing Self-Assessment Tools

In addition to trying to recruit candidates with a particular profile of characteristics, organizations can take steps to make it easier for applicants to self-assess their fit with the job and organization. Because believing that they are a good fit with a company's culture and job opportunities improves a job seeker's attraction to the organization, many organizations try to enable applicants' self-evaluation of their fit with the company. Companies including McDonald's, Walmart, and Home Depot provide information about the organization's culture and values and have created interactive self-assessment tools to help candidates make this assessment.

Some organizations provide an online questionnaire that gives users feedback about their degree of fit with the job and organization.¹²⁷ ZipRecruiter and Bright.com offer a "Bright Score" feature giving potential job applicants an instant score of their fit with a company's job description based on their work experience, skills, and education.¹²⁸ Prospective employees can also use on-site computers to learn about an organization and its job opportunities, take self-assessments to identify their fit with the company's culture, read job descriptions, review current job openings, and immediately apply for jobs.

To ensure an honest self-assessment on the part of the potential applicant, self-assessments should be anonymous. Moreover, the company should not use this information to screen

applicants. The best use of such a tool is to help potential applicants determine whether the company is a place where they are likely to enjoy working. If a potential applicant perceives herself as a poor fit and decides not to apply, she and the organization can save time and resources by not pursuing what is ultimately likely to be a poor match.

TIMING THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

After the firm has identified the more- and less-attractive aspects of the job and the organization, a decision needs to be made about when to communicate this information to applicants. The content of the recruiting message is likely to change over time, focusing initially on broader issues, such as the job title, the general nature and responsibilities of the job, and the job's location. At the initial stage of making contact with a potential recruit, the communication is intended to allow each party to quickly and cost-effectively assess the general likelihood of a fit between the applicant's competencies, values, and experiences and the organization's particular job openings. If the organization has an opening for an accountant but the potential applicant has a background and an interest in marketing, the recruiting effort is not likely to be pursued further by either party.

As the fit between the recruit and the job begins to look better, information that is more detailed is provided about the job's requirements, responsibilities, authority level, and advancement potential. Job candidates are typically interested in learning all they can about the organization's strategy and position in its market, the firm's available training programs, travel requirements, and the stability of the job and company. Candidates may also be interested in learning what they can about the organization's values and culture, and the recruitment messages from the company can be designed to inform the candidate about these issues both directly and indirectly. Compensation issues can be discussed at any time but are often reserved for late in the recruitment and hiring process. Figure 7-2 summarizes the type of information candidates generally look for earlier versus later in the recruiting process.

We have discussed how applicants interpret recruitment experiences, including perceived recruiter competence and recruitment delays, as symbolic of broader organizational characteristics. An organization that does not keep its word regarding when it will be communicating with applicants or whose interviewers are unprepared and overscheduled is sending a different message to recruits than an organization that is organized, professional, and keeps its word in its interactions with job candidates. It is important that recruiters be trained in what to tell recruits and how to identify issues of importance to each candidate. Some candidates will be focused on the organization's compensation and incentive system, while others will attend more to the opportunities for training and development and job advancement. It is difficult to anticipate all the issues candidates may want to hear about. Providing a communication channel through which candidates can learn more information and ask questions, perhaps via a Web site or phone number, can help balance the need to provide enough information with the need to not provide too much information, which can be both expensive and generally unnecessary at the early stage of the recruiting process.

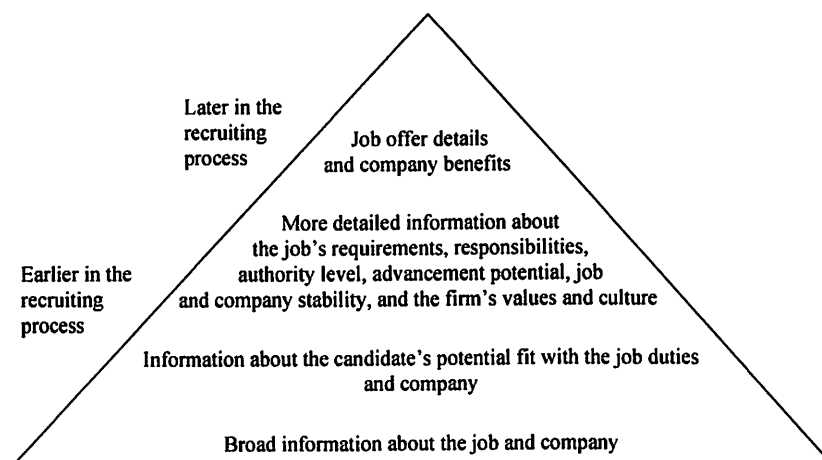


FIGURE 7-2 Information Sought at Different Times in the Recruiting Process

ACHIEVING RECRUITMENT CONSISTENCY

Recruitment activities lay the foundation for a consistently administered, efficient, and legally defensible staffing effort. Developing a recruiting guide and following the EEOC's best practices related to recruiting are part of this foundation.

Developing a Recruiting Guide

A **recruiting guide** is a formal document that details the process to be followed when a firm recruits for an open position. It should address both internal and external recruiting processes. A recruitment guide clarifies company policies and procedures relating to the budgets, activities, timelines, staff members responsible for recruiting, legal issues, and the specific steps to be taken to fill positions. By standardizing the recruiting procedures used by the organization, the guide helps clarify which employees are expected to perform what roles during the recruitment process and helps to ensure that all the relevant recruiting policies and procedures are followed during the process. This can help the organization recruit in the most effective, legal manner by detailing what is and is not acceptable recruiting behavior. The policies and procedures described in the guide also help coordinate the efforts of a firm's internal and external recruiters to ensure they are not at cross-purposes with one another.

RECRUITING GUIDE

a formal document that details the process to be followed when a firm recruits for an open position

Following the EEOC's Best Recruiting Practices

As we discussed in Chapter 3, many legal issues are involved in recruiting and staffing. Table 7-5 summarizes an EEOC task force's best practice ideas in the area of recruitment.¹²⁹

TABLE 7-5 EEOC Best Recruiting Practices

Firms acting consistently with EEOC best practices do the following:¹³⁰

- Establish a policy for recruiting and hiring, including the criteria, procedures, responsible individuals, and applicability of diversity and affirmative action initiatives.
- Engage in short-term and long-term strategic planning.
- Identify the applicable barriers to equal employment opportunity.
- Specify the firm's recruiting goals.
- Make a road map for implementing the plan.
- Ensure that there is a communication network that can be used to notify interested persons about the firm's job opportunities. The communication network should include advertising within the organization, within the general media, and media that focus on minorities, people with disabilities, older people, and women.
- Communicate the competencies, skills, and abilities required for available positions.
- Communicate about family-friendly and work-friendly programs.
- Where transportation is an issue, consider arrangements with the local transit authority.
- Participate in career and job fairs and open houses.
- Work with professional associations, civic associations, and educational institutions to attract minorities, women, people with disabilities, and/or older people.
- Provide recruiters, employees, and search firms with instructions to recruit diverse candidate pools and expand the company's search networks.
- Partner with organizations dedicated to serving diverse groups.
- Use internships, work-study, co-op, and scholarship programs to attract and pursue interested and qualified candidates.
- Develop and support educational programs; become more involved with educational institutions that can provide the company with leads used to recruit a more diverse talent pool.
- Ensure that personnel involved in the recruiting and hiring process are well trained in terms of their equal employment opportunity responsibilities.
- Become more involved in the community to improve the company's image and attract diverse candidates.
- Eliminate practices that exclude diverse candidates or create barriers for them.
- Evaluate the firm's managers on the progress they make toward the company's equal employment opportunity goals.

Social Media Recruiting at United Parcel service

To better utilize social media in its recruiting efforts, UPS created a careers Web site that became the center of its recruiting activities. The videos it posted on the Web site profiling different jobs were viewed by over 1 million people in one month during a peak holiday hiring season.¹³¹ UPS then began driving traffic to its careers site through print ads as well as mobile apps and text messaging. Even though drivers and package handlers were the target audience, it was clear that they were willing to utilize this technology when job seeking and learning about UPS.¹³²

To evaluate the effectiveness of social media as a recruiting source, UPS measured how many people clicked from social media to an “apply now” landing page, how many started an application, how many finished one, how many were interviewed, and how many were hired. UPS found that the conversion ratio of created applications to hires from Facebook and Twitter were twice that of all other online media. The interview to hire ratio of 2:1 also indicated that the quality of applicants sourced this way was very good.¹³³

UPS's recruiting budget changed from 90 percent in print media in 2005 to 97 percent in social media in 2010.¹³⁴ UPSJobs on Facebook, containing job listing and links as well as a variety of videos and interactive content, has over 55,000 likes. The company also uses Twitter to provide interesting information on the company's philanthropic work or other topics.¹³⁵

UPS now has a staff that interacts with candidates via Twitter and Facebook, and has also developed a calendar for posting updates to get information out without overwhelming followers.¹³⁶ When UPS began a formal social media recruiting strategy in 2009, only about 100 people were hired through the effort. In 2012, the number of hires through its social media recruitment efforts reached about 6,000, and substantially lowered the overall cost per hire.¹³⁷ Hiring speed and quality has also improved, and the conversion rate of applications to hires from Facebook and Twitter are higher than from other sources.¹³⁸

To reinforce their employer brand and to find the best matches for their culture and business, the company also built an online application that includes questions asking job candidates to reveal their favorite Container Store product and additional questions designed to delve into their communications skills and other characteristics. Using the Web site also helps the candidate learn more about the company and better prepare for a possible interview. “They’re not just wandering into the store and filling out an application,” the company’s director of recruiting and training says. “They are taking 45 minutes or so to prove their interest. It has heightened the quality of the candidates.” The store managers, in turn, are able to quickly respond to each applicant with a letter tailored to the situation.¹³⁹ This strategy helps to persuade candidates that the company is a good fit for their interests and needs.

Summary

The purpose of recruitment is to generate and maintain the interest of desirable potential employees. An organization's recruitment messages, how it handles its recruiting process, and the behaviors of its recruiters can all influence its current and future hiring effectiveness and have spillover effects as well. Treating potential applicants and employees as potential customers can enhance organizational hiring success as well as organizational performance.

The question of who should recruit for a particular position is not one to be taken lightly as the choice affects the speed and quality of the staffing initiative. The first decision an organization needs to make with regard to who should recruit is whether the recruiter should be internal or the organization should outsource its recruiting activities and use external recruiters. The fact that internal recruiters generally do more hiring for an organization than do external recruiters can also mean that more information is available to the organization on

each recruiter's strengths and limitations. This knowledge can be used in making recruiting assignments and identify training and development opportunities that can improve internal recruiters' effectiveness over time. Because all the recruiting metrics can be collected and processed centrally, using internal recruiters can also facilitate recruitment evaluation.

As discussed earlier, the recruitment information communicated by the organization and its recruiters must be perceived as credible if it is to influence applicant attraction. Perhaps ensuring the credibility of the recruiting information received is why applicants have been found to generally prefer meeting with multiple organizational representatives during the recruitment process.¹⁴⁰ Some research has found that applicants perceive job incumbents to be more likeable, knowledgeable, and trustworthy sources of job information than formal recruiters. Applicants also report themselves more likely to consider accepting a job offer when the information source was

an incumbent rather than a recruiter.¹⁴¹ The perceived status of the person doing the recruiting may also influence applicant reactions. One study found that job title influenced perceptions of interviewer competence such that when the interviewer was introduced only by name, applicant impressions were less favorable than when the title “recruiting director” was also used.¹⁴²

Unfortunately, why some recruiters outperform others, and even who an organization’s best recruiters are, are questions companies do not often ask. Organizations can select and train recruiters just as effectively as they can select and train people

filling other positions. Thus, the failure of firms to benchmark their recruiters’ skills and disseminate recruiting best practices is easy to rectify. Because applicants often interpret recruiter characteristics and behaviors as signals of broader job and organizational characteristics, it is important that thought be given to the selection of recruiters. Organizations should also train, reward, and provide feedback to recruiters to maximize their effectiveness in attracting desired applicants. Implementing good applicant attraction strategies and developing a recruiting guide will also enhance a company’s ability to meet its recruiting goals.

Takeaway Points

1. Recruiting helps a firm build a stable and talented group of employees who contribute to its mission and business strategy. Recruiters do so by converting the leads generated during sourcing into job applicants, generating interest in the company and its jobs, and persuading candidates to accept extended job offers.
2. Recruitment spillover effects are the effects of recruiting that go beyond the particular staffing effort. When an unhappy job candidate tells potential customers or job applicants about a bad recruiting experience, it can have an effect on how attracted to the firm future applicants will be, the organization’s performance, and the company’s ability to recruit the unhappy job candidate for a future position and do business with the candidate.
3. Recruiters should be personable, informative, and trustworthy.
4. Applicant attraction strategies include improving an organization’s image and its brand as an employer, and the nature, realism, and timing of the information presented to recruits.
5. Developing a recruitment guide and following the EEOC’s best recruiting practices can help a company administer its recruitment activities more consistently and legally by formalizing the policies and practices to be followed during recruitment.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important that organizations continue to actively recruit job candidates even after they have applied?
2. If you wanted to request funding from your CEO to evaluate and improve the quality of your company’s recruiters, how would you persuade him or her that doing so would be a good investment?
3. What recruiter characteristics matter to you when you are applying for a job? Why? Which do not matter much or at all? Why not?
4. Does an organization’s image or its brand as an employer affect its attractiveness to you as an employee or a potential employee? What elements of its brand matter the most to you? Why?
5. What could a recruiter do to interest you in applying for a company you have never heard of before? What tactics or information might persuade you to apply?

Exercises

1. *Strategy Exercise:* Luxury Limousine is a thriving business that operates a limousine service in a large metropolitan area of over 800,000 people. Customers call 24 hours in advance to schedule—hire a car and driver for anything from rides to and from the airport to fun nights on the town. Because Luxury Limousine’s drivers are the only employees who customers see face-to-face, they must be professional, be knowledgeable about the city’s roads and fastest routes to key locations, and represent the company well. Lately, the company’s “help wanted” advertisements in the local paper haven’t been attracting the number of quality drivers it needs. In response to this situation, Luxury Limousine has decided to conduct a mass mailing campaign and send a recruitment brochure to each home in the metropolitan area. The company hopes this will improve its ability to recruit quality drivers.

The following job requirements and rewards exist for the driver’s job: Drivers must (a) be over 21 years of age, (b) pass a written test about local roads and highways, (c) possess a valid commercial driver’s license, (d) have a good driving record (no moving violations in the last three years), (e) be able to read maps, and (f) be courteous. No previous limousine driving experience is required. The job is part time, varying between 10 and 35 hours per week. The

driving can occur 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The wage is \$10.00 per hour plus tips. Tips are highly variable; about 15 percent of customers provide no tips, 50 percent provide tips of about 10 percent, and 35 percent provide tips of 15 percent or more. Drivers are given three days of training by an experienced driver, after which they must pass a ride-along test conducted by the owner of Luxury Limousine. Drivers receive a paid one-week vacation after 1,000 hours of work in a 52-week period. Another benefit is that drivers often hear of other job opportunities from their customers. Anyone could be a customer, from celebrities to high school prom dates. Traffic accidents and breakdowns can occur, and traffic can be challenging. Although most customers are friendly and enjoyable, some become intoxicated and can be difficult to deal with.

Prepare two versions of the recruiting brochure. The first should carry a realistic message, and the second a traditional message. The brochure will be a single, 8½” by 11” piece of paper folded in half, with one of the outside halves being used for the mailing and return addresses. Your goal is to attract safe drivers who will execute Luxury Limousine’s strategy of providing reliable, high-quality transportation and excellent customer service. Remember, the goal is to communicate a realistic message, not a negative one.

Then, prepare a separate report in which you indicate (a) which of the two brochures would likely attract more job applicants, (b) whether the quality of applicants attracted is likely to differ and why, and (c) other recommendations you have for generating more and better job applicants.

2. *Develop Your Skills Exercise:* This chapter's Develop Your Skills feature presented four steps for developing a positive employer brand. Working in a group of three to five students, use this process to design an employer branding strategy for a job held by one of your group members. Describe the brand you would like to create, and outline the activities you would undertake to establish that image among targeted applicants for your chosen job. Be prepared to share your ideas with the class.

3. *Opening Vignette Exercise:* This chapter's opening vignette described United Parcel Service's social media recruiting strategies. Working alone or in groups of three to five students, answer the following questions. Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

1. What metrics do you suggest UPS track to optimize its use of social media in sourcing talent?
2. What are some advantages and disadvantages of UPS using social media almost exclusively to source drivers and package handlers?
3. What other sourcing strategies for drivers and package handlers do you think would be effective for UPS?

CASE STUDY

Rock Blocks is a concrete manufacturing company. The company has been in business for over 60 years, and furnishes concrete blocks for building and landscape use. Rock Blocks is owned and operated by the third generation of the founding family and has over 600 employees. Customer demand for the company's products is growing, but Rock Blocks is having difficulty attracting and hiring enough manufacturing talent to keep up with demand. The company typically posts openings for its specialty positions on Internet sites including Monster.com and its own careers site, but the quality and quantity of applicants has been falling in recent years.

Accordingly to company president Roy Hanby, "concrete manufacturing isn't a popular career choice. Unless someone has family or a friend working in the industry, it can be hard to convince them of the potential of the job." Hanby explains

that starting salaries and career growth potential are high, and many employees feel proud having made something that many people will see and use and that will be around for a long time.

Questions

1. How can Rock Blocks increase the number of people that apply with the company? How can realistic job previews be used to increase interest?
2. Why do you think that potential applicants might not be enthusiastic about the idea of applying for jobs with Rock Blocks? What can recruiters do to change these perceptions?
3. Create a brief employer brand-oriented newspaper advertisement for a basic manufacturing position for Rock Blocks.

Semester-Long Active Learning Project

Building on your work for this project in the last chapter, research, describe, and critically analyze the alignment between existing recruiting practices and the staffing needs of this key position. Recommend alternative recruiting strategies, methods, target applicants, appropriate recruiters, the training recruiters should receive, and how they should

be rewarded and evaluated. Using what you learned in Chapter 3, identify how your recruiting plan will enable the company to comply with EEO and other legal requirements. Also, develop a sample newspaper ad for the position that incorporates both the company's employer brand and a realistic job preview.

Case Study Assignment: Strategic Staffing at Chern's

See the appendix at the back of the book for this chapter's Case Study Assignment.

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