

Staffing Decisions™

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Making the Staffing Process More Personal

In a tight labor market and an environment where some are suggesting that even “digital natives” are tiring of the pervasive intrusion of technology in their lives, recruiters and hiring managers may want to consider ways to personalize the hiring process.

Yearning for the Personal Touch

Research by the American Staffing Association backs up that idea. A Harris Poll study in late 2017 indicated that about 7 of 10 employees feel that the job search process is “too impersonal.” Eight in 10 indicate that applying for a job feels like sending a résumé or job application into a black box.



On the flip side, though, most (80%) also acknowledge that technology has made finding a job easier. Still, when asked about acceptable ways to initially

contact them about job opportunities, a majority prefer personal methods such as in-person/face-to-face (72%), a phone call (72%) or email (71%) to more automated means of contact such as an account on a website (36%), a text message (24%), a video conference or virtual meeting (20%) or a social media message (15%).

Richard Wahlquist, ASA president, said, “When recruiting talent, ‘high touch’ still wins the day. Businesses that rely too heavily on a high tech, faceless process are sending the wrong message to job seekers looking for companies that value their employees.”

Don't Misunderstand Millennials

Two recent studies from the American Productivity & Quality Center in Houston mirror these statistics. Lauren Trees, Research Director for Knowledge Management, says, “Arguments that millennials shy away from in-person communication in favor of virtual channels are wildly overblown. And even if younger people use a communication method extensively in their personal lives, it doesn’t mean they prefer it in a work context.” Trees recommends that employers look for ways to focus on

direct communication where possible.

Finding the Right Balance

HR analyst Laura Handrick, with Fit Small Business in New York, agrees. She says that there are two critical time frames when personal connection makes sense: recruiting and onboarding. “HR needs to get better at interpersonal communication the way candidates prefer,” she says. One relatively simple tactic: providing updates more often. Updates should be personal, not form emails, she says. For example, say things like, “We’re talking to the hiring manager to see who else may want to interview you,” instead of “you’re now at stage 3.”

Obviously, HR needs to be able to balance productivity with personalization. Technology can certainly play an important role in speeding things up at the beginning of the application process, when dozens, hundreds or thousands of résumés must be reviewed. When reaching out to set up interviews, however, as well as during the interview process itself, a more personal approach is likely to be more effective. ▲

For More Information:

HRDive: Three Ways to Reduce Time-to-Hire

<https://www.hrdive.com/news/three-ways-to-reduce-time-to-hire/409457/>

SHRM: Push to Reduce Time-to-Hire May Impede Background Check Process

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/push-to-reduce-timetohire-may-impede-background-check-process.aspx>

TalentCulture: Recruiting Analytics – Reducing Your Hiring Timeline

<https://talentculture.com/recruiting-analytics-reducing-your-hiring-timeline/>

Hot on the Inside

A Need for a Work Friend 2

Having friends at work is as important to morale as having them outside work.

HR Exec Opportunities. 3

As the current generation of HR executives retires, opportunities for advancement are opening up ... but you need to be prepared.

Bring Me a Solution.. NOT! 4

Why the classic “Bring me solutions, not problems” approach may not be the best management practice.

The Importance of Having a Best Friend at Work

The Gallup Q-12, a well-known employee engagement assessment tool, has a question that often gives people pause. Question #10 asks, “Do you have a best friend at work?”

While seemingly “odd,” the question is included for a good reason. Gallup research has shown that having a best friend in the workplace correlates with higher rates of job satisfaction and a reduced likelihood that an employee will seek a job elsewhere.

Steve Pritchard, an HR consultant with Cuuver, a UK insurance quote comparison company, says, “It’s important to build close relationships among work colleagues. It helps everyone to feel more comfortable and makes getting up in the morning much easier. This, in turn, leads to better morale, better teamwork and better results.”

Helping Employees Connect

Pritchard suggests that there are a number of ways organizations can encourage teams to get to know each other better. It starts with the hiring process. When interviewing, seek out people who will get along with your team. Ask candidates about their interests so you can get a better idea whether they will fit in or not. This will reduce the risk of having a team with clashing personalities.

In addition, Pritchard says, there are a variety of things that can be done within the workplace to help build camaraderie and strong relationships. “Create a social atmosphere in your office,” he suggests, “with shared social spaces and a relaxed atmosphere, rather than a silent, sterile office.”

Friend-Building

Shawn D. Madden, CEO of FunCorp, a corporate events company that specializes in friend-building, points to “four building blocks” of friendship: proxim-

ity, familiarity, shared commonality and shared disclosure/vulnerability, and five stages of workplace friendship:

- **CO-WORKERS/EMPLOYEES** Just work with them, might never see them, talk to them or even know their names;
- **ACQUAINTANCES** Cordial interactions, exchange of pleasantries, know their name, water cooler small talk;
- **FRIENDS** Common work experiences, shared interests, gossip, shared activities, lunches, happy hour;
- **GOOD FRIENDS** Shared secrets, goals and dreams, know family and kids, shared experiences outside work (visits, trips);
- **MEGA-FRIENDS** Don’t need to knock, know their password, will drop everything in a moment, know them at their best and worst – and can tell the difference.

Certainly not all friendships will, or should, move into the mega-friend category. However, Madden stresses, when employees know and like each other they build “miscommunication immunity.” They’re more likely to give each other the benefit of the doubt even in contentious situations.

Understanding the importance of workplace friendships and taking steps to help nurture them through opportunities for social interaction and “down time” can help build the types of relationships that benefit not only individuals, but organizations as well. ▲



Always Be Recruiting (Even When You’re Not Hiring)

In these days of tight labor markets, with too many job openings going begging, perhaps this subject is worth revisiting. It is the #1 employee-centric challenge today, according to research from Aberdeen Group, a business intelligence consultancy in Boston.

If you’re struggling through this issue, remember that we can help by identifying candidates that fit your needs and culture. In turn, your recruiters are able to focus on what matters most: having strong, ongoing relationships with candidates.

Aberdeen research shows that top companies *improve their external sourcing capabilities when they ally with a staffing service*. This approach, *more than any other strategy, allows you to double your recruiting efforts without having to double your HR staff*.

The very nature of a staffing service involves constantly recruiting and evaluating people. An essential part of our everyday life is a *hands-on process* of sourcing candidates, and separating the chaff from the strong contenders. Our recruiting professionals engage people in the enduring tradition of person-to-person.

Moreover, we do it *every day*, which makes us quite adept at the sourcing and evaluation processes. Think about that, and ask how we can help you to build a stronger pipeline of appropriate candidates. We’re real people here, and we’re here to help.

For More Information:

Coca-Cola: 4 Surprising Benefits of Being Friends With Your Coworkers

<http://www.coca-colacompany.com/stories/4-surprising-benefits-of-being-friends-with-your-coworkers>

Fast Company: Why Having Friends At Work Is So Important

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3051290/why-having-friends-at-work-is-so-important>

Harvard Business Review: Having Work Friends Can Be Tricky, But It’s Worth It

<https://hbr.org/2017/08/having-work-friends-can-be-tricky-but-its-worth-it>

Growing Demand for HR Execs in the Know

Surveys show a growing demand for HR execs in the not-so-distant future. That's a good news-bad news situation for many of today's HR professionals. Opportunities for better positions will open up, to be sure, but the skills required by these new positions will differ significantly from the skills required when many of today's HR practitioners entered the field.

What are those must have skills for HR executives-to-be? How can companies best ensure that they will have the bench strength necessary to fill critical senior-level HR roles?

A Focus on Data Analytics

One thing surveys make clear is that data analytics will be the in-demand, critical competency for HR executives. In a Gallup survey of corporate leaders, nearly half said that data science and analytics skills will be required of everyone in operations, finance and accounting, marketing and sales roles in the next three years. Eighty-six percent said these skills will be required of some or all HR managers.

Don't Forget Soft Skills

The challenge that organizations face, of course, is predicting exactly what other future skills may be needed. According to the World Economic Forum's

The Future of Jobs Report, "By one popular estimate, 65% of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that don't yet exist."

This uncertainty, suggests Scott Whiteford, director of leadership development and analytics with Talent Plus, in Lincoln, NE, will require a focus on agility rather than more traditional knowledge, skills and experience.

It is essential, says Whiteford, that executives understand whether their HR leaders have the aptitude to succeed in the near future if the scope or breadth of the role is altered significantly. Executives must select HR leaders who demonstrate a strong ability to adapt to these unpredictable changes in the workplace, both through process and people. Future HR leaders must be intellectually flexible and able to learn and adjust quickly. These future leaders will also need to be strong in thinking strategically and processing information quickly.

Impacts Already Being Seen

Companies are already seeing the potential impact of new technology, particularly artificial intelligence and machine learning, on many aspects of the organization, including HR.

While employees, and even some HR pros, are concerned that AI may ultimately affect their own job security, most experts suggest that this technology will provide more benefits than risks.

For example, consider a large organization that receives literally thousands of résumés and applications for

a single position. Reviewing these résumés to find the cream of the crop can be tedious and time-consuming. Intelligent automation can plow through mounds of résumés quickly to identify the best candidates, creating both cost efficiencies and boosting accuracy. That leaves HR pros with time to focus on tasks that require the personal touch.

Honing Key Skills

There's never been a better time for HR pros to hone their analytic and strategic goals, and to reach out to develop internal relationships with C-level executives that can help them better understand the critical business implications of the decisions they make.

HR pros should also commit to lifelong learning and eagerly take advantage of as many opportunities available to them as possible. As the Pew Research Center's State of American Jobs report indicates, 87% of workers said that "training and development of new job skills throughout their work life will be essential to keep up with changes in the market."

In the future we're rapidly entering, if HR professionals prepare themselves appropriately, they are more likely than ever to finally take over that coveted seat at the table. ▲



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For More Information:

Bloomberg: Learning Is 'Hot Benefit' That Helps Employers and Employees

<https://www.bna.com/learning-hot-benefit-b73014474664/>

HR Technologist: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work

<https://www.hrtechnologist.com/articles/learning-development/artificial-intelligence-and-the-future-of-work/>

Okay, Maybe You *Should* Bring Me Problems

Traditional management wisdom has managers telling employees, “Don’t bring me problems, bring me solutions.” Some veteran HR practitioners are now suggesting that this approach, rather than empowering employees, can do the opposite.

In an article in *Harvard Business Review* last year, Sabina Nawaz, a Seattle HR consultant, tackled the topic, suggesting that it’s time to retire the “bring me a solution” approach. The traditional approach can, says Nawaz, “cause employees to shut down in fear, breed a culture of intimidation, and prevent some problems from surfacing until they’re full-blown crises.”

Nawaz is not alone in her thinking. Alexis Chateau, managing director of Alexis Chateau PR, in Atlanta, says that the biggest issue with the bring-me-a-solution approach is that the problems employees don’t have a solution for are likely the thorniest ones you have.

Managers’ Roles

Managers and HR can play an important role here, says Gina Abudi, president

of Abudi Consulting Group, in Amherst, NH. She says, “When I was a senior leader, I provided process, procedures and best practices for developing solutions to problems that employees could utilize. Those managers who tend to expect the employees to do all the work, without providing a foundation for them to do it, or guidance when they are more junior and need that guidance, do no favors to employees.”

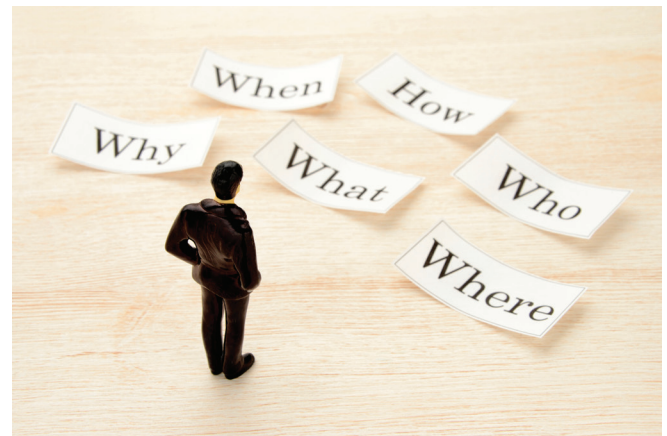
A Multi-Pronged Approach

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the issue. The right approach depends on the situation and the employee. For instance, says Abudi, new hires, just out of college, are not likely to arrive at good solutions to a problem.

More-experienced employees, on the other hand, can reasonably be expected to come up with workable solutions. Says Abudi, “I would

expect veteran employees to come to me with a variety of potential solutions that they have thought through and weighed against a number of factors – resources available to implement, fully solving the problem, and budget available to implement.”

The bottom line: “bring me a solution” is an approach that may have its place, but organizations may be more often best served by staff feeling empowered to bring problems forward, with or without solutions already formulated. ▲



For More Information:

ATD: How to Manage an Employee Who Needs to Be Better at Problem Solving

<https://www.td.org/insights/how-to-manage-an-employee-who-needs-to-be-better-at-problem-solving>

Fast Company: How Managers Can Teach Employees to Solve Their Own Problems

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3051480/how-managers-can-teach-employees-to-solve-their-own-problems>

Harvard Business Review: The Problem With Saying “Don’t Bring Me Problems, Bring Me Solutions”

<https://hbr.org/2017/09/the-problem-with-saying-dont-bring-me-problems-bring-me-solutions>