

# HOW TO BUILD A CANDIDATE PIPELINE...





# THEN AND NOW...

Having worked across a variety of HR positions over the last 2 decades, I can honestly say 'candidate pipelines' were never really a thing for me, nor was the war on talent, as candidates appeared to flow freely via one simple platform, job boards. I do remember on occasion experiencing candidate shortages and the worst-case scenario would be re-advertising the role for the second time in order to fill the vacancy. And of course highly specialised IT roles were very hard to fill, however the networks of our CEO and CTO always got the role/s filled in due course..

Even though I have advertised many roles over the years, whilst also juggling other HR priorities, I was always able to fill the vacancies. One of the advantages was that I was lucky enough to work on great roles in great companies and interesting projects and this made and makes one hell of a difference when it comes to recruitment. The quality of the role and the quality of the company will have a significant impact on the capacity to fill any vacancy.

As the Head of HR in a Legal Tech firm filling paralegal and IT professional roles was not overly challenging as the successful candidate/s were in a position to deliver highly valuable and rewarding work in support of state and federal Royal Commissions. Also having been responsible in the past for filling international school roles in sought after locations in South East Asia, again filling vacancies was not overly challenging.

Looking to post 2020 and now having experienced a global pandemic, the introduction of highly flexible work arrangements and GenZ holding higher expectations of their employers (I wish my generation did this!), the way of work has changed. Recruiting in the current market is now extremely demanding as companies fight over the rarest commodity in the world - talent. Building and maintaining a strong candidate pipeline is now a must.

Having transitioned to the dark side (as I have been told by many HR colleagues) in owning and operating a recruitment agency it has been one hell of a baptism of fire building a knowledge base on candidate pipelines as an essential part of any business.

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# A GOOD PLACE TO BE...

Throughout this eBook we list several tips outlining what we consider important and necessary to build a solid candidate pipeline. We hope you find this eBook helpful and we are always happy to give advice on its contents or any other aspect of the talent search.

Firstly and foremost, it is extremely helpful to ascertain ***what your company is doing about its value as an employer in the market, the industry and globally.*** This is particularly important comparable to your competitors, because they will happily take away any interested candidates and make them their own, if you let them. Called the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) the first thing a company should be considering is what value they provide to employees and why they should solely work for you! Many larger companies do get this right and promote it well mainly on social media channels. Companies that come to mind are Canva, Atlassian and Salesforce.

And when we say EVP, we don't mean pool tables and bean bags, as evidence is showing this is not what people want. So consider, what true value do you add? What is your company and team culture really like? Will an employee get an opportunity to work in a company that values who they are? will they enjoy their work and the environment? will they be paid well for their skills and experience? Will they have opportunities for professional development and career advancement? Or is the company (we are really talking about it's leaders here) closed off, unsupportive, secretive, bullying and it is truly not a great place to be. Unfortunately most of us have experienced and know what such a workplace looks and feels like.

***...Do not be that company...do not be that workplace!!!***

For every employee, who they work for, who is in the trenches with them every day and what style of leader they have to deal with daily is of the utmost importance and have the one of the greatest impacts on their lives. So, if you say, 'yes we are great at this stuff!' then who know this other than you and the employees. Do would be candidates have access to this information, particularly passive ones? Think deeply about how you share this information, , some examples may be being nominated for EVP awards, promotion via social media and famously via referrals from other staff.



# A GOOD PLACE TO START....

*So often have I seen companies rush to advertise a vacancy when the skills, qualifications and experience of the most suitable candidate are already working in their business.*

It is very common for leaders (and HR) to rush and advertise a vacancy when the right person for the role is already in the business. There can be a multitude of reason for this.

Such as:

- they forget to look --
- they think they have to advertise or don't understand internal promotion processes --
- the internal candidate is performing well and they don't want to unsettle things ---
- placing an internal candidate means they will have to advertise a different vacancy so they don't bother, they just stick with the original vacant role ---

and many other reasons..

***Making the decision to do nothing about identifying internal talent is certainly a decision, yes it is a decision, the decision to do nothing.*** However taking this approach runs the risk of devaluing and demotivating your current workforce, which could result in your having to fill more than one vacancy as the disgruntled employee disappears out the door.

When doing the initial spec for a vacancy one of the first things I ask the client, or potential client, is can they fill the vacancy internally? Yes of course this is against the recruitment culture of billing, billing, billing, however this approach best serves the client. Plus promoting someone from within will reduce your recruitment costs and remove the necessity for an extensive onboarding process as the candidate is already engaged into the business. Also the internal candidate can work with you to fill their back vacancy as they are the most recent 'expert' in the position, removing some of the workload from your desk,

I would always recommend to work with your HR Team if and when you identify talent within the business that is well suited to your vacancy.





# REFERRALS....

One of the great untapped resources available to a company is its employees and their networks, and using these connections for candidate referrals.

Every company has an opportunity to seek referrals from its workforce for current and future vacancies. Many employees will oblige, particularly if they love working for you and the business. If the company has great benefits, your employees will be happy to share them with referrals, which has the capacity to increase your candidate pipeline and the aim of building a larger pool of great candidates.

***If you are serious about your referral program you can also offer incentives for your employees once the candidate referral has been official hired into the vacant role.*** A referral may include paid and/or unpaid incentives, such as \$\$\$, additional leave, movie tickets or other gifts, to name a few.

Many companies promote their referral program internally and also freely advertise it publicly. Here are some examples:

- a designated webpage that allows for the submission of referrals and resumes;
- promotion of the referral program via LinkedIn or other forms of social media;
- including mention of referral programs during new employee induction/onboarding.

There are many ways to promote Candidate Referral Programs both internally and externally that will add to interest in your company and the building of your candidate pipelines.

***Promoting referrals programs with your EVP is a great way to promote your business to the masses for the filling current and future vacancies.***

# BENEFITS OR BENEFITS....

If you think your company is attractive and you don't offer hybrid working, a competitive salary in the market, professional development opportunities and opportunities for advancement, then think again. The world of work has changed and more and more employees are expecting employers to come to the party and compensate them for the skills, experience and qualifications they bring with them and that compensation does not necessarily involve dollars. So **if you can't deliver on these key areas for your current and future employees then consider yourself out of the race** when it comes to being competitive in the 'war on talent'.

No doubt you will get some applicants for your roles and candidates who are interested, however they will either not be qualified or experience for the role and they will most likely not be top shelf.

On top of this **always make sure the benefits attached to a role and the job advertisement are truly benefits and not actually entitlements.**

If you are offering standard leave entitlements, these are not benefits; if you are offering standard salary ranges this is not a benefit, if you are offered the standard superannuation rate this is not a benefit.

If you are not sure what salary ranges would be an competitive for a specific role there are a multitude of annual salary reports out there that can be accessed for this information (e.g. Hays, Robert Half et al). Alternatively contact your local friendly recruiter who you trust (yes they do exist) and ask them directly. If they are worth their salt, they will have their hands on this information and share it freely with no obligation or alternatively send you in the right direction for assistance. And of course there is always the HR Team to guide you.

FRIENDLY TIP: One of the things I have learnt from going into small business is a lot of small business owners will generally give out free advice in their chosen field. This is an untapped resource I wish I knew about years ago. Ask and you shall receive.



# BUILDING A NETWORK...

***The ultimate aim in building a strong network is to establish a strong connection with potential and existing clients and candidates.***

LinkedIn, facebook, Twitter, Instagram are all forms of social media used by multitudes of companies to build and market brand awareness. The same can be achieved by talent acquisition teams and talent acquisition individuals when building a candidate pipeline.

***If you are a talent acquisition specialist in the professional services world and you are not on LinkedIn building your network daily then you are doing yourself and injustice, like a carpenter without a hammer.***

LinkedIn is the primary tool for professional networks and will help build your networks as fast as LinkedIn restrictions allow. Additionally, if you are in the world of Talent Acquisition don't just make connections, interact with your network, engage in conversations, make comments, share and create content, send well wishes. It is good practice to create content and share information to help others achieve their goals.

At times social media can be a numbers game and so often connections exist or are created that add limited value to your network. The aim in developing your network is to reach out to connections that are relevant to your end game. As an example, if you are recruiting in the health sector it would be a bit pointless connecting with pilots..

Most big companies create content, so posting in its simplest form can be sharing your company's content or sharing content from any relevant and valid source you come across and consider valuable to your network. This simple approach will get you known and liked. ***It is important to build your network daily and get yourself known.***

Remember the greater the number of connections you have on LinkedIn the greater the reach you have when you are advertising, promoting a vacancy in the search for passive candidates. The aim would be to ask them to share any content, job adverts and so on to increase your coverage



# USER FRIENDLY PRACTICES....

When I first started working in HR in the NSW Public Service in late 1996 the requirement for job applications was the completion of two (2) x preselection questions detailing experience relevant to the role. An example may be, "Tell me about a time when had to deal with an employee with poor performance. What did you do?" And now, all these years later the NSW Public Service continues to ask candidates to answer two (2) question as part of the application process.

The NSW Public Service was always pushing to inject private sector experience into their sector to build diversity of experience and reduce the risk of an antiquated and stale public service.

***However, my biggest concern was always how could one expect to build a pool of private sector experienced candidates when they were asked to spent an excessive amount of time completing an application process?***

Put simply, candidates will just move on and go elsewhere.

***A lean recruitment process for any role in any organisation could include the following:*** i) find candidates, call for resumes, remember to look internally first before advertising; ii) make an initial phone call clarifying qualifications and check the candidate's communication skills are polite and well structured; iii) invite for interview; iv) follow a structured interview process asking introductory, behavioural and technical questions. Run a 3 member panel with a convenor (the roles reports to them), HR (as needed) and a technical expert (as needed); v) do personality, cognitive etc tests when the position is a leader or a specialist role; vi) choose a preferred candidate based on the assessment results; vii) undertake probity and reference checks; vii) run a final interview with a senior leader (aka the bill payer) so they can assess the team's selection and make the hiring decision; and finally; viii) make an offer and arrange onboarding.

***For the majority of candidates finding a job is a job within itself, it is highly demanding, stressful and can take weeks to see results.*** Employers can assist candidates along the way using a few small actions, namely advising candidates when; a) you receive their application; b) they are not progressing to interview; and, iii) if they ask, why they were unsuccessful at interview. ***Remember, one day in the future an unsuccessful candidate may be your preferred candidate, so treat them well.***



# INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES....

I recently heard a horror story of a candidate being invited to six (6) interviews as part of a recruitment process for a single role at mid management level. This is crazy. For any process to have this many interviews one would expect; i) the role to be with a highly reputable and in demand company; and ii) the position in question be paid very, very, very well.

Under the heading, 'User Friendly Practices' in this guide you can find a brief outline around what is recommended for a streamlined and reasonable recruitment processes.

No doubt each stage has a level of detail to consider, however the outlined process give you a great starting point.

So many hiring managers, business owners and leaders often jump into an interview process with no structure and no planning, which can lead to confusion, a lack of interest and misdirection for the other panel members. It is helpful to run a structured process, using interview guides and set questions to ensure consistency across interviews, plus it is always a great idea to brief and debrief as a panel for every single interview.

If someone was invited to an interview and they ask for feedback provide it. ***As a general rule people can handle bad news, they are adults, they just want to be told the truth and respectfully.*** NEVER, NEVER, NEVER ghost a candidate, at any stage of the process, it is extremely unfair and will give your company a bad name. There is a great initiative ran by Steve Gard ([linkedin.com/in/steve-gard/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/steve-gard/)), called the ***The Circle Back Initiative*** that promotes thorough communication with candidates across all stages of the recruitment process. The scheme is free, highly recommended and provides a great standard to set when running a recruitment process ([www.circlebackinitiative.com](http://www.circlebackinitiative.com)).

I have found the following approach valuable when dealing with communications:

- a) email candidates to say thank you for their application (this can be automated);
- b) advise by email when they are unsuccessful in progressing to interview;
- c) if they progress to interview and are unsuccessful, advise them by email; and
- d) if they progress to interview, are unsuccessful and ask for feedback, provide it.

I have personally used this tactic for years and have been thanked by candidates time and time again for running a fair and supportive process.

# STRATEGY SESSION...

Personally I hope this guide has provided you with some insights into the mystery around recruitment practices and candidate pipelines. The race to find quality candidates continues as talent becomes the most sort after commodity of our time. The GEM Survey Reports set out the top three (3) talent acquisition challenges which resonate in today's market, these are and continue to be:

- difficulty finding high quality candidates;
- keeping candidates engaged in the process and in particularly dealing with multiple counter offers for each preferred candidate; and
- building and maintaining passive candidate pipelines to fill current and future roles.



If you would like to discuss your HR talent needs, with no obligation of course, book in for a strategy call now at the link below or call us directly on 0424 409 901.

I look forward to working in partnership with you in the future.

Strategy Meeting Direct Link:

[Michael Bates - Strategy Meeting](#)

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