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Roses In The Thorn Bush:

How Marketing Can Leverage The Value Of Recruiting and How Recruiting Can Leverage Marketing In Return

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About Interbiznet

Founded in 1994 by John Sumser, interbiznet.com is the leading analyst of the Electronic Recruiting Industry. From its flagship daily newsletter, the Electronic Recruiting News to its annual industry analysis, The Electronic Recruiting Index, IBN chronicles and facilitates the development of the Electronic Recruiting Industry. John Sumser also contributes his expertise in the form of consulting with companies involved in this exciting industry.



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In many organizations, the distance between Human Resources and the Marketing department can be measured in light years. Marketing thrives on disciplined insight, rapid market-driven decision-making and spontaneous creativity. HR is widely stereotyped as “soft”, focusing on conflict resolution, standardization and conservative decision making. One operation uses conflict as an essential fuel while the other trains managers to reduce it.

It is hard to imagine two organizational functions with less in common. Consider the following scenario.

The VP of Marketing has just returned from a meeting with the CEO. Oldco, the dominant competitor has just released a stunning product. It includes all of the standard functionality at half the price with a meaningful money-back guarantee. The entire company is surprised by Oldco’s move. Third and fourth quarter revenues are now in jeopardy.

As he starts calling his quick-react problem solving team together, he says to the coordinator, “Let’s be sure that the HR folks are in on this one.”

When pigs fly.

Stereotypes are often rooted in reality. HR and Marketing are very different cultures with opposing operating styles. It is really not very surprising that the two groups communicate infrequently.

The Hidden Treasure

No marketing manager ever has enough resources. There is always additional market research, competitive intelligence, branding, advertising or other tasks that could be completed with a little more budget. We enjoy showing an (always surprised) Marketing VP the resources hidden inside the organization.

We begin by asking the VP, “Did you know that you have a group that:

- Owns a database including hundreds of thousands of records for customers, competitors, suppliers and investors;
- Makes huge volumes of outbound cold-calls to that database;
- Delivers branding messages to that database and a much larger audience;
- May conduct numerous events that introduce that database to the company;
- Routinely monitors industry movements and other key competitive intelligence?
- Changes the dynamics of the market routinely with key individual acquisitions and overall acquisition strategy?
- Negotiates millions of dollars of deals per year;
- Is responsible for the experience of 40% to 60% of your website’s traffic; and,
- Knows and communicates with key industry players at all levels of the game?”

Then, we take the astonished VP over to meet the head of Recruiting.

Recruiting Overview

Nestled in the heart of the HR empire is a surprising island of expertise. The Recruiting department is responsible for acquiring the Human Capital required to replace attrition and fuel growth. In order to accomplish this task, Recruiting must:

- Know the business and the basic strategy;
- Understand organizational structure and the competencies of all departments and their managers;
- Monitor the industry and its changes;
- Manage the labor market including the members of teams that compete with the company;
- Cultivate a network of readily available replacement employees;
- Develop relationships with desirable employees who work for competitors;
- Create a flow of interested potential employees;
- Persuasively explain the company's potential and the rewards available to team members;
- Hunt, win and negotiate; and
- Perform under relentless pressure.

In other words, buried in the HR department, there is a critical function that has deep commonalities with the Marketing operation. The Recruiting team executes a kind of fundamental marketing strategy, develops advertising campaigns, closes deals and influences the market. Savvy Marketing executives can expand their effectiveness by collaborating with the company's recruiters.

In order to fully understand the powerful opportunities for Marketing/ Recruiting synergy, it is necessary to understand the operational details of the recruiting task.

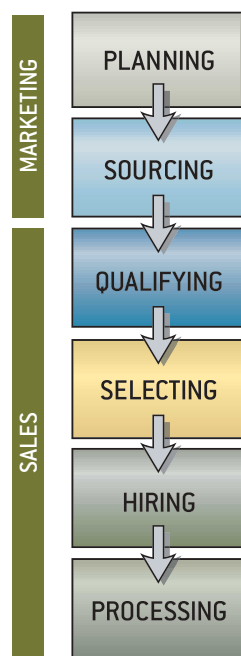
What Recruiters Do

The Recruiting department's mission is to have the right people available at the right time so that the organization can meet its growth and performance objectives. This charter is usually executed through six broad categories of work:

1. **Planning:** Forecasting hiring requirements; conceiving and creating performance metrics; monitoring market conditions and talent structures; developing detailed job requirements and descriptions; creating storylines; and, acquiring software and maintaining it.
2. **Sourcing:** Developing a private talent community; capturing quality candidates; validating the contact information data; developing media campaigns; creating and placing recruitment advertising; conducting recruiting events; maintaining and improving the employment section of the corporate website; managing referral networks; developing relationships with potential employees and their professional networks; performing competitive surveillance in search of critical talent; and, developing and maintaining relationships with schools, universities and other ongoing sources of talent.
3. **Qualifying:** Creating job specific groupings of candidates; evaluating candidates for fit and viability; checking backgrounds and references; administering tests; judging and assessing technical competence; portraying the organization in compelling ways; and, maintaining long term relationships with qualified and desirable candidates.
4. **Selecting:** Coordinating the candidate evaluation process; coordinating interviews and logistics; incorporating feedback to Planning and Sourcing based on hiring manager's experience; facilitating internal decision making.
5. **Hiring:** Making the offer; closing the deal; and, negotiating the employment contract.

6. **Processing:** Managing the various administrative processes associated with “on boarding” a new employee.

In the Planning and Sourcing functions, the Recruiting Department performs a series of tasks that are identical to fundamental Marketing responsibilities.



From supply and demand forecasting to advertising campaign design, Recruiting develops a clear view of the marketplace that complements the traditional Marketing perspective. So much so that some companies have begun moving key Recruitment leaders into the Marketing Department and vice versa to evangelize the synergy.

A detailed look at the source of Recruiting candidates will further illuminate that synergy.

Candidates Are Customers; Customers Are Candidates

The Recruiting department is investing heavily in the process of discovering the right employees. Marketing can capitalize on the investment by understanding the sources of those potential employees. They come from the following groups:

Customers, past, present or future;

Community members, either geographical or professional who have some knowledge of the organization;

Suppliers, past present or future;

Investors, a surprisingly large group with critical awareness of the organization;

Students looking for a first employment experience;

Competitors including employees of competitors and their suppliers;

Former Employees who may also be Customers, Suppliers, Competitors or Investors; or

Walk-Ins.

These groups can be harnessed to provide the marketing organization with a windfall of intelligence, business leads, and messaging opportunities. Although candidates usually offer the company information about their current work situation, the data is rarely exploited for the overall benefit of the firm.

The Recruiting department offers an astonishing opportunity to more clearly understand and influence the dynamics of the marketplace.

Most contemporary organizations are experimenting with the idea that the candidate database is a community that can be developed as a way of guaranteeing a reliable source of future employees. This is the emergence of the idea that candidates are Customers. As Recruiting learns to manage its supply by establishing long-term relationships with its candidate “customers”, amazing opportunities open for market effectiveness. The further that Recruiting moves towards “Relationship Management”, the less they become seen as administrative.

The techniques used by Recruiters to segment and deliver messages to the candidate database are in a very primitive form. Targeted email is used to cull interested and qualified applicants for near-term opportunities. More advanced marketing techniques involving sustained value delivery to the database are just emerging.

One close look at your organization’s employment website will be extremely revealing. Lacking strong input from the organization’s marketing team, Recruiting sometimes struggles with common marketing tasks:

- Generating exciting copy;
- Managing and measuring web-site effectiveness;
- Tailoring messaging by audience;
- Enthusiastically presenting the organization’s strengths (and weaknesses);
- Mining competitive intelligence;
- Understanding how to value potential employees as customers; and,
- Knowing how to identify current and potential customers and what to do when they enter the hiring process.

Recruiting reaches deeply into the organization’s supply and customer chains. Marketing can provide a host of tools, techniques, perspectives and resources that unlock a powerful synergy.

Conclusions

Most Marketing VPs are surprised by the combination of similarities and opportunities available in a collaborative relationship with the Recruiting department. On the other hand, many Recruiting VPs are intensely aware of the fact that they have shortcomings in the Marketing skills arena that impede their effectiveness. The two arenas are unusually complementary.

The potential benefits for Recruiting come directly from the adoption of the refined skills and management techniques of the contemporary marketing operation. From copy writing effectiveness to ad development and demand forecasting, Recruiting needs the tools and insights of the Marketing department in order to become an effective weapon in the competition for talent that will drive organizational growth in the 21st Century.

For Marketing, on the other hand, the opportunity is very straightforward. Recruiting offers untapped data collection and communication channels with subsets of all-important external stakeholders.

Possible Synergies

The key areas of opportunity in an expanded Marketing/Recruiting relationship are:

Competitive Intelligence

The candidate database should contain contact information and relationship evidence for many employees of direct competitors, customers and suppliers. By carefully reviewing the contents of the database, opportunities to improve the effectiveness of competitive intelligence will become obvious.

Brand Management

The tricks, techniques and skills of brand management are the province of marketing. The employment brand has become such an important issue that the arena can no longer afford to be managed without Marketing intervention and oversight. *Most people have their first knowledge of the organization as an employment brand.* A well-executed employment brand provides a foothold for full articulation of the total brand.

Data Collection

Inserting the right 3 to 5 questions (on a category by category basis) into the Recruiting workflow should provide a bonanza of insight into market dynamics, emerging trends, customer attitudes, purchasing intentions and so on.

Customer Development

Very detailed data about customers lives, unexploited, in the candidate database.

Growth Opportunities

Once a working relationship is firmly established, less mechanical (more strategic) synergies will be discovered. Great Recruiting departments derive immense organizational satisfaction from aggressive attacks on the competition's ranks. An optimized Recruiting/Marketing collaboration affords opportunities that range from the subtle disabling of a competitor to all out assaults.

A coordinated communications plan can create increasing velocity (attractiveness) for the firm as an employer while assuaging the analyst community and introducing uncertainty in the ranks of the competition.

The power of the employment brand cannot be overstated. Imagine the consequence, over time, of becoming the place that most customers want to work next. Attracting potential customers through the employment process is a time-honored practice in very large businesses that can now begin to be deployed effectively in smaller firms.

The potential is only limited by imagination.

10 Steps For Marketing VPs To Take Immediately

1. Create a joint Marketing-Recruiting Team responsible for the Employment Brand.
2. Add Recruiting to the distribution list for your routine Competitive Intelligence Report. Ask Recruiting to submit items each time it is published.
3. Prepare a list of the top 10 Competitive issues. Ask Recruiting to research them with candidates.
4. Invite the Recruiting Team to a “Brand Identity” Review. Teach them the fundamental values behind the brand.
5. Conduct a review of “Candidate Experience” on the employment website.
6. Have two marketing employees apply for jobs through the website. Have them complete the entire employment process as “mystery shoppers”. Publish the results.
7. Sample 10% of the job advertisements placed by Recruiting this year. Have a copy editor rewrite them.
8. Identify your top 100 prospects. Have a report sent by the Candidate Database each time a relevant candidate is added.
9. Review/edit copy of career website focusing on competitive issues.
10. Consider adding a Recruiting component to trade show and other Marketing outreach activities.

10 Steps For Recruiting VPs To Take Immediately

1. Identify your five hardest to fill openings. Prepare a note for the Marketing VP asking for help in identifying sources. Be sure to ask if there are opportunities to extract the talent from a crucial competitor.
2. Begin asking all candidates whether or not they are customers. Develop two questions about their experiences with the company. Collect the data and send it to the Marketing team.
3. Organize the next big interview process to include using candidates in a focus group.
4. Invite members of the marketing team to participate in your next Recruiting events. Encourage them to observe one or two. Hold a meeting to discuss obvious improvements and methods for regularly integrating the marketing team.
5. Ask Marketing to define the top 10 Competitive Intelligence Issues. Share the list with the Recruiting team and develop a routine report.
6. Set up a process for Marketing to alert Recruiting of important marketing activities as well as new or negative press hits, with best recommendations of how the Recruiting department should use this information.
7. Develop a list of the top 10 things that could be changed on the company website to improve Recruiting effectiveness. Try to pick at least 5 that offer a real benefit to the Marketing team.
8. Ask a sample of candidates (1 out of 10 phone calls) to take a look at the company website and suggest improvements. Forward the data to Marketing routinely.
9. Collaborate with the Marketing team to develop weekly or monthly themes to deliver in outbound email and in phone conversations.
10. Consider transferring a key recruiting thought-leader from your team to the marketing team. Whether a permanent move or temporary, this person's charter would be to maintain a bird's eye view on all branding, marketing and customer/candidate relationship activity.

Top 10 Steps



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