

# How to lure top talent in a low-unemployment environment



The U.S. unemployment rate fell to 3.9 percent in April 2018, the lowest it has been since 2000. While job seekers welcome such news, employers face the challenge of attracting talent during this competitive period.

It goes without saying that offering appropriate wages and benefit packages is a necessary start. But money tends to level the playing field, not seal the deal. Getting applicants to sign on the dotted line requires greater commitment and creativity. Here's a look at measures companies can take to boost their appeal to prospective workers:

## Spread the brand

People will not apply if they don't know you exist. Now is the perfect time to up the company's name recognition and public perception.

"We've completely revamped our recruiting strategy to involve collaboration between HR and Marketing," says Taylor Toce, president & CEO of Velo IT Group. "Recruiting is traditionally an HR function, but Marketing knows how to capture attention and create a valuable brand experience across all touchpoints. With highly sought after candidates being actively engaged with and recruited by other companies, simply posting job openings online is no longer a sufficient recruiting tactic."

As you attend to things such as social media presence and involvement in professional associations, enlist current staff in the efforts. Their enthusiasm and first-hand accounts make them powerful, believable brand ambassadors.

"Focus on making current employees so happy that word spreads in your industry," says corporate culture expert Joshua M. Evans. "The goal should be for people to hear about how amazing it is to work for you that top talent will be approaching you."

Consider an employee referral plan containing monetary incentives. Asking team members to think about which people in their network might make good additions generates a talent pool that tends to be a good match for your needs because candidates have been hand-selected by people who know your company culture.

## Attend to candidate experience

When choices are plentiful, applicants shy away from unclear or time-consuming processes. Thus, organizations

need to pay attention to details or risk disengagement. Make instructions easy to follow. Ensure career sites are optimized for seamless viewing and navigation on mobile devices. Promptly confirm receipt of material. And when you invite someone in for an interview, respect the person's time by staying on schedule, thoroughly reviewing the resume in advance, and refraining from dragging out the process unnecessarily over multiple rounds.

"When candidates have a good experience, even those you decline can become your fans," says Rob Byron, partner/manager at talent acquisition firm WinterWyman. "Not everybody is a good fit for every role, and job seekers recognize that. Treat them professionally from the start, and they'll form a strong impression about your company they'll share with others, not to mention an open mind should you approach them about an opportunity in the future."

## **Sell the role**

Finally, expect to act as a salesperson during times of low unemployment. Figure out what distinguishes your company or the position you're offering from others out there, and toot your own horn.

"Create the must-work-for company," says Jenn Folsom, chief of corporate development at Summit Consulting LLC. "It's all about the employer brand, and you've got to sell it. It doesn't have to be ping-pong tables and unlimited snacks (though we have found both to be helpful!), but you must become the employer of choice for the people you need to hire. Connect the dots. You have to show each target hire why THIS job is THE job, the only one they should take, for the right next move in their career."

Selling points will be different for each organization, but some that attract attention include:

- Flexible work arrangements/telecommuting options
- Opportunities to wear many hats
- Commitment to professional development and continuing education
- Meaningful work that makes a difference
- Cutting-edge technology
- Volunteer work in the community
- Emphasis on collaboration and access to top execs
- Defined career growth and advancement plans
- Work-life conveniences such as on-site childcare and free employee lunches

The objective isn't to become something you're not, but rather to define the organization's priorities and culture. A company excited by what it does and how it operates encourages others to want to join in.