Hiring outlook still strong despite rumors of recession

Recent talk of a softening economy has done nothing to dampen employers’ enthusiasm for adding staff. The latest Manpower Group Employment Outlook Survey finds that fourth-quarter hiring is likely to increase 1% year over year, compared to 2018. The total outlook score of +20% is the highest recorded since 2006.

Manpower’s Net Employment Out-look score is derived by taking the percentage of employers anticipating an increase in hiring activity and subtracting from this the percentage of employers expecting a decrease in hiring activity. Manpower bases its projections on quarterly surveys of 11,500 companies.

Employers in all industries reported double-digit hiring intentions in the fourth quarter, with the most optimistic outlooks reported in leisure and hospitality (+27%) and professional and business services (+24%).

Biggest hiring challenge: Getting applicants’ attention

Recruiting is no walk in the park, according to new research from the Robert Half staffing firm. Employers face a number of challenges throughout the hiring process, the greatest being generating interest from qualified candidates, asking the right interview questions, developing attractive compensation packages and negotiating salaries.

The survey polled more than 2,800 HR professionals and hiring managers.

Asked what aspect of the hiring process they found most difficult, respondents said:

- Generating interest from qualified candidates: 35%
- Asking the right interview questions: 20%
- Setting compensation/negotiating salaries: 19%
- Reviewing application materials: 13%
- Developing good job descriptions: 12%

Making an offer to a candidate isn’t the end of the recruiting road. When asked to name the most common reason recent prospective hires had decided not to join their organizations, 30% of respondents said it was because pay and benefits were lower than expected. An equal number reported that applicants accepted other positions or counteroffers from current employers.

Other reasons candidates said thanks but no thanks: poor fit with the job description (12%), poor fit with the corporate culture (8%) and too few employee perks (7%).

Snapshot: Young employees are prepared to bolt

It’s time to ramp up efforts to retain your younger employees. Many don’t plan on sticking around for very long.

Plan to leave current job within two years:
Is it time to ban criminal history queries on applications?

It’s at least time to reconsider your practice of asking potential employees about their criminal record histories. That’s especially true if you ask the question upfront, on your application or before you have even reviewed candidates’ other qualifications.

Several traps could ensnare you if you persist. First, in today’s tight job market, you may be unnecessarily excluding otherwise qualified applicants.

Second, a number of states and municipalities have “banned the box”—the space on a job application that asks applicants to check “yes” if they have ever been convicted of a crime. Such laws are increasingly common.

Third, retaining the box on your application or asking about criminal histories before you have reviewed other qualifications or made a preliminary employment offer could violate the EEOC’s standards on background checks. The agency takes the position that screening out applicants with criminal records may disproportionally harm minority applicants and amount to discrimination against applicants on the basis of race.

The EEOC suggests that criminal history questions should not be asked before a conditional job offer has been made, and even then, must be limited in scope. EEOC guidance says a conviction that isn’t job-related and consistent with business necessity shouldn’t be used to exclude any applicant.

Recent case: The EEOC just settled a case that showcases the agency’s current stance on criminal records. It involved an applicant for an assistant manager job with retailer Pier 1. Pier 1 used an application that included a question about criminal convictions. The applicant was rejected after he checked the box.

The commission investigated and concluded that Pier 1’s use of criminal records had a disparate impact on black candidates such as the applicant.

He will receive $20,000 and Pier 1 will revise its application to drop the question. The EEOC will monitor compliance for two years.