

Take A Sales Approach To Recruiting (And No It's Not The Same As An Employment Brand)

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Most recruiters know that, in this hot talent market, you need to woo candidates. Yet even that may fall short. To land those A players, you need a more aggressive approach than recruitment as usual. Look beyond the borders of human resources and you will see people in your company who are aggressive for a living: sales and marketing.

The sales process is tried and true, and it aligns nicely with recruitment. The first step is to treat candidates as customers — not only because it will help land talent, but also because every candidate is, in fact, also a potential customer. That means nurturing every candidate who sends a résumé. At a minimum you should acknowledge receiving the résumé, and if you find someone with the skills you want, you need to pour it on.

Nurturing candidates builds your employment brand as well as your company brand. If you don't, it could hurt you. [According to Tracey Parsons](#), director of recruitment marketing practice at SmashFly, "Lack of nurturing creates brand resentment." Alienate a candidate and you'll also alienate a potential customer.

Should Recruitment Move from HR to Sales?

To model talent acquisition after client acquisition, think Sales 101. The two functions are so similar that you wonder whether recruitment doesn't belong in the sales & marketing department rather than HR. The steps of a successful sale follow:

- Define the value proposition: Why should a candidate leave their current position to take your open position?
- Convert that proposition into a compelling message: Distill it down to the hook that will engage the right candidates.
- Get the message out to targeted prospects: Post and source, of course, but also use social media.
- Manage leads (applicants): Qualify them and score them against the likelihood that they will be converted to a hire.
- If one lead says no, ask him or her for referrals.
- Follow through until you close the deal.

Like sales, you should use a customer relationship management system. You may not have thought of it this way, but your applicant tracking system is more than storage for archiving résumés. With it you can build and manage a pipeline, including measuring leads, tracking conversion rates, and even creating the recruitment version of a sales forecast. This will provide you with tangible metrics to manage against, such as deliverables and targets.

This approach will take some effort, but it's easier than culling through 100 résumés that simply aren't a good fit. You'll also need to commit resources, take some risks, and act with urgency — like your sales team does. A little flair for the dramatic also will help.

Who's Making It Work

Some companies are doing this. It's working. Gap, Apple, and Google all use a sales/marketing/branding approach to recruitment. Reportedly, each corporation receives as many as 30,000 applications a month. You may not have the brand strength or resources of those companies, but you can adopt one of their key best practices: treat applications as *leads*, and use those leads to source potential candidates and customers. Most companies are *not* doing this, and that's good news in terms of competition. If everyone were doing it, it would flatten the playing field. However, if you implement this approach, you will stand out.

Lots of companies have developed an employment brand, but that's not the same as taking a sales approach. You may have a great employment portal on your website, but you still have to draw people to it. Miles Technologies (Miles) is one company [doing a great job with this](#). [Check out its career portal](#).

Spotlight on Proactive Best Practices

Miles has branded itself not just as an employer of choice, but also an environment of choice. There are a dozen pictures that make you feel like you've already visited the company. The portal also shows employees enjoying fun activities together. The corporate overview below the pictures is an example of best practices in marketing content. Why? Because the emphasis isn't on what employees need to bring, but rather on what Miles is offering.

Further down it showcases Best Places to Work awards it has earned and is confident enough to provide a link to Glassdoor. The page describes the culture, work/life balance, community engagement, benefits, and more.

The kicker is that the company is *proactively driving traffic to the portal*. Recruiters huddled with their marketing team and launched a yearlong campaign to promote the brand and increase candidate awareness. This included things you might expect, like email blasts, but it also had key staff members post in blogs and online forums frequented by the kinds of candidates needed.

Miles continues to maintain a strong social media presence (a Twitter feed is right there on the careers portal), but it doesn't write about how great it is to work at there. Instead, employees share ideas and insights in their practice areas: IT, business software, and web/marketing consulting. By establishing themselves as subject matter experts in the right circles, they raise the company's profile among prospects/candidates.

According to Luke Trovato, talent scout for Miles, "In the first six full months of 2014, we saw an almost 186 percent increase of applications from the six months prior."

Our Collective Challenge

Let's create a shared library of what works and what doesn't with this approach. If you know of companies that are trying it — and especially if your company is trying it — share that information below. Together we can create a strong resource for everyone. It's a new mindset, and every bit of insight can help.

thanks for the help from Tom Brennan, Master Writer

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Kim Shepherd joined [Decision Toolbox](#), a 100 percent virtual organization providing recruitment solutions in 2000 as CEO. Today, she leads the company's growth strategy, primarily through developing partnerships and alliances, and as an active member of the Los Angeles and Orange County

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