

Chapter 22

The Need for a Recruiter 2.0 for Hiring IT Talent: The Case of a German Software Manufacturer

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ABSTRACT

In times like the current economic downturn, just like when there is growth, companies struggle to meet the challenge of an IT talent shortage as recruitment and HR in general undergo dramatic changes in the methods applied to find suitable candidates and the services provided to internal and external clients. The IT recruiter's job profile has changed dramatically in the Web 2.0 era, as searching for candidates via LinkedIn and Facebook or micro-blogging via Twitter have become part of the recruiter's daily tools. Apart from all the technical and organizational changes involved, it is still unknown how recruiters and their skill sets will be transformed into those of recruiters 2.0.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the case of a German software manufacturer who invented a Recruiter Training Academy to fulfill their IT recruiters' need for new and specific skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Even in times of global financial crisis attracting new IT talent is still one of the key issues for IT executives in the USA (Luftman et al., 2009) as well as in Germany (Bitkom 2009a; Bitkom, 2009b). As the “baby boomers” get older, the proportion of the US population aged 65 or older is projected to increase from 12 percent in 2000 to about 20 percent in 2030 (U.S. Census, 2000). According to Brock’s (2003) research, there simply are not enough workers behind the “baby boomers generation” in the labor supply pipeline to fill all open vacancies (Brock, 2003). The situation in Germany is even worse as labor market research has projected that by the year 2028, 71 percent of the German working population will be retirees (Sadin 2003). In addition, one challenge, especially for human-capital orientated firms focusing on attracting, retaining, and developing IT talent on a long-term perspective (Agarwal et al., 2006) continues to be the shortage of highly qualified IT talent on the labor markets, mostly due to demographics and a shrinking total number of IT graduates (Dolan, 2004). Beside the demographic situation (Frank et al., 2004), the history of economic crises like the dotcom bubble and 9/11 shows that after a crisis everybody started hiring again and that those companies who repositioned themselves and their HR function in the crisis were successful (Fernández-Aráoz et al., 2009). The authors also pointed out in the HBR article that even “now, before the recession lifts, our research suggests that most global companies are running into staffing problems in emerging markets, and they are also having a difficult time finding talented younger managers to replace baby boom retirees.”

Therefore although the economy is going through tough times, the human resources (HR) function, especially in terms of recruitment, needs to reposition itself to go beyond the traditional ways of thinking. This is necessary to meet the challenge described above as well as the demand

for diversity in staff recruitment and the new usage of social media tools among potential employees (Brickwedde, 2010). To help the organization to leverage its potential and flourish, recruiters’ skill sets need to shift from focusing solely on processing and compliance to those of long-term strategic thinkers and business partners as they develop into informing consultants (Welbourne, 2009).

IT recruitment is evolving more and more to cope with these problems as the HR profession undergoes a dramatic change (Gueutal, 2009). In general the IT recruiter’s job profile has changed dramatically over the past 20 years (Weitzel et al., 2009). New terms and technologies such as Web 2.0 in a changing information society have become part of the recruiter’s daily vocabulary and business. New tools such as social networking sites (e.g. LinkedIn or Facebook), blogs, Twitter or rating platforms (e.g. RateMyEmployer) have become a common part of the recruiter’s toolset (Kluemper & Rosen, 2009). Several approaches were adopted to investigate how companies could strategically structure and combine their e-recruiting system with these new instruments (Lee, 2007; Eckhardt & Laumer, 2009; Laumer & Eckhardt, 2009) to improve their overall recruitment performance in terms of time and costs per hire. Even though innovative strategies were presented in computer personnel research for attracting IT candidates through online gaming (Laumer et al., 2009), in virtual worlds (Laumer et al., 2008) or via their social network (Eckhardt et al., 2007) there is still no common approach to the way IT recruiters’ skill sets could be shifted from mostly administratively orientated ones to those of internal business consultants with diverse knowledge about IT business, culture, marketing or psychology. Therefore the IT HR functions must provide services to groups inside (e.g. hiring managers in operating departments) and outside a company (e.g. applicants) and the mindset of responsible recruiters must be shifted from describing themselves as administrative

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