

It Starts with a Strategy

Approach talent acquisition and retention the same way you would for customers

BY RICHARD BLABOLIL

There is a tremendous struggle within the marketing and advertising industries to attract, nurture, and retain the right talent — especially diverse talent. Perhaps what plagues most agencies and clients is the lack of a well-thought-out and executed talent strategy, which is as important to the success of a business today as an effective marketing plan.

Agencies work tirelessly on behalf of clients to conduct research, understand a target audience, design a campaign, determine the right tools, and measure results. That same level of effort should be taken to market to another desired audience — skilled, diverse job seekers.

GET BACK TO BASICS

There's no denying that many well-established marketing organizations and ad agencies have a certain way of doing things. Often, in pursuit of quality talent, ultra-choosy managers will simply wait for the perfect job candidates to come knocking on their doors. Hoping that great talent will not only find your organization but automatically love working for you, is a naïve way to operate. Instead, have each hiring manager create a marketing plan specifically for talent acquisition and retention, tapping into some of the basics of marketing and advertising.

For example, the first step in any successful marketing effort is to figure out your target audience — in this case, qualified candidates of different generations, genders, and ethnicities. Where do you find them? Do your research. Not only is it important to know exactly who you're looking for, but how you will meet their needs and get value in return. Your plan, for example, might call for: "Thoughtful generalists and specialists who have skills to contribute right away and have room to grow over the course of a normal employee lifecycle. While they are on our team, we will teach them new skills *and* learn from them."

The next step is to communicate with your target market directly. That requires crafting a message that fits a diverse audience, and then working to spread that message with such outlets as settlement service agencies; employment service centers; cultural community groups; local community centers; local



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ethnic and community newsletters or newspapers; associations and organizations that serve ethnic communities; and language schools.

Building relationships with cultural groups/organizations takes time. Reach out to them personally, follow their social media channels, and attend their events. Promote your organization as a viable place to work, with a value system and culture that welcomes diversity.

TAKING A LONG VIEW

There is no silver bullet, no best website to deliver you the perfect candidate. This needs to be personal. The effort needs to reflect your ambition and desire to seek out, work with, and develop the right person. It's about understanding his/her "lifetime value." While it typically shakes the walls of human resources when anyone implies the lifetime value of an employee and the long-term implications, that should always be the intent. When you hire for the long haul, your devotion is different, and your investment is different. Your employees' commitment, in return, is also different.

Think of it as working to secure long-term customers. The diligent approach you use to market to customers should extend to attracting and retaining employees. There's a cost, of course, but consider it an investment in your future.

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