workable

Candidate sourcing 101

An introduction to sourcing job candidates

Contents

Introduction

Recruiting used to mean posting a job ad and waiting for candidates.
Although this is still an effective way to hire, candidate sourcing can be
even more effective.

Candidate sourcing is all about taking control of your candidate choices.
Proactively finding candidates for open roles, instead of simply waiting for great
people to apply to your jobs, will increase your chances of finding (and hiring)
the most qualified people.

In this ebook, we explore the principles of effective sourcing.
We take a look at the most common ways to find passive (and active)
candidates from social media to referrals. Then, we offer advice
on how to convince passive candidates to consider your company.

What to look for

Before searching, recruiters need to know what they're looking for. They should talk to hiring managers about the necessary qualifications and gather as much information as possible about extra requirements (e.g. education and seniority level.) Setting specific criteria and separating 'must-haves' from 'nice-to-haves' is a crucial first step.

To better understand the role they're hiring for, recruiters shouldn't just focus on the desired skill set. It's equally important to identify what kind of person would work best. A go-getter? A diplomat? A 'creative' or someone who's more focused on set procedures? Building a table or list of the qualities and skills necessary for each role will help organize the sourcing process and ensure everyone is on the same page.

Recruiters screen candidates, but candidates screen recruiters, too. Recruiters need to sell each position to attract candidates - particularly passive candidates who aren't actively looking for a new job. To pitch candidates more effectively, and discover what qualities and qualifications matter most, recruiters need to ask, and answer, some important questions:

✔ **What are the responsibilities of this role and how will it contribute to company objectives?**

✔ **How is this role different from similar positions offered by competitors?**

✔ **What are the most interesting and the most challenging parts of this role?**

✔ **What is the career development potential for this role?**

How to find candidates

How to use boolean search

Social media and candidate databases provide great opportunities to find talented candidates. But searching for a few great candidates among hundreds or thousands can be daunting. For example, if a recruiter searches for a 'java engineer' on Google, they'll get over 30 million results, most of which are irrelevant.

Boolean logic can make things easier. It helps recruiters target their searches and receive fewer, more relevant results. Recruiters can combine search terms or exclude those they don't need.

Sometimes, boolean 'rules' differ across search engines (though not too much). In this ebook, we'll use Google in our examples, since it's the most common search engine and it allows users to search other sites through its own search function.

Get to know boolean operators

Boolean search revolves around three main string operators: AND, OR and NOT. Here's a basic breakdown of how they work:

🔍 **Developer AND Android:** results contain both terms Developer and Android

🔍 **Developer OR iOS:** results contain at least one of those terms (Developer, iOS or both)

🔍 **Developer NOT senior:** results contain Developer but not senior

OR expands search results, while AND and NOT narrow down searches by adding constraints.

Most search engines add the operator AND when people type two or more words, by default. For example, typing 'engineer java python' is the same as typing 'engineer AND java AND Python.'

Some websites and search engines support symbol operators instead of words. For example, in Google the operator NOT is expressed through the symbol '-' to exclude terms. Bing supports the symbols '&' for AND, '|' for OR and '-' for NOT.

Build boolean search strings

If you type "resume of engineer who knows java and python in boston" into Google many of the results will be irrelevant. For example, the first three results are job ads, not potential candidate profiles:

Python Software Engineer Jobs, Employment in Boston, MA | Indeed ...
www.indeed.com/q-**Python**-Software-**Engineer**-l-**Boston**,-MA-jobs.html ▾
Jobs 1 - 10 of 1338 - 1338 **Python** Software **Engineer** Jobs available in **Boston**, MA on Indeed.com.
one search. all jobs. ... to 10 of 1,338. Upload your **resume** - Let employers find you ... Are you a full-
stack **engineer who knows Python**? ... Experience with programming/scripting (JavaScript, **Python**,
Java, or similar language).

Python Jobs, Employment in Boston, MA | Indeed.com
www.indeed.com/q-**Python**-l-**Boston**,-MA-jobs.html ▾
Jobs 1 - 10 of 2599 - 2599 **Python** Jobs available in **Boston**, MA on Indeed.com. one ... Upload your
resume Sign in ... Are you a full-stack **engineer who knows Python**? ... Proficient in programming
languages **Java**, NodeJS, **Python** and tools.

Software Developer (Python, Java, Node.js) Job in Boston, MA ...
www.workbridgeassociates.com/tech.../**boston**-ma/...**engineering**/...**python-java**.../289... ▾
Oct 3, 2016 - Software Developer (**Python**, **Java**, Node.js) job in **Boston**. ... **Java**, Node.js) and other
software-**engineering** jobs in **Boston** today! ... Use the button below to send us your **resume** and let us
know you're interested in the job!

Here's a boolean string to exclude jobs ads from your search:

> 🔍   *resume AND engineer AND java AND python AND boston -jobs*

To be even more precise, your boolean string could incorporate the fact that, sometimes, resumes are called CVs and engineers are called developers. For these kinds of synonyms, the Boolean operator OR can help:

> 🔍   *(resume OR cv) (engineer OR developer) Java Python Boston -jobs*

Here, we added a few conditions for our search by using multiple criteria. With the operator OR, we told search engines to generate results that contain at least one of the words in brackets.

Note: Brackets around OR commands help search strings work better.
With a few basic restrictions in boolean search, results are more relevant.

Use phrase searching

When someone types 'software engineer', search engines understand they have to present pages that contain both of these words. But, they mightn't appear together. The word 'software' could be at the beginning of the page and the word 'engineer' could be at the end.

Using quotation marks can solve that problem. By typing "software engineer", search engines will only generate results that contain both words in that particular order. This can help refine searches even further:

> 🔍 *(resume OR cv) (engineer OR developer) Java Python Boston*
> *"memory management" -jobs -hire*

Phrase searching can also help counteract a search engine's auto stemming feature. Search engines recognize a word's root form and may return results that contain words from the same root. For example, Google will read the word 'developer' and may generate results with the words 'developer', 'development' or 'developing.' By including quotation marks, search engines will look for exact words and phrases.

Use truncation

You can use the asterisk (*) symbol to make broader Boolean searches. For example, the search string: "software developer * in Boston" can generate various results:

✔ **Software developer living currently in Boston**

✔ **Software developer jobs in Boston**

✔ **Software developer salaries in Boston**

So, instead of doing three separate searches, you can get all results you need by using the asterisk in between words.

The asterisk can be placed at the end of words too. For example, develop* can mean developer, development etc. Google does that automatically, but it might be useful in other sites or databases.

Use the site: command

Google can look through other sites for specific terms with the site: command. For example, if recruiters are looking for candidates on a particular website, they can use this command:

> 🔍 *"Java developer" site:pagename.com*

This command is very useful for sites that don't have a strong search function. So, when recruiters find it difficult to scan a website, they can use this Google command instead.

Use Inurl/Intitle

These commands help recruiters build even more targeted searches. Until now, our search strings told the search engine to find those words no matter where they are in a website. For example, the word 'cv' could be the very last word of a text and probably not relevant. By using the 'inurl' and 'intitle' commands we tell the search engine to find these words in the url or the page title, respectively.

Here's an example of this search string:

> 🔍 **(inurl:resume OR cv) (engineer OR developer) Boston Java Python -jobs -hire**

Boolean strings can become long and complicated. But they're great allies for searching through search engines and websites.

How to source on social networks

With roughly 1 billion daily users and an increasing number of new profiles, **Facebook** is too big to ignore. Here are the most useful tools to source candidates on Facebook:

Facebook groups

People are more willing to share their personal and professional information online in more private settings, like Facebook groups. For example, a designer might not list their job on their profile, but may participate in 'graphic designers' or 'UI/UX designers' groups.

Paid job ads

Posting job ads on Facebook isn't revolutionary. A 'post and pray' method might bring a significant number of applicants, but not necessarily the most qualified ones. For better results, recruiters should consider paid job ads to get closer to their desired audience. There are multiple filtering options to choose from, like location, college degree or interests (e.g. PHP, Google Analytics.)

Graph Search

Although Facebook isn't explicitly built for recruiting, Graph Search is a feature that could help source candidates using specific criteria (e.g. by location, profession or the university they attended).

Sample queries include:

✔ **[Job title] who live near [Location]**

✔ **[Job title] who speak [Language]**

✔ **People who work at [Competitor]**

Facebook Live

Social media is all about being current. And nothing is more current than live streaming. Facebook Live supports broadcast in real-time. You can easily connect with your audience - without using extra apps or video editing software. Recruiters could ask their employees to take part in live sessions to introduce themselves, give office tours or simply share casual moments at work to help woo potential candidates.

Considering the 140 character limit, finding good candidates on **Twitter** can be challenging. Here are some good places to start:

Search

Twitter search can be a powerful recruiting tool. Recruiters can look for potential candidates' profiles by searching by profession, location or skill set using the 'Accounts' search tab. It's also a good idea to search terms that are popular among specific professionals, like Github for developers. With Advanced Twitter search, recruiters could narrow down their results by location, language, keywords and hashtags.

These kinds of searches can provide a few good profiles, but they require a lot of time and are limited to people who openly share their professional interests on Twitter. Twitter members sometimes prefer to add a humorous touch to their profiles. A search for a 'software developer' won't identify a 'ninja engineer' who might be qualified. It's helpful for recruiters to start building a strong Twitter network, so their searches produce more relevant results.

Hashtags

Twitter discussions are all about #hashtags. Recruiters who want to leverage Twitter for their sourcing needs should follow and participate in current trends that are relevant to their ideal candidates. For example, professionals who attend a specific conference will tweet about it using the conference hashtag or a popular, related one. When recruiters spot a Twitter user who could be a potential fit, they can visit their profile, follow them or send them a message. Hashtags can also come in handy when reaching out to candidates who don't follow your company account.

Adding the appropriate hashtag (e.g. #bostonjobs or #SaaSjobs) will get your job ad in front of a much larger, interested audience. Online generators, like all-hashtag.com and hashtaggenerator.com, create interesting hashtags based on keywords of your choice.

Hashtag metric tools like Hashtags.org and hashtagify.me can also help recruiters keep on top of trending hashtags and attract more candidates.

Chat

A Twitter chat is a group discussion about a certain topic among Twitter users at a predetermined time. A host or moderator will ask questions to prompt responses and encourage interaction among tweeters. This opens the door for recruiters to spot interesting professionals who - even if they're not currently looking for a career change - might consider a future opening or or refer other good candidates. Companies could even initiate a Twitter chat to share career advice or exchange views on industry topics to attract more followers and get a better feel for potential candidates' concerns.

Lists

Twitter lists are curated groups of accounts, categorized by topic or interest. Recruiters could create private lists with passive candidates, to keep up with their activity, organized by job, skills or location. Or, they could invite qualified people to join their public lists to show they're interested in their work and ideas. Public Twitter lists are also helpful to identify people who attended a specific event or who talk about a particular topic. Use boolean search to discover Twitter lists for particular fields of expertise and instantly get access to members' accounts.

Google | site:twitter.com lists uxdesign
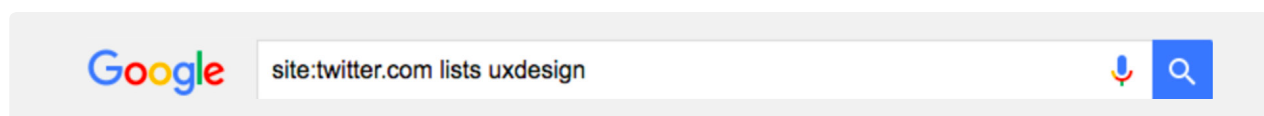
Google+

Google+ mightn't be recruiters' first option to source candidates. But, the less recruiting competition there is, the more likely you are to stand out from the crowd. Here's how to find interesting profiles on Google+:

Google Search

Although Google+ search does a decent job, it doesn't offer much precision. For more accurate results, it's best to search Google using boolean strings. Some users may not frequently update their Google+ profile, so recruiters should double-check if they meet their criteria. To start with, they should search by location or company.
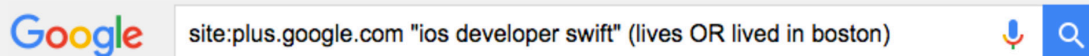
Google	site:plus.google.com "content writer" (lives OR lived in new york)
Google	site:plus.google.com "graphic designer" (works OR worked at microsoft)

Boolean strings are also helpful for specific skills and qualifications and for hard-to-fill roles.

Google	site:plus.google.com "ios developer swift" (lives OR lived in boston)

Users' profiles may include a mini bio or a downloadable version of their resumes or links to their personal pages, like a blog or portfolio website. Recruiters could use these kinds of sources to get better insight into candidates' background and interests. They also serve as a reference for personalizing souring emails and crafting relevant interview questions.

Communities

Google+ Communities allow people with common interests to join (or create) groups to exchange ideas, discover new trends and have direct conversations. Communities can give recruiters a good idea of what professionals in a specific field are interested in. It's easy for recrutiers to reach out to potential candidates through member lists.

Instagram is more than just a photo sharing network. These methods can help you source and communicate with potential candidates:

Hashtags

Just like on Twitter, Instagram hashtags are a quick way for users to search for content. Hashtags related to hiring can make it easier for job seekers to discover job openings, without visiting a job board. A common tactic is to add a comment with relevant hashtags. It doesn't have to read like a formal job ad; the point is to catch users' attention and keep them interested. Hashtags are also a great way to keep track of events and meetups.

Comments

Social media networks open a window for more personal communication outside the formal context of an interview. Instagram isn't the usual place where people expect to have a professional discussion. But, it can be a good venue for recruiters to make a warm introduction by showing their appreciation for a candidate's work. Leaving a casual comment on a designer's image or a speaker's event photo can be the first step to getting noticed.

Private messages

Instagram offers the chance to jump straight into a conversation with another user. A casual introduction followed by a comment about someone's work or a question about a particular photo are good starting points to spark a discussion. This kind of approach is more likely to receive a positive reaction compared to a cold, impersonal email.

Snapchat is known as the 'social media playground', because of its fun effects and disappearing messages. Recrutiers can use its ephemeral interface to source candidates with:

Job ads

The key here is to attract potential candidates' attention. Snapchat offers tools (like special effects and stickers) to create a job ad that looks totally different. It doesn't have to include all necessary details. An eye-catching filter with a link to the actual job description can do the trick.

Stories

A series of 10-second videos can form an engaging Snapchat story. Recruiters could offer potential candidates a sneak peek of their company's office, introduce their team and provide footage of company events. Snapchat's campus stories feature also offers recruiters a unique opportunity to reach students on particular college campuses.

Discussions

Social media is all about two-way communication. A Q&A session with career advice from hiring managers could attract a significant number of potential candidates. To identify a potential culture fit for their company, recruiters could prompt candidates to send snaps answering questions like 'Why would you like to work for us?' Or, ask them to showcase their skills through their own snap stories.

It's like an interview, only quicker and more playful.

slack

Slack is a cloud-based communication tool that gathers people with common professional interests to share related ideas, spread industry news and have conversations. Its advantage is that it's playful and casual, which sets the right tone when you want to meet potential candidates without using formal or impersonal messages.

Communities

Slack communities are groups created around a field of expertise, like Web design, Marketing and Product management. Choose the ones that interest you and send an invite request. Discussions on Slack can give you first-hand experience of what keeps people motivated at work: what industry trends they follow, what upcoming conferences they're attending and where they find inspiration. Some interesting communities include DevOps and #developers for developers, Designer Talks and Dribbble people for designers, CRO tricks for Marketers and DBR: Inhouse Recruiters for recruiters.

Direct messages

Direct messages are useful for quick, private conversations between two Slack users. Once you've found a potential candidate, it's best to contact them individually. You can send a private (direct) message, but only if you've previously introduced yourself and engaged in a public conversation. Pose a question or send a comment about something interesting they said. Investing some time in these kinds of discussions helps build relationships and improve your long-term sourcing strategy.

Job boards

There are specific Slack communities where you can let people know about your job openings. For example, software jobs and #jobs-design. Introduce yourself, mention what you're looking for and provide any necessary information. Slack users could either contact you for more details or share your job ad with other people who might be interested.

How to use event sites

Attending events and conferences is a good way to build a proactive sourcing strategy. Networking through big scale events like Dreamforce or PyCon is always a great idea. But, there are also plenty of niche events to be found on:

✔ **Meetup.com**

✔ **Eventbrite**

✔ **Ning**

✔ **Lanyrd**

✔ **Jobfairsin.com**

✔ **4Networking**
(UK for local businesses or international ones who have offices in the country)

These sites provide great opportunities for sourcing, even if you don't attend events.

Meetup.com is a website that hosts all kinds of events. For recruiters, Meetup can have a dual use. Recruiters can join Meetup groups if they want to attend the events and meet people offline. But, they can also browse through members of interesting groups without having to attend events.

For example, a recruiter could source developers by browsing attendee lists of events listed in their local 'tech' event category. Alternatively, recruiters can search Meetup through Google with the site: command if they have more specific criteria, like:

> 🔍 *"Python" "java" site:meetup.com*

Meetup.com usually picks up the searcher's location. If recruiters want to search for meetups in other cities, they can use a version of this command:

> 🔍 *site:meetup.com : java intitle:"boston"*

When recruiters find relevant meet up groups they can view their pages:
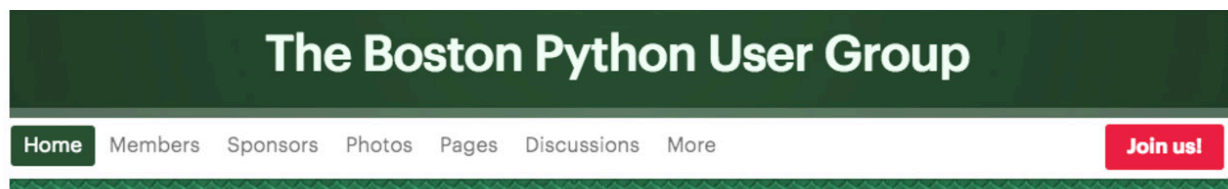
By clicking on the 'members' tab, recruiters can see all members of that group. Searching through member profiles can produce some good results. Member profiles can list information about their interests and may include emails or other social media accounts.

Groups can also help recruiters find other groups, listed under their 'We're about' section:

We're about:
Open Source · Python ·
Computer programming ·
Software Development ·
Web Development

Recruiters needn't search member lists manually.

They can use Boolean search to help:

1. Start with the group URL:

🔍   *meetup.com/bostonpython/members/*

2. Search the URL using the "site:" operator:

🔍   *site:meetup.com/bostonpython/members/*

3: Refine:

🔍   *(engineer OR developer) (Java OR C++) site:meetup.com/bostonpython/members/*

How to get the most out of referrals

Most companies acknowledge the value of employee referrals. Research suggests that referred employees are more productive and less likely to quit. Here's how you can prompt your colleagues to refer qualified candidates:

Communicate the details

The best way to get good referrals is to make your requirements clear. Send a short, concise job description to your teammates. You should write it in an enthusiastic tone that motivates employees and mentions your incentive program.
Here's an example:

Hi all,

We are excited to announce that we are currently looking for a customer success specialist to work with our customer support team!

This person will be responsible for resolving our customers' issues and helping them use our product in the most effective way. We want them to be patient and able to communicate well, even in difficult situations. We'd prefer someone with a university degree and a couple of years of professional experience.

If you know someone who you think would be a good fit, it'd be great if you could refer them. Please send an email to our recruiting team with that person's email or phone number. It'd be very helpful to include some information about them so we can reach out to them.

Thank you!

Find the most appropriate person to ask. Recruiters often send company-wide emails requesting referrals. But sometimes, reaching out to specific people might be more helpful.

Consider your colleagues' backgrounds. For example, if you're looking for a designer, you could ask employees who started their career in a design team or who used to work for a design company (regardless of their role).

Browse your teammates' social media networks. When looking for an accountant, your finance colleagues' networks are a good place to start. Use LinkedIn's advanced search to find candidates among colleagues connections.

Premium accounts have even more filter options available. To do the same on Twitter, Twiangulate can be useful.

Use a 'reference referral.' Author John Sullivan suggests that when new hires have proven to be good hires, recruiters should call their references again. Their contact details are already in recruiters' files and if they recommended a great employee once, it's possible they could recommend another one.

Offer incentives

Cash bonuses are a common employee referral incentive. But other incentives can work well, too. Raizlabs offers travel adventures. Dropbox's customer referral program gives referrers 500MB of additional free space - a similar incentive could work well for employee referrals.

Tier your rewards

Recruiters can easily initiate internal competitions between teams or departments. Whichever team refers the most candidates who make it to the interview stage wins.

Use tools

Employee referral software helps automate company referral programs. Most have matching algorithms to automatically recommend candidates from employees' networks and keep referrers updated on their referrals' progress. They also help with monitoring incentives and offer gamification techniques to motivate employees. Examples of these platforms include Boon, Employeereferrals, Zalp and Zao.

Make the process easier

Referrals shouldn't be too much trouble. Employees should be able to know what recruiters are asking for and how they can refer someone without too many clicks.

Ideally, recruiters could use an ATS or an employee referral platform like the ones mentioned above. This kind of software can automate the process and help keep track of who referred who.

In general, it's best if one person is responsible for referrals. That way, employees will know who to ask when they have questions. One person will be able to organize the process and incentives better.

Always be improving

Measuring referrals is fairly easy. Recruiters can keep track of:

✔ **How many employees referred someone and whether numbers decrease or increase over time**

✔ **The average number of referred candidates per employee**

✔ **The percentage of referred candidates who were hired and/or stay with the company for a certain period of time**

Combat issues

Strong referrals can be the best hires, but weak (or non-existent) referrals can be a warning sign. Employees make referrals when they're proud of their workplace. If recruiters see that hey're getting few or bad referrals, they should think about potential culture or engagement issues. It's also important to give employees feedback on the status of their referrals. If recruiters neglect to give referral feedback, employees may be reluctant to refer candidates again.

When to use
different sourcing
methods

When to use different sourcing methods

Sourcing plays an important part in a company's overall health. Proactively sourcing qualified candidates can result in shorter time to hire, even for hard-to-fill roles.

However, sourcing methods aren't one-size-fits-all solutions. Each scenario requires a different approach. Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind:

✔ Referrals are the most effective source of candidates. Employees refer qualified candidates who are more likely to accept a job offer because of a mutual connection.

✔ For senior level positions and top-performers, referrals have positive results as well. Engaging through social platforms is also an effective tactic in this case, as networks help build strong, long-term relationships.

✔ Social media channels tend to appeal to younger audiences. So, it's a good place to look for entry-level candidates.

✔ When there are noticeable gaps in company resume databases, it's best to conduct boolean searches or search through job portals to find resumes using specific criteria.

✔ For roles where a resume is not enough to evaluate candidates skills, recruiters should search for online portfolios on professional networking sites and social networks.

✔ Recruiting events and offline meetings are good ways to get in touch with potential candidates, nurture a strong network and improve your employer brand.

Depending on the situation, it's best to try and test which technique is the most effective. Useful metrics include:

✔ **Sourcing productivity (number of resumes/candidates coming from each source, number of cold emails/calls, number of interviews)**

✔ **Recruiting efficiency (response rate, number of hires, time to fill)**

✔ **Quality of hire (performance of new hires, candidate satisfaction, manager satisfaction)**

All sourcing methods have advantages and disadvantages. It's best to combine different techniques to get the most out of each sourcing channel.

People Search

Expand your sourcing strategy and connect with candidates online. *People Search* is the most effective way to find email addresses, resumes, social and professional profiles and more. A single search via the *People Search* Chrome extension will scan millions of online profiles and trusted data sources. The result is a unified, organized candidate profile. Qualify every lead before reaching out, and contact the best prospects directly with a personalized email.

WORKABLE.COM/PEOPLE-SEARCH

Contact candidates in fewer clicks and increase response rates

Build better talent pipelines

Review and download resumes in seconds

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