

Journal of Corporate Recruiting Leadership

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Focus: Workforce Planning

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Dear Recruiting Leader,



I'm in the process of judging applications for the annual [ERE Recruiting Excellence Awards](#). These are the top awards in the field, given to companies who have excelled in corporate recruiting, often through an innovation or idea not tried before at their company.

I don't yet know who's going to win what, but one thing that's heartwarming so far are some of the applications, oddly enough, from companies who cut staff.

Yes, cut.

I'm not applauding their layoffs, but am impressed at what they've done to limit them.

One company lost a contract and was at risk of losing 125 employees. Its talent management team interviewed every employee affected in order to assess their skill sets, and determined their ability to train for new positions. At the same time, its management team began an employee engagement initiative which featured a series of daily meetings and calls with hiring managers to place people in new roles within the organization. The company had three weeks, but most employees remained employed.

Another company created what I'll call an in-house temp firm. Instead of just getting laid off, an employee could take on a temp assignment within the company, perhaps in another division, possibly resulting in a permanent gig. The company saved on staffing costs by using internal resources versus contingent/contact labor, saved in severance costs, and most importantly, saved some of its employees' jobs.

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A 60-year-old Lesson in “Modern” Recruiting

In 1950, a professor showed that tweaking one thing can affect everything else. For recruiting and workforce planning, this is still true.

By Michael Kannisto and Vicky Wang Kamahele

The year is 1950, and the scene is a basement classroom at the London School of Economics. A graduate-level class of future economists has gathered, as they always do on Thursdays, for their course on macroeconomics. In the midst of a booming post-war economy, it's more important than ever for these future business leaders and policy-makers to understand the subtle influences and interactions between taxation, savings, interest rates, and imports/exports. Much like today, the students in that classroom have spent hours memorizing the hundreds of equations that have been developed to demonstrate what happens to one financial variable when another is changed.

After a moment, the professor appears at the front of the lecture hall. Rather than striding in briskly as he always does, he stops to hold the door open off the side of the chamber. Seconds later, an assistant appears in the doorway pushing a large rectangular object on rollers. It is covered in a white sheet, so no one can see what it is. The object is carefully wheeled to the front of the room, and the assistant reaches under the sheet, locates a power cord, and plugs it into the wall outlet. A noisy humming sound fills the room, and the professor pulls off the sheet, revealing the object to the crowded hall.

A Brief History of Talent

Modern consulting notwithstanding, the “War for Talent” can more accurately be described as a series of hard-fought battles for people. As far back as there is history, there have been recruiting and people-management crises. In ancient Egypt, pharaohs were faced with the challenge of iden-

tifying, recruiting, and training thousands of workers (and support staff) to construct complex pyramids and monuments. During World War II, American factories faced a labor crisis as an entire male workforce packed into troop ships and headed off to fight overseas. And after that war ended (where our story started), great factories in the Mid-

west were faced with the unprecedented task of finding thousands of skilled laborers to produce the automobiles, appliances, and other durable goods that returning veterans wanted to buy. The 90's dot-com boom further demonstrated that labor crises can *still* catch modern organizations by surprise, and leave them struggling to find people with skills no one has.

In each case, and many more, there was a previously unidentified need for talent. And in each case, that need was met: slaves were conscripted to build the pyramids,

women kept industrialization moving forward, southerners (newly available as a result of sharecropping coming to an end) moved to Detroit, Chicago, and Pittsburgh to begin punching timeclocks for the first time in their lives, and globalization helped tech companies find their engineers domestically and abroad.

These changes also had secondary effects that further altered society. Family dynamics drastically changed when women entered the workforce. New companies emerged, inventing products to ease the lives of dual-income families. One-stop-shopping became the norm. With two parents working, an automatic need to adjust the workplace was apparent. Yet it took nearly 40 years for “workplace flexibility” to become the forefront topic—most often discussed for women, not men—and it's still a work-in-progress for most American companies.

After laying off thousands of workers, companies now realize they can't grow without a skilled workforce.

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Today, as we face a global economic crisis and jobs appear scarce, there is still a war raging within companies as they try to get back on their feet. After laying off thousands of workers, companies now realize they can't grow without a skilled workforce. Some companies now struggle with recruiting everyone back, while others try and make do with their existing employees. As the economy begins to pick up and the very notion of “work” evolves from something done at a specific place, during set hours, to a collaborative experience, performed in real time, with global cohorts, we feel another large-scale change in the air. If only there was a way to predict the next talent crisis, and take steps now to ensure organizations are not left fighting for a limited supply of needed employees.

The Moniac

As the sheet was pulled back in that classroom in 1950 London, the professor looked at the stunned faces in the sea of shirts and ties. He smiled, and shouted over the noise as he explained what the class was looking at. What they saw at the front of that classroom was an incredible collection of clear pipes and tubes and gates and runnels mounted on a vertical panel covered with graphs and charts. The loud humming sound came from a pump at the bottom of the device, which directed red-colored water into a chamber at the top of the remarkable mechanism. Upon spilling into a small tank, the water then ran down various paths along the front of the machine, diverting and flowing variously throughout the complicated network of transparent chambers and sluices.

The device was called the *Moniac* and it had been developed by an engineer named W. A. Phillips. This Money-based Eniac (giant computing brain) was designed to simulate the flow of money through a national economy. Water represented currency, and as that water flowed through the device, the operator could make adjustments to various valves and gates, simulating changes to interest rates, savings, and even government spending. Quite simply, the device was a visual display of graduate-level macroeconomics.

For example, a standard relationship in economics is the Liquidity Preference Function. It is a mathematical model used since the 1930s to explain the non-linear relation-

ship between interest rates and bank liquidity. If that sounds complicated, it is: the explanation in a standard economics textbook goes on for several pages. Yet, as this group of students watched, their professor pointed at a clear plastic tank nearly filled with water. “This gate represents the interest rate. Watch what happens when I lower the height of this bit of plastic—as I lower the interest rate.” As he slid the scale down, water poured from the chamber, joining the larger flow, and creating an excess of liquidity that then was re-directed into foreign investments and other sections of the machine. It must have been an incredible moment for those students.

Though only a handful of these devices were ever built, and only a few are still in existence (carefully preserved in museums), they were incredibly accurate. They could be used to reproduce economic events that had already occurred with remarkable accuracy; they could also be used to make predictions. Even more significant was the fact that all the complex interrelationships were easy to understand as a result of the straightforward visuals.

Using data already in existence, tomorrow's staffing leader can use college recruiting to fill openings that don't currently exist, with skills that will be important at a later time, to meet strategic objectives that have not yet been communicated.

Talent Today

In much the same way that many variables combine to influence the supply and allocation of money in a national economy, variables also combine to influence the supply and allocation and management of

talent: from recruiting to benefits, scheduling to performance management, and diversity to immigration capabilities. At any given point in time, organizations spend large amounts of time and money to place special focus on one element of their talent strategy—campus hiring,” “industry hiring,” or “diversity hiring” for example—only to find that, in addition to influencing the one variable, other changes then occur to their talent portfolio.

Some staffing leaders (from another company) who we interviewed for this article recalled clearly a CEO in the mid-1990s declaring at a “town hall” style meeting that in the future, all senior leaders would come from that company's college rotational program. The primary effect was that the program then received time and attention and money. Yet soon thereafter, there was a rise in voluntary turnover as loyal, long-term employees who had not come from the ro-

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tational program concluded that the only way they would ever be able to rise to a senior position would be to do so at another company. Much in the same way that water had spilled out of the Moniac’s “liquidity” tank back in that classroom, talent had spilled out of that company’s talent pool, and into other organizations.

A Metaphor for Talent?

It would appear that there are many similarities one could draw between a complex international economy and a complex organization’s talent portfolio. The Moniac was designed to illustrate the flow of dollars through an economy. It had many variables, and could model the diversion of money into foreign holdings, the supply or demand for money in the form of taxes and tariffs, and the reservoir of money available at any given time.

Picture now a machine that simulates the flow of people in, out, and throughout an organization. A Talent Moniac . . . a *Tani-ac*. Settings could represent anything from the current supply of college hires, the unemployment rate, the availability of specialized skills, or any number of other variables. Make one small adjustment to any seemingly independent variable and watch as talent flows violently and turbulently into unexpected parts of the company.

Forecasting, 1950s-Style

Using our new metaphor, let’s see how something well known like workforce planning might be re-imagined. Traditionally, [workforce planning](#) consisted of the head of recruiting visiting the head of, say, R&D, and asking “How many scientists are you planning to hire next year?” The answer might be, “I don’t know—how many did I hire last year?” If the answer was 50, then the “forecast” is typically 50 or slightly more, depending how the business is doing. Or your VP of HR might ask for a salary benchmark: “Is our compensation in line with other organizations?” The answer might be “yes, we are paying within our competitor’s range.” But did you compare apples to apples? Did you compare your turnover, benefits, progression opportunities, etc. within your “benchmark” group of companies?

Recently, several organizations have begun using a more

strategic approach to workforce planning. They call it “analytics.” Namely, they go back and look at historical data. If two years ago the R&D function hired 30 people, then 40 last year, then 50 this year, there is a strong likelihood that 60 is a good estimate for next year. The good news is that companies that have taken this “predictive” approach, report that their targets are much closer to actual hiring data when reviewed at the end of the year. But what if the business plans to offshore R&D? Or plans to acquire another company with a large pool of existing R&D talent? What

if the R&D population is mostly near retirement age, or there are no “ready-nows” for key leadership roles?

Companies have an extraordinary amount of information that already exists about their employee population. There is turnover data, performance data, and detailed information about cross-business moves. There is probably a training database, diversity information, and robust industry data describing how long it typically takes to “grow” a particular position. Instead of purely mapping a hiring number to prior year plans and hiring 60% of your workforce on contract to hedge your bets, a brief conversation with the R&D head can reveal powerful information about what direction the function will be taking,

what types of scientists will be needed to take on future projects, and what skills will likely be in short supply. This can be compared with external demographic data that is readily available, allowing your organization to predict how high the demand will be for particular employees.

Even simply determining what roles are strategically important to a function, and what roles simply “evolved” because someone happened to be around who was willing to take on additional responsibilities, is instructive. Do you have a true need for a position, or did you create a position out of chaos or for the purpose of satisfying an individual? Are you moving people with purpose, or are you moving people to temporarily pacify them or a particularly vocal leader? These data points, taken together, have more predictive power about what talent you have, who you can grow, what you need to buy, and what gaps need closing than any excel spreadsheet ever created.

Furthermore, considering the information as all inter-con-

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nected pieces will allow staffing leaders to view their talent for the first time in the same way that a room full of graduate students viewed the economy for the first time—as a single, kinetic, changing, shifting cascade of talent flowing through a system.

Approaching recruiting and staffing with such a view of talent would doubtless lead to much more strategic decision-making. Rather than simply increase college hiring because there are more internship slots, a strategic staffing leader could identify mid- and senior-level positions that will be vacant 5 or even 10 years in the future (based on, say, employee age or turnover). Knowing what skills and roles will be important (from interviews with senior leaders) will allow correct targeting of new graduates with the base skills and motivation to occupy those key roles in the future. In other words, using data already in existence, tomorrow’s staffing leader can use college recruiting to fill openings that don’t currently exist, with skills that will be important at a later time, to meet strategic objectives that have not yet been communicated.

Conclusion

The era of the Moniac was brief. It was expensive, complicated, and the global market for the device was rather limited. It is likely that comparatively cheap, new mainframe computers made the little plastic valves, and the paper-and-pen graphs, seem quaint and old-fashioned. After all, why spend an hour adjusting dozens of settings to produce a simulation that could be produced on a computer via algorithms in milliseconds?

That might be true, but perhaps the value of the Moniac was not in its use as an analytical tool, but rather as a teaching aid. Visually experiencing all the things that happen when you “raise taxes” must have been an extraordinary experience for those students. And while the few remaining Moniacs are preserved and packed away, their most powerful lessons can be tapped even today by any staffing leader.

A brief conversation with the R&D head can reveal powerful information about what direction the function will be taking, what types of scientists will be needed to take on future projects, and what skills will likely be in short supply.



Michael Kannisto began his career with BASF Corporation as a college hire performing original research in the area of polyurethane formulation. Today he oversees Staffing, University Relations, and Employment Branding for BASF. Between those two vastly different roles, He spent over six years at Johnson & Johnson in a variety of staffing and university relations positions, and several years as Global Staffing Director at Bausch & Lomb. He received a B.S. in chemistry from Hope College, a Ph.D. in chemistry from Texas A&M University, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the Materials Science and Engineering Department at the University of Michigan. He is a member of the American Chemical Society and the Society for Human Resource Management, has earned certification as a Senior Professional in Human Resources from HRCI, and is a certified Process Excellence Greenbelt. His professional interests include employment branding, and the impact of multiple generations in the workforce.

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Breaking Out of the Crisis Mode

Workforce planning fails when it is viewed as an HR issue rather than a business issue. Today, companies are beginning to treat it as a business issue, and that's where the success comes.

By Mitzi Jordan

Mention workforce planning to 10 different executives, and you may get 10 different opinions about what it really means. Everyone seems to agree that it is critical for business success, but according to a 2009 study by Bersin & Associates (“The Modern Approach to Workforce Planning”) the majority of companies (67%) still conduct workforce planning on an “as-needed” basis.

Of course, “as needed” workforce planning is a loaded term, and typically it suggests a re-active activity of limited strategic value. Often, it means scrambling to develop a meaningful forecast of talent needs ahead of a relocation, expansion, merger, or change in company strategy. This type of “crisis mode” workforce planning is not only inaccurate; it also does not truly represent the continuous process that defines best-practice workforce planning today.

The good news is the discipline of workforce planning has matured. By better understanding what strategic workforce planning means and what processes are involved in a best-practice operation, organizations are transforming workforce planning from a re-active planning task to a core strategic function.

DEFINING THE PRACTICE, MATURITY, AND IMPACT

To grasp how [workforce planning](#) can deliver long-term impact, step back and define the practice and then look at what that definition means to the business. This widely accepted definition emphasizes the strategic nature of workforce planning:

Workforce Planning is the process that provides strategic direction to talent management activities to ensure an organization has the right people in the right place at the right time and at the right price to execute its business strategy.

One of the most important ideas here is that workforce planning is indeed a process. We may all know this, but in practice it is still often treated as an *event*. That is, a pressing need arises, data is gathered, forecasts are made, and the result is often a “headcount plan” based solely on the needs and conditions at hand.

If built and treated as an ongoing process, workforce planning prevents that need for information or forecasting data to *suddenly* arise. It also helps ensure that the business is truly responding to its real talent needs and making the best use of existing talent. It is doing more than simply answering a business unit request to meet a particular challenge; rather it should balance immediate challenges in one area with other needs across the enterprise.

In many companies, workforce planning is evolving as a practice. Whether consciously or not, companies are addressing needs and making incremental improvements, even in cases where they skip between one workforce planning event and the next. To truly accelerate that evolution however, it is much better to have a realistic view of where a process is in relation to industry best practices. With that in mind, a practical workforce planning maturity model is helpful (see Figure 1).

Workforce planning doesn't mean the same thing to everyone given that companies are at various stages of maturity in providing that discipline to the business. The model above provides a high-level view of what workforce planning means in different organizations, and how companies may need to evolve to achieve strategic impact through the practice. These areas of development include Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Workforce Planning:

Basic Workforce Planning

This level of maturity is frequently what is meant when companies say “yes, we do workforce planning.” It is based on the

business plan and current headcount data, with little additional supporting information. While there is nothing wrong with this basic process, it is important to understand that it does not generally yield the strategic impact that companies need to achieve through their talent management strategies. Two types of planning fall into this category, including:

Understanding headcount

The most commonly used workforce planning process is a traditional approach focused primarily on headcount trending. Through the analysis of current vs. forecasted headcount, a company is able to determine its talent gaps against the budgeted headcount in the business plan annually.

Situational WFP

Situational workforce planning is similar to the traditional model in that it analyzes the variances between actual vs. needed headcount. However, this model is used as a one-time approach to address a specific business challenge (e.g. merging companies, relocating an office).

Intermediate WFP

Intermediate workforce planning provides a higher level of sophistication and uses more data points to provide a more detailed view of workforce needs. In addition to business plan and headcount data, it also accounts for the relationships between the data points. In other words, if one piece of information changes, what will be the impact on the other needs reflected in the plan? Two types of capability in this area include workforce analytics and scenario modeling:

Workforce Analytics

Workforce Analytics moves the workforce planning model to an intermediate level by engaging in heavier quantitative data analysis. This approach goes beyond headcount analysis to examine relationships between key data variables such as employee demographics, cost, turnover, performance, etc.

Scenario Modeling

Scenario Modeling begins with a baseline workforce projection and determines gaps between the projected workforce supply and demand. Using the heavier quantitative approach found in workforce analytics, “what if” scenarios can be modeled to test these data relationships and determine how assumption changes change the anticipated gaps.

Advanced WFP (Strategic WFP)

This level of practice is the “strategic workforce planning” that organizations seek to achieve as they evolve their processes. Advanced workforce planning incorporates business plan, headcount data, and data relationships. It is also integrated into the business and financial planning process, so it provides a foundation for a talent plan that is aligned with the business strategy. A key advantage at this stage is the workforce segmentation capability:

Workforce Segmentation

Through Workforce Segmentation, planners take the larger workforce plan and break it into components (segments, job families, critical roles) that have more strategic importance. This allows organizations to analyze the dynamics, needs, and motivations of the critical roles. Using this information, they can then invest their resources more strategically.

Workforce Planning Maturity Model

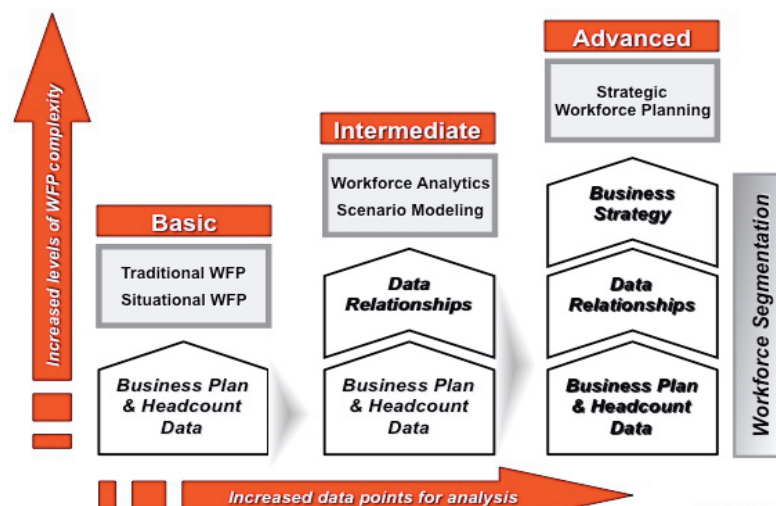


Figure 1

A LOOK INSIDE THE PROCESS

The basics of workforce planning are similar across different levels of maturity. That means if an organization can simplify the process at a high level, it can focus on improving the steps involved in the function. Figure 2 shows a general illustration of the key steps.

Each step in the process is important. Defining objectives, projecting future demand, evaluating supply, defining the gaps, and managing the gaps all require coordination between the business, finance and HR functions. Of course, the steps are easy enough to understand, but putting them into practice is the daunting task for most companies.

Defining the Objectives

In looking at your objectives, understand what types of questions to ask of yourself and your organization. Sometimes, companies may be surprised by the prospect of stepping back so far from immediate talent needs to look instead at the business as a whole. The objectives are not necessarily about talent at all; rather, they are about business direction. What are your key objectives? What kinds of considerations may make or break your effort to achieve them? What are the obstacles? What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Projecting Future Demand

This is the area where planners delve into the talent implications of the business' strategic needs. Analysis and considerations center on how the organization sources, positions, or develops the workforce to meet strategic objectives. Conversations relate to key questions such as: What are the top roles or activities needed to achieve strategic objectives? Do we have the type of roles in place to meet those needs today? Do we have the quantity of appropriate roles to meet those needs? What are the barriers? What roles and capabilities will become less important over time? Do we have the right structure to sustain the critical talent for the future?

The result of this stage of planning is a plan that identi-

fies "Demand Barriers" that reduce success (i.e., talent needs that the organization cannot currently meet). Accompanying this information is a plan for mitigating those demand barriers, including the strategy, actions needed, owners, and associated timing.

Evaluating Supply

This stage in the cycle involves two main areas of focus: internal analysis and external analysis. The internal evaluation begins with a look at the current workforce, including talent review data, HR analytics, talent management systems data, organizational chart tools, performance review data, and other sources related to company structure and talent quality. Key questions center on where the key talent is today, skills deficiencies, risk of talent loss, workforce demographics, productivity, and ability to develop key skills from within. Next, assumptions are applied to the current workforce to determine the composition of future workforce. The results of this analysis are applied toward identifying critical talent and skills needed both now and in the future to support the business plan. Notably, this includes segmentation of the workforce into critical, core, non-core, and non-essential talent areas.

External analysis draws on industry information to help identify possible changes in the talent landscape that may affect future workforce plans. From federal sources such as Census data and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics informa-

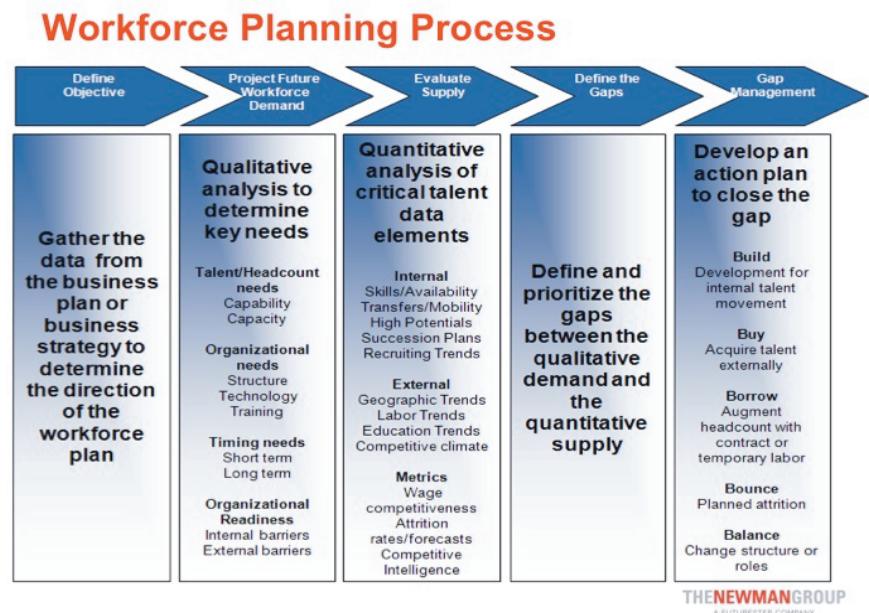


Figure 2

Define the Gaps

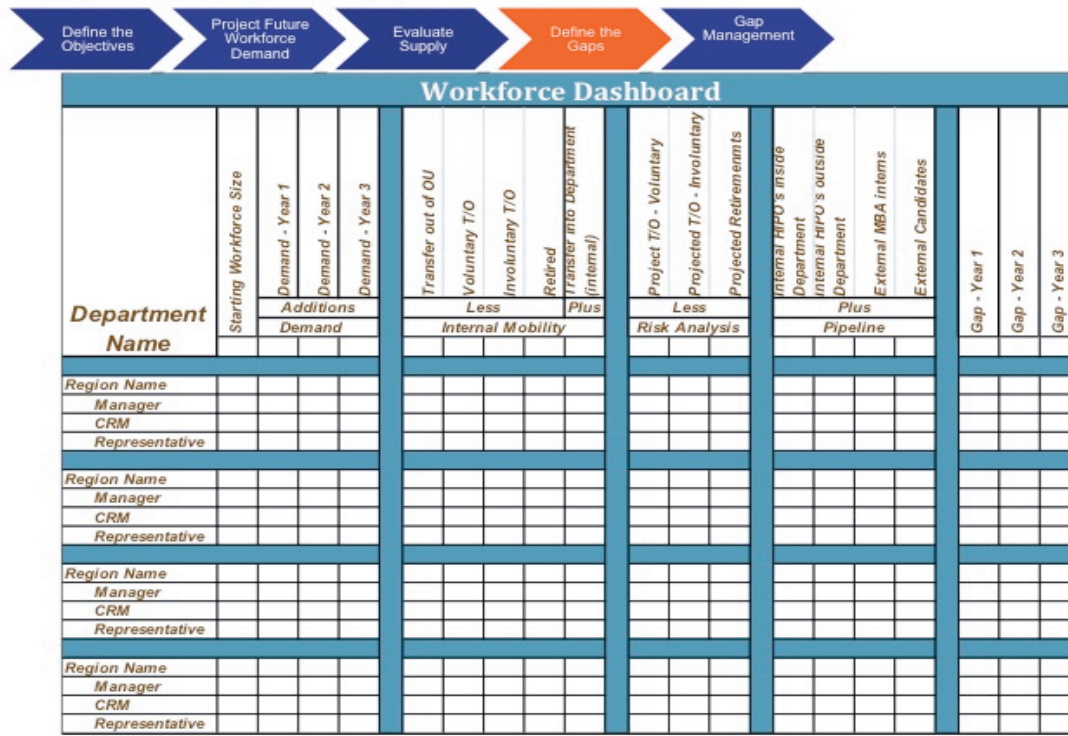


Figure 3

tion to trade associations and university research, there is a wealth of information to draw from in assessing the talent landscape. Key questions center around the trends based on benchmark data, the skill composition of the changing workforce, and changes in economic conditions that may affect talent availability. The result is a clearer picture of the impact of economy, regulation, and industry trends as it relates to the talent supply. This analysis can help an organization focus recruiting resources in the most critical areas.

Defining the Gaps

The workforce dashboard above provides a concise view of what is needed to determine the gaps in workforce supply against workforce needs (see Figure 3). Key considerations include starting workforce size followed by year-over-year demand, predicted internal mobility, voluntary and involuntary attrition and retirement, and projected internal and external pipelines. The result is a clear gap that shows the type and the quantity of talent in projected shortfalls.

Gap Management

What do you do once you've identified the talent gaps your

organization faces over the next one- three- or five year strategic time-frame? Based on the gaps that a company defines, there are generally five main options. They comprise the classic "Build, Buy, Borrow, Bounce, (and Balance)" strategy:

Build: Keep an eye on the high-potentials within your business/function even if the roles they are currently in will no longer be needed in future years. Help to build development plans to mold them into the new roles defined through the demand-planning exercises.

Buy: Watch competitors and stay close to the external talent pipelines to be able to bring on new talent rapidly.

Borrow: When roles become vacant — determine if they are part of the future demand. If not, consider short-term strategies such as using temporary help or contract labor to fill the immediate gap.

Bounce: Closely monitor performance management to manage the attrition in a way that frees up headcount

to accommodate the identification/training of new talent needed for future demand.

Balance: Review the organizational structure components (management structure, reporting relationships, span of control, compensation, capabilities & knowledge needed, etc.) to ensure the alignment with the future demand needs.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO EVOLVE A STRATEGIC WORK- FORCE PLANNING FUNCTION?

So, what is needed to make truly strategic workforce planning a reality? The answer, in a word: process. According to a Corporate Leadership Council study, the perception of HR effectiveness at delivering on strategic workforce planning needs is quite low. Only 29% of companies feel their HR departments are effective at doing this. To boost the workforce planning capabilities of HR, the organization must work cohesively in a way that allows the people involved to gather both qualitative and quantitative data, analyze it for current trends to avoid pitfalls, and better predict future talent needs.

This doesn't mean that HR needs to be effective at being both consultative (to gather qualitative data) and analytical (to make sense of quantitative data). Instead, it must align itself through engagement models to become a "teaming" unit that interfaces with existing financial schedules, oper-

ational strategy sessions, and reviews of internal and external talent movements to better understand future needs and the talent shortages associated with those needs.

While the idea of tackling the workforce planning challenge may seem daunting at first, most companies face similar workforce planning challenges today. The majority of organizations are ineffectual at predicting future talent demands, but a growing awareness and proven successes are driving companies to take on a more strategic approach.

Industries most heavily impacted by talent issues — aging talent, scarce talent, and high growth — have led the way in creating effective strategic workforce planning practices, but other industries will need to follow as the economy continues to improve and demand for key talent increases.

In any case, workforce planning fails when it is viewed as an HR issue rather than a business issue. Today, companies are beginning to treat it as a business issue, and that's where the success comes. Successful organizations are identifying talent needs in detail, aligning key processes to address those needs, and as a result, improving their ability to win in the competition for critical talent. Strategic workforce planning will

not happen overnight, but as a means of breaking out of the crisis mode in identifying talent needs, it is a goal that is well worth the effort.

**Strategic
workforce planning
will not happen
overnight.**



Mitzi Jordan is VP, solutions development, for The Newman Group, where she consults with organizations on all facets of talent management. She has a proven track record in leading large initiatives in key areas, including workforce planning, recruiting and sourcing solutions, performance management, and succession management. As a recognized thought leader, she is a frequent speaker at industry events and webinars for ERE, HCI, HR.com, and other industry forums.

Six Degrees of Engagement for Leaders

*Your recruiting team must be passionate about what it's doing;
if not, candidates will know.*

By Bruce Ferguson

It's quite possible that the recruiter function is more crucial now than it ever has been in corporate history. Granted, you may have fewer positions to fill than you did, say, three years ago. But the ones that are on your desk right now are critical to your company's current vitality and its future strategy. Each person you and your team place represents an expensive investment in helping your company achieve its full potential—not only surviving now, but also thriving in the future.

This makes it especially essential that your team experiences the benefits of all that we have come to understand about employee engagement. The concept of employee engagement was built and matured when companies were competing viciously with each other to attract and keep huge populations of employees. (Or making sure that certain people would not be available to the competition.) So employee engagement efforts were pointed in the direction of making sure the right people were content and inspired in their jobs—once they were in their jobs.

Why is employee engagement suddenly more important to the recruiting organization?

You're the one who is tasked to make sure that your company is always going to be stocked with the people who will help turn strategy into reality. And that includes making sure your high-priority target new hires will participate in creating a culturally cohesive experience that will move the entire company in the right direction. So, now more than ever before, you are the keeper of your company's culture flame. And that means your recruiting team must be engaged like never before. The proven benefits of engagement can make your team more effective in multiple ways.

They are more likely to invest more energy and creativity in finding just the right candidates to fill those critical positions that will move your company forward. Engaged recruiters are motivated by more than just hitting their numbers. They care about the prospects of their company and they are personally interested in marketplace trends and developments. So they are more likely to invest discretionary effort in cre-

atively sourcing and meeting the hidden talent gems.

Engaged recruiters are more likely to connect with high-quality candidates. Candidates who are seeking exciting corporate cultures and strategies will consider how excited the recruiters are about the opportunities on the table. An inauthentic, dispirited presentation is going to ring flat and false. In contrast, the excited, inspired recruiter will be able to convey that passion to the right candidate looking for that correct mix of inspiring culture and winning strategy. Since like attracts like, you will want your recruiters to be just the kind of people your target candidate will want to work with.

By the same token, engaged recruiters will be able to spot candidates who are just in it for the paycheck. You need recruiters to gauge the authenticity of candidates' excitement. And engaged recruiters will be more alert to scripted responses and less-than-authentic resumes.

For all the benefits of having engaged recruiters, there are definite hazards to having unengaged—or even actively disengaged—people on your team tasked with the job of building your organization's future through the talent you acquire. Unengaged recruiters have lost appreciation for the fact that they carry influence over the prospects of your company, as well as the personal futures of the candidates they consider. Unengaged recruiters are more likely to conduct dull, spiritless interviews, which, in turn, could drive away the talent you need to achieve the goals necessary to turn your company's prospects around to the positive. They will do the bare minimum required by their job descriptions—which could send really great talent to your competition.

Actively disengaged recruiters—those employees identified by the Gallup Organization as being more likely to actually sabotage your organization—could do your company very real harm. They can give away proprietary information, enriching the value of the candidate who then goes to your competition. They can offend candidates by rude treatment, which then puts the word on the street that your company is not the best choice for high quality talent.

RECRUITERS FIRST

Your Recruitment Team's Engagement Begins With You

Recognize that everyone is individually responsible for his or her own happiness on the job. And, if your recruiters are the kind of high-quality talent who have what it takes to staff your company with additional high-quality talent, they know that part of taking care of their own work experience is choosing their team leaders well. If you run a recruiting organization, that would be you. And in a very real sense you must re-recruit your own team every day by your actions and leadership behaviors.

So, to help you understand what those behaviors might be for your team, I have put together a list that I call the Six Degrees of Engagement for Leaders.

Degree 1: You must be authentic. If you want your recruiters to have open, authentic conversations with their candidates, you must be open and authentic with your recruiters. Share information as quickly as you can. Never lie or try to present yourself as something or someone you are not.

Degree 2: You must be consistent. Your people must be able to count on you to behave and make decisions in a way that's consistent with your company's (and presumably their) values. If you are having personal difficulty manifesting your organization's values by predictable behaviors that align with what's important to the organization, you may not be the most authentic match to the company. Go back to Degree 1 and seriously consider whether perhaps the disengagement might be coming from you. That conclusion wouldn't necessarily make you wrong. It just might mean that you and your company aren't right for each other.

Degree 3: You must be imaginative. Not everyone thinks of him- or herself as being naturally imaginative. And there are different degrees of imagination, creativity, and originality. You don't have to be a creative genius to be a visionary leader. But you do have to capture your recruiters' imaginations and help them see how their own creativity can lead them to making surprising discoveries of great talent—before your competition gets there first.

Degree 4: You must be flexible. One of the challenges of setting up a creative organization that runs on imagination is that not every experiment is going to succeed. Your people must feel safe to try new approaches and sourcing techniques—even if it means coming up empty-handed after some great effort. That will encourage them to try another tactic, the one that might pay off in a big way. Your flexibility and tolerance for uncertainty will help them stay courageous for the adventure of finding the talent that will see your company to its new objectives.

Degree 5: You must be service-oriented. You want your recruiters to demonstrate through their actions the kind of employee-centric culture your company is aspiring to be. So you must demonstrate through your actions that you consider yourself to be there to support and serve your team. They're not there to help you. You're there to help them do what they do well. And together, you and your people are a team to help your company attract and recruit amazing talent.

Degree 6: You must be communicative. Authentically. It looks like we've come full circle. Knowledge is power, to be sure, but it's at its most powerful when it's shared with your team. When you share information freely, you are modeling for your team that they're expected to do the same with and for each other. This builds a culture of trust, which will then transmit to your candidates that your company is just the right place in which they can invest their best work in an open, collaborative environment.

These are the behaviors of every engaging leader. And, paradoxically, if you implement them in a way that's authentically consistent with the values and culture of your company, you will differentiate your organization from your competitors—even if they are following the same guidelines. No two companies are exactly alike. And it will be the engaging way your recruiters behave that says to your high-value candidates, "This is where you will find your best opportunities for the future you dream of."

Isn't that ultimately the name of the game?



Bruce Ferguson has over 25 years of operational management experience emphasizing a collaborative and decisive style. He has extensive experience in planning and managing for growth and has been called an innovator, risk-taker, and visionary change agent. He is co-CEO of i-Hire, a staffing outsourcing firm. He was at Exult, Inc., the first full service HR business process outsourcing company, as its Chief People Officer. His team delivered human and intellectual capital identification, process re-engineering, and offered a recruiting footprint of approximately 50,000 hires annually.

Social Media: It's about Engagement

Some of the same social-media mistakes being made by recruiting departments were made when job boards were new. Social media can work, but not when concepts like “community” are given lip service.

By Raghav Singh

The basic idea behind using [social media](#) for recruitment is simple: people are social animals, and that means one of two things. First, they have lots of friends, so send them job postings and they'll distribute them to their friends, which should produce candidates. Second, they want to belong to groups. Involve them in talent communities and eventually they'll become candidates. That's how it's supposed to work, but the record shows that getting hires is elusive. The CEO of a vendor that makes an application for recruiting with social media recently told me that the vast majority of its clients make only a small number of hires through social networks.

The Personal vs. The Professional

One reason why getting results is difficult for recruiters is because many make the assumption that social networks work the same way for personal and professional purposes. Research shows that this is not the case.

The popularity of social networks at a personal level is largely because they appeal to people's Id—the part of their psyche that consists of desire. The desire to build social capital and support their aspirations. Social capital is created by the relationships that give a person a sense of belonging—friends and connections that may be of help in say, finding a job. This can contribute to a person's sense of well-being and self-esteem. This is borne out by data that shows people who are most active on social networks tend to have low-self esteem. This doesn't mean that everyone who is active on Facebook is suffering from low self-esteem; the research

shows an inverse correlation between self-esteem and activity on social networks. The likely explanation is that online social networks let people develop an illusion of having hundreds of “friends” that they can broadcast their lives to. Most of us know of at least a few people who post the most trivial and intimate aspects of their lives on their Facebook pages, things that they would never say in a face-to-face conversation.

Another study recently found that for men, the number of connections on a social network is a status symbol: a way to impress others, especially women. Research also shows that the primary basis for people to choose whom they connect with on social networks is ethnicity, age, religion, and sexual orientation.

All the main motivations people have to join and participate in social networks are personal, and the benefits are not equally available in the workplace. Social capital is hard to build in the workplace because relationships with others are not primarily social, and policies and culture restrict speech. Programs like diver-

sity programs discourage limiting one's circle of contacts to individuals of similar ethnicity, age, religion, and sexual orientation.

Employers are increasingly using social media to screen out candidates and even monitor them after they are hired. Whatever the merits of doing so, such behavior creates an environment of distrust. This is why products that are intended to foster collaboration between employees and tap social networks in the workplace are not used much, while collaboration in the public domain (Wikipedia, Linux) is

Many [recruiters] make the assumption that social networks work the same way for personal and professional purposes. Research shows that this is not the case.

ENGAGE PEOPLE

flourishing. Informal and off-the-cuff remarks, risky and unusual ideas, are guaranteed to result in mistakes and failure. Who would want to set themselves up to be attacked based on what was recorded on an officially provided social network?

All of these factors make for powerful headwinds that a recruiter confronts when attempting to use social networks for finding talent. The fact that making referrals has no negative consequences is not relevant. Most people don't make such distinctions in using social networks associated with their employers.

Talent Communities

A [talent community](#) is supposed to be a pool of talent to be used to get hires. Most are set up to collect business card information from anyone on the career site who does not want to apply for a job or leave a resume. This does not create a community. It produces a marketing database—a list of prospects who may have an interest in employment at that employer. That may work if the employer does not require skilled professionals—retail stores for example—but for any position that involves even a modicum of specialization, this is near worthless. Knowing that a person's title is "Account Executive" doesn't help much if you're looking to hire sales staff.

A community means a group of people that share some common interests and interact with each other. What creates a community is engagement. It is not a random group of strangers that don't know the existence of each other. People coming into a store or movie theater don't form a community.

This is where social media can be the most effective for recruiters. By bringing together a group of disparate individuals to form a true community—an engaged group—a recruiter or an employer can create a private pool of talent to draw on. But engagement is not easily achieved, online or offline. Think about your close friends and the groups you joined voluntarily. What made you join, and more importantly what makes you stay? It's the engagement you have with others there: the quality of conversations; the value of the content you receive; and how close-

ly you get to know the others there. The social cost of leaving is high.

Employers that have created successful talent communities—a reliable source of hires—include Sodexo, Microsoft, and Hewitt, among others. Their success has come as a result of focused and diligent efforts to create a high level of engagement with the members. The model that's emerging also suggests that talent communities work best when they are narrowly focused—the same types of jobs, at a similar level, or narrowly defined skill sets. That ensures that the participants have a lot in common. But once they are set up, creating engagement requires an ongoing effort to keep the participants coming back. This means starting and encouraging relevant conversations and

providing content that's valuable to the members. Data on participation in social networks shows that less than 10% of people in online communities typically drive most of the content. About 1% are heavy contributors, and 9% are intermittent. The bulk—90%—are just there to read and observe. Given this [90-9-1](#) rule, it's critical that a talent community be seeded with some heavy contributors if it is to succeed. Find people who are very passionate about the field, industry, or discipline to join.

One caveat here is that the heavy contributors should not be restricted much in what they contribute. The best ones

generate controversy because they have strong opinions and original ideas, which is what people like to read. That can make legal and marketing departments very uncomfortable, but an employer can't have it both ways. Start putting too many restrictions on what people can contribute or require approvals and the community will become a wasteland with little or no engagement.

The Evolution of Tools

Software applications for supporting talent communities have started to evolve in the direction of creating engagement. Much of the scarcity of results can be attributed to applications that focused entirely on job distribution. This is just an extension of an employee referral program, where participation by employees is rarely beyond the single digits. Recruiters want simple solutions, and the

[Collecting] business card information from anyone on the career site who does not want to apply for a job or leave a resume...does not create a community.

early applications that emerged gave the impression that distributing jobs through social networks was the way to go—connect, select, broadcast. Paying rewards do little to improve the outcomes since the likelihood that an employee will collect one is small, and the amount is not very large.

This is a familiar path for recruiting. The social media space is mirroring the job board space of the '90s. Back then the emphasis was on distributing jobs to as many boards as possible—what can be labeled the Pontiac strategy (wider is better). That was what their ad agencies were recommending. Eventually, clients realized that only a dozen or so were useful, and the boards began to find niches. Most recruiters have realized that going wide was not the answer, and they need is to go deep, not wide—to focus their efforts on the niches they are targeting, despite anything ad agencies say.

Today, measurement of job board results is common, and employers are moving away from them, but it took 15 years for that to happen. So job distribution is still where we see the most products, and these have some value, but these are low effort, low yield solutions. Unfortunately there's no free lunch. Newer tools are starting to emerge—Cachinko being an example—where the focus is much more on creating engagement, but widespread adoption will require a shift in thinking among recruiters.



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For Recruiting, Video is Hot (and Cold)

The video resume is dead. Long live the video interview.

By John Zappe

When was the last time you got a video application? Were you tempted to take a look? Did you? Right then, if you didn't hire the candidate, you might have opened yourself up to an EEOC claim. It didn't happen. It hasn't. Yet. But you discovered the other reason that video resumes never caught on with recruiters: They just take too much time.

Now consider the video interview. You control the what, when, and how. The legal issues are little different than if the candidate was interviewed in your office. But instead of the travel expenses, and the scheduling challenges, the video interview is cheap and convenient. For you, the hiring manager, and the candidate.

As trends go, the video resume is cold; the video interview, hot.

In the two articles that follow, you'll learn about the use of video resumes and interviews. Why the latter is rapidly gaining popularity, while the former, except in some limited situations such as performance auditions or creative occupations, never achieved critical mass. Part of each article deals with the legal considerations. While video resumes may pose the most worrisome EEOC risks, video interviews aren't without issues. Recording them creates a record that might someday become the evidence against you.

Overall, what we found when we examined the two 21st-century recruiting tools is that the video resume is a niche tool, while the video interview is going to save you time and money when you're ready for that first face-to-face meeting with your top prospects.

Saving Time and Money, Video Interviews Take Off

In contrast to the video resume, the video interview might as well be sliced bread.

"I am a firm supporter of the video interview," says Rayanne Thorn, a recruiter and marketing director with job-posting service Broadbean Technology, and a fervid opponent of video resumes. "For the same reasons I've hated pictures on a resume, I don't like video resumes ... you're rejecting me from just looking at me."

But for as much as dislikes the whole idea of video resumes, she endorses the video interview.

"You've made your (candidate) list. You've picked the top candidates for all the right (legal) reasons. You're just doing a first round (of interviews), but you don't have all the travel expenses and your candidates don't have to take time off," says Thorn. "It's convenient for them and for you (and the hiring manager)."

Video interviews, she says, are a "win-win."

That's what nearly every recruiter who has conducted a

video interview in the last few years says.

It's important, here, to distinguish between the video interviews of the 1980s and 1990s and modern video technology, which is making the remote interview accessible to everyone.

The old school video interview required a candidate to get to a studio, often at Kinko's or a video service center. Unless the employer had a studio in-house, the recruiter had to do the same. Arrangements could take days to make and the cost ranged upward of \$250 an hour.

Now you can conduct an interactive video interview, record it, and make it available to the hiring manager for under \$100. Thanks to Skype, even budget-minded shops can participate.

"I don't know why it (using video) started with the resume, but the better use of video is the interview," says Hope Gurion, CareerBuilder's chief development officer. CareerBuilder launched a video resume service a couple years ago,

but shut it down after about a year when it found enthusiasm waning among recruiters and job seekers. On the other hand, Gurion says CareerBuilder's still relatively new video interview service is building momentum.

"It makes so much more sense for a company to do a first interview this way," adds Gurion. "It's a time and money saver."

The Aberdeen Group, in its 2009 whitepaper *Video-Enabled Talent Acquisition: Improving Cost, Quality, and Satisfaction*, said this about video interviewing:

"Organizations that are seeking to make better hiring decisions by more efficiently enabling collaboration among all stakeholders in the hiring process are moving beyond mere web-conferencing and video-conferencing and making video-enabled interviewing an integrated part of their talent acquisition strategy, and are having a real impact on recruiting costs and candidate quality."

Big Savings

Besides the savings in travel expenses, and the ease of scheduling, especially when using recorded interviews in which candidates respond to prepared questions, the Aberdeen researchers found two less obvious, but equally important benefits to using video.

First was an improvement in screening candidates for fit. "Managers," the report says, "gain a better sense of candidates." And candidates, particularly in live, two-way interviews, get a better feel for the culture, and it helps build the employer brand. "Both of these factors contribute to improving first-year retention rates," says the report, of up to six percent for its "best-in-class" video users.

The second surprising benefit is how using video expands the talent pool by eliminating geographic boundaries, while simultaneously immersing new employees in remote work management. This latter point may not be significant to all companies, but, as CareerBuilder's Gurion pointed out, more than a few have remote sales offices where, without video, hiring means an on-site recruitment effort by a regional manager. A video interview instead will, besides the other benefits, serve to introduce the successful candidate to video contact with management.

Certainly, most employers turn to video interviewing pri-

marily for its convenience and cost-savings.

Chip Luman, COO of HireVue, an industry leader in online interviewing, says company business has increased by a factor of eight since the beginning of the U.S. recession in 2008. By early fall, the company sales had already exceeded all of 2009.

"This is an idea that has really come around," Luman says. "It's been building (for a decade), but the recession and companies looking to save expenses and still get top people, has been a driver."

For instance, the global mining and resources company Rio Tinto, a HireVue customer, is saving \$10,000 to \$20,000 per candidate for some jobs. Most companies won't see that kind of savings unless they have operations in the same kind of distant and inaccessible locations. However, it isn't unusual for a company to see savings in the \$1,500 - \$2,500 range.

Skype, the free video service, is fine for one-on-one screens, so long as the candidate has a webcam and is also a Skype user. Techies and IT-focused employers are proponents of Skype interviews, but most companies opt to use one of the many vendors. Prices for some are as low as \$10 or \$20, but expect to spend at least \$50 and more likely \$100 to \$200 depending on the service.

GreenJobInterview is typical of the higher-end providers. Greg Rokos, one of the co-founders, describes it as "concierge-level service." Candidates without a webcam—and he says that's more than half—are mailed a camera. Everything goes through the company's systems, which provide a secure connection, and also handle scheduling, tracking, and reminders.

Curiously, GreenJobInterview was a companion startup a few years back to FutureResume, which was the flagship. That site offered video resume creation and storage to job seekers. But, it didn't take off the way the interview service did, in part because of the EEOC concerns, and in part because the timing for video interviewing was right.

Spurred now by economic considerations, nearly everyone believes that the growth of video interviewing was inevitable once the Internet became ubiquitous and broadband became commonplace.

Dabbling with online video for employer marketing, for job postings, and job branding went back almost to the earliest days of the Internet. The "first real tipping point,"

There's nothing inherently more discriminatory about video than an in-person interview.

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Luman says, was the mainstream acceptance of YouTube, which launched in 2005. That was shortly after cameras became standard on laptops. Then as people started creating video content specifically to upload to YouTube, they grew comfortable with the medium. And that included recruiters, some of whom already had experience using the cumbersome video-conferencing equipment of the 20th century. Particularly after 9/11, when travel became complicated, recruiters began to consider the possibilities of using the Internet as a substitute for at least the first round of interviewing.

HireVue was founded in 2004. Now, it's a crowded field, with new vendors appearing monthly. Competition is keeping prices low, even as the available features improve.

One Way or Two

There are two basic types of video interview:

1. The asynchronous or one-way interview. These are always recorded.
2. Live, two-way, fully interactive interviews, recorded or not.

The first is the cheapest and most convenient, with as many variations as there are vendors. However, they all share the same fundamentals. Candidates access a list of questions (usually text, but sometimes prerecorded by a real person). Candidates are given a specific amount of time to answer, and their response is recorded for later viewing by a recruiter or hiring manager. Among the variants are whether a candidate gets advance notice of the questions (most vendors don't allow that, but many do offer a sample, practice question); whether a candidate can re-record a response; time limits on the response; and, whether an interview session can be stopped and restarted.

The advantage of using this technique is convenience. Neither candidate nor interviewer has to schedule a specific meeting time. Once the interview is completed, all the employer stakeholders can review the candidate interviews when it suits them. Because the questions are identical for each candidate, comparison is easy.

Some employers are beginning to replace the phone screen with these types of video interviews.

The live, two-way interview is typically reserved for the

short-list candidates. Especially with employers who are replacing telephone screens with prerecorded video interviews, the live interviews help narrow the list further, before bringing in the finalists for the face-to-face meetings, which, incidentally, everyone agrees is a must.

Most often these live interviews are recorded so they can be reviewed later by the hiring team. Typically a recruiter will conduct these sessions. Sometimes, they'll be done by the hiring manager. Rarely will they be panel interviews.

HireVue offers three options: the prerecorded interview; live recorded interviews; and, live unrecorded interviews.

GreenJobInterview, another of the more popular video services, doesn't offer a recording service. "We want to be known as the brand that doesn't record," says co-founder Greg Rokos.

If that seems odd, consider that face-to-face interviews are rarely, if ever, recorded. By not recording the online interview, observes Rokos, "there's no recordkeeping requirement." The EEOC requires that employment records be retained for at least a year, and longer, under certain conditions.

Just how important a consideration that is, is a matter for each company to decide.

As is the case with video resumes, the EEOC has no particular bias for or against the video interview. The most recent word on the subject came in a 2004 informal opinion letter by Carol Miskoff, the same assistant legal counsel who wrote the informal opinion cited in the video resume article. In the letter, which actually is in response to recordkeeping in connection with video clips prior to an interview, she writes:

"It is not illegal for an employer to learn the race, gender, or ethnicity of an individual prior to an interview ... Employers need to take care in training hiring officials and human resources staff about the appropriate responses when gender, race, or ethnicity are disclosed during recruitment. Video clips might be analogized to information on a resume that clearly tells an individual's race, such as, 'President, Black Law Students Association.' In this situation, as with the video clip, the employer needs to focus on the person's qualifications for the job."

Some employers are beginning to replace the phone screen with these types of video interviews.

Jeff Allen, author, labor lawyer, and staffing agency owner, says the video interview is far safer than a video resume. “There’s no proscription against that (using video interviews),” he says. “There’s nothing inherently more discriminatory about video than an in-person interview.”

Nor does he believe that simply because one person comes across better than another—whether due to nervousness, the background environment, lighting, or other,

similar factors—is there any issue of legal discrimination. “The fact that somebody does well on a video,” says Allen, “Well, good for them.”

Luman, of HireVue, says everything on the video goes to the selection process. He’s had cases where candidates have recorded the interview in their bedroom. “It’s part of the selection test in itself. Something like that says as much about the candidate as the answers they give.”

Employers Never Fully Warmed to Video Resumes

Video-Enabled Talent Acquisition: Improving Cost, Quality, and Satisfaction

Ironically, Aleksey Vayner may have done more than anyone on earth to promote video resumes while simultaneously demonstrating their destructive power.

In October 2006 the Yale senior’s over-the-top video that he sent to UBS that month got leaked on the Internet. Vayner’s seven minutes of karate chopping, ballroom dancing, weightlifting, and business philosophy espousing went viral almost immediately, making a mockery of the then-23-year-old. A colossal blunder under any circumstance, the timing happened to coincide with the rise of YouTube, which Google bought the next month.

Not only could the world read about Vayner’s misfortune, but anyone with an Internet connection could see it for themselves. Oddly, instead of warning off would-be resume videographers, it spurred them to create their own. Suddenly, everyone was talking, if not making, video resumes.

Before Vayner, video resumes were largely the province of the creative arts. Producers, directors, dance company managers, and the like were accustomed to getting audition tapes. Usually, but not always, a paper resume was part of the package.

After Vayner, everyone got into the act. References to video resumes on Google skyrocketed: 13,400 mentions before his video versus 259,000 in the four years since. Recruiting authorities talked them up. Recruiting consultant Kevin Wheeler wrote in an ERE article just days after the

Vayner video that “...the video resume may be a good way to differentiate candidates and a way to get more qualified people to apply.”

RecruitTV launched, becoming the first site devoted to video résumés. It was followed by several more, including a CareerBuilder service in mid-2007, and, a year later, FutureResume.

Today, they’re all gone. YouTube still has a few thousand videos that turn up during a search, but many of them are either “how-tos” or spoofs. The better, serious ones are less resume and more marketing vehicles intended to supplement a traditional resume rather than replace it.

Rayanne Thorn, marketing director with Broadbean, the global job post distribution service, and a prolific blogger on RecruitingBlogs, has never received a video resume, and “wouldn’t touch it” if she did. “It’s just such an invitation to discriminate.”

What happened?

Recruiters never really warmed to the idea. Candidates discovered they weren’t very good at video production. And the lawyers warned about the potential for discrimination complaints.

“It certainly never exploded,” said Jeff Fish, vice president, digital at Bernard Hodes Group. EEOC compliance was an issue, he agreed. But the real death knell was “the sheer amount of time it takes to go through them.”

Even the most succinct video runs a minute or two. Com-

**After Vayner, everyone
got into the act.**

RESUMES AND INTERVIEWS

pare that to a paper resume which can be reviewed in seconds.

“Recruiters don’t have the time,” Fish added, though, he says, the video resume “still has a place.”

One of those places is as part of a portfolio marketing a candidate. Greg Rokos, an experienced recruiter who co-founded the video resume production site FutureResume, said that even though FutureResume was shut down in favor of a companion site for video interviews, he suspects the video resume—of sorts—may still have some life left.

“A strategically marketed video profile is a strong branding tool,” Rokos said. “If it can be packaged right and is short enough and sweet enough ... there could be an interest there.”

VisualCV isn’t strictly a video resume service, but it allows individuals to package a video with other elements, including a standard resume, to create an online portfolio. RezBuzz, on the other hand, is a video resume site. But its CEO and founder Mark Sadovnick says there are other uses for the video than as an initial application method.

“What a great way to remember candidates, especially [passive candidates](#) for the future,” he says. With companies building networks of social contacts, a video can serve as the differentiator that makes a difference for a contact.

Yes, he acknowledges there is a risk of a discrimination claim. “There’s always a risk,” he says. In his opinion, though probably not in the opinion of the company lawyer, the value of getting to see how a prospect communicates and present themselves outweighs that risk.

At leading RPO provider Accolo, the video interview is king. The video resume? “A waste of time,” says CEO John Younger, CEO. Viewing them is simply too time-consuming.

For some positions, however, Accolo will put together a set of questions for the top candidates and have them create a video response. Some of the videos are simply talking heads answering questions. Others, Younger said, are much more sophisticated.

The quality of the video “of course” influences the hiring, Younger observes. “A savvy job seeker,” he says, will

use the medium “far more completely than just a talking head with hard lighting.” To Younger, that shows more initiative, ability, and communication skills, even if the video isn’t perfect, than does the talking-head version.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission doesn’t particularly care about the technology a company uses. But it does care how the selection tools are used.

In an informal opinion letter in September, Carol R. Miskoff, EEOC assistant legal counsel had this to say: “The EEO laws do not expressly prohibit the use of specific technologies or methods for selecting employees, and therefore do not prohibit the use of video resumes.”

Later in the letter, she cautions:

“However, biased treatment is not always conscious... because viewing a video may trigger unconscious bias, especially if opportunities for face-to face conversation are absent, covered entities should implement proactive measures, or best practices, to minimize this risk. For example, before using video resumes and other video screening devices, a covered entity could proactively formulate and communicate to selection officials how the video resumes can help assess specific qualifications and skills that are necessary for success in the position. Additionally, a covered entity could require that several people assess each video resume in relation to the stated job requirements.”

Reread that last sentence, especially the part about having “several people assess each video resume.” That would come at the point you are creating your candidate pool, not picking the top candidates from all those in it.

No wonder, then, that employment lawyers everywhere counsel: forget the video resume.

Says Jeff Allen, employment lawyer, author, recruiter, and staffing agency owner: “Why bother?” While technically the unsuccessful jobseeker must establish discrimination, “As a practical matter, if an employer considers a resume with a photo (paper or video), they are presumed to have discriminated,” says Allen.

If you get a video resume, Allen’s advice is send it back with a note saying that only paper resumes without a photo are accepted.

**The EEOC doesn’t
care about the
technology used, only
how it’s used.**



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