

Revving Up

By Anne Freedman
Staffing Columnist

Now, when the burning desire to hire, hire, hire is mostly on a low simmer, staffing professionals should be stoking up for the future.

Take this time and use it well, says Alice Snell, vice president of iLogos Research, an independent research arm of Recruitsoft Inc.

This time of economic uncertainty, she says, "is absolutely good news for the staffing departments." Away from the "hiring frenzy," HR professionals now have the time to review their processes and procedures. They have the time to build up databases of quality candidates. They have the time to "anticipate changes in the supply-and-demand balances" of the job market.

Companies that aren't using this time now to revamp and recharge may be left behind once the economy turns around.

And one aspect of recruiting that definitely needs revamping, Snell says, is corporate career sites.

"There's got to be this understanding that there is a corporate asset here [at corporate career Web sites] and so how do you treat any other corporate asset that's got value?" asks Snell. "How do you optimize that value?"

Of course, these are not rhetorical questions. Snell has very definite ideas on how to leverage the inherent value of corporate career Web sites, and iLogos recently released a research study, *Value Creation Through Corporate Careers Websites*, that details a variety of ways companies can improve candidate quality, increase savings in process costs (the cost labor intensive tasks), reduce sourcing costs (the cost of finding good candidates) and "opportunity costs," the latter of which are assessed by calculating the cost to the company of an unfilled position over time.

In just five years, the number of Global 500 companies with dedicated career Web sites has grown from 29 percent to 91 percent, according to iLogos Research. Five-year-old statistics were not available for the Fortune 500, but in the past three years, the overwhelming majority of Fortune 500 companies have had career Web sites (89 percent in 2000 and 2001, edging slightly higher to 92 percent in 2002).

Now that the medium has been accepted, it's time for companies to take better advantage of their career sites, says Snell, whose company outlines 17 best practices in that regard. "There's direct correlation to savings and quality that come from implementing these best practices," Snell says.

Some best practices-such as creating an automatic requisition number tracking system-result in process savings, or reduce the cost of labor-intensive tasks. Some best practices-such as using pre-screening tools-create process savings, improve candidate quality and increase opportunity cost savings, according to the study.

Other best practices outlined by iLogos include offering an anonymous job application (prompting some passive candidates to become more active), saving candidate profiles (creating a database of likely candidates for use when needed), and adding a "job agent" (e-mailing candidates when a job opens up).

According to the study, the most common practices include automatic requisition tracking (64 percent adoption rate in 2002), providing information on company culture (75 percent), having a searchable job database (68 percent), providing a link on the company's home page (86 percent), offering "one click to apply" (75 percent), publicizing a privacy policy (71 percent) and offering information on employee benefits (64 percent).

In this age of resume deluge, one surprising finding was that so few companies have adopted pre-screening tools. Only 9 percent of the companies used such a tool in 2002, although the increase of 104 percent over the previous year indicates that such technology has been appreciated by some companies.

Using such best practices creates "a tremendous competitive advantage" that will pay off dividends when the economy turns around, Snell says.

Company Web sites that are unwieldy and unresponsive give job candidates, customers and consumers a corporate message that top executives would not appreciate, she says.

"When a career site visitor comes away with essentially a bad impression of that company," Snell says, "that is very harmful to a corporate brand."

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