

## Getting the Right Person at the Right Time

By Julia King  
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- **Who:** Jon Walker, human resources global director, Dow Chemical Co., Midland, Mich.
- **Problem:** Receiving lots of resumes, complete with all the trendy IT and business buzzwords, but not having a consistent, cost-efficient or effective way to quickly and accurately assess job seekers' true abilities or their potential for success at the company.

Dow, a \$28 billion company with more than 900 sites in 65 countries, is organized into eight global business units, none of which had the ability to archive and track resumes. This meant that a hiring manager in one business unit had no way of knowing about a qualified job seeker who may have applied to the company through a different business unit.

- **Solution:** Dow implemented a central electronic repository into which all incoming resumes from around the world -- including those posted from third-party, Web-based job boards -- are directly funneled. Skills profiles are created for all applicants and are automatically checked for a match each time a new job requisition is entered into the system. An application service provider was hired to install and then manage the technology on a day-to-day basis.



*Jon Walker,  
human resources  
global director  
at Dow Chemical Co.*

Dow Chemical Co. was used to receiving literally thousands of resumes -- via postal mail and e-mail -- which would pile up and go ignored until a hiring manager was presented with a job requisition for a chemist, database specialist, manufacturing manager or maybe a plant operator. Manually sifting through the resumes to find the people with the right skills for the job could take weeks or even months. Add to that another several weeks to contact the appropriate applicants, set up and conduct interviews, and review notes from those interviews, and a full financial quarter could pass before a new employee was actually hired and working at the company back in early 2001.

Today, Dow's hiring cycle time is down from an average of 95 days to 30 to 35 days. Its headhunter and other recruiting costs are down 25%, and it has cut its job advertising costs by 35%. This is primarily the result of implementing an automated resume-tracking and worker-profile system hosted by Recruitsoft Inc., a San Francisco-based application service provider. The system has paid for itself within nine months of deployment and has earned a 6-to-1 return on investment over the past two years, according to Jon Walker, Dow's human resources global director.

### How It Works

All job applications and resumes generated by newspaper advertisements, Internet job boards and recruiter referrals are directed to Dow's corporate Web site, where they are immediately funneled into the Recruitsoft system. Dow hiring managers who tap into the system's central repository can immediately review resumes. They can also create templates to ask applicants very specific questions in order to validate their experience and expertise.

For example, for a European sales job opening, a template might include questions about the applicant's passport status, ability to travel and language skills.

"The faster you can talk to [applicants], the more you can share your goals and culture, and the faster you can make a match," says Walker. "We're a science and technology company, not just a chemical company, so we're trying to hire the same technology people as Intel or finance people as Merrill Lynch." Even in a down economy, speed is critical to acquiring the best and the brightest talent, he notes.

Even more useful is the system's central repository, which now contains thousands of resumes against which Dow hiring managers can quickly compare incoming job requisitions.

Walker tells the story of a young woman who was rejected for an auditor's job in the office of the comptroller. Later, a financial analyst position opened up in the company's finance department. "But before they even advertised the job, this woman's profile popped up against the requisition, and they hired her on the spot. When you hire someone before you even post the job, it reduces your cycle time immensely," Walker says.

"Before, when we had paper resumes, we had no centralized way to do any kind of consistent workflow," he says. "Now the deal is we have a system that doesn't sleep."

The Web-based Recruitsoft system also allows Walker to create future employee supply-and-demand scenarios by analyzing the experiences, skills and competencies contained in worker profiles stored in the central repository. "We're now able to track the right people," he says.

Looking ahead, Walker says he foresees Dow exchanging applicant profile information with other companies, excluding Dow's direct competitors.

"Why not do this, especially if the company is a customer of ours?" he asks. "We could go from 100,000 profiles to 1 million profiles to create a talent pool and a network that works better for everyone."