

Agency or Online

Many industry critics have long been forecasting the decline of staffing agencies, in the face of growing competition from job boards, on-line recruitment teams and social networking and recruiting, but the industry continues to grow, and we offer an important role for sourcing the best talent. Newer sourcing or attraction models, as I call them, may seem to preclude the third-party recruiter, whereas client and candidate expectations change and evolve in-line with technology, but there remains a core need for recruiting specialists to find talent for companies, and to help that talent become hireable.

When I first entered the industry I recruited qualified engineers. Most firms saw agencies as advisers, with their eyes and ears in the market place, who focused efforts on attracting great candidates. As a recruitment consultant - your value was measured by - the candidates you could find, or knew, your market intelligence regarding shifting trends and pay scales, and competitor activity.

So what are some of the main advantages of using an agency now?

Knowledge of the market

The best recruiters have their finger on the pulse of their “specialty market” and can give the company’s hiring team - insight into what is happening in their market area. They (recruiters) should know the available talent, their location, how to reach them, their salary rates, career expectations, available skill-sets, and any current hiring complexities. Other businesses are most likely struggling to find the same people; therefore, you as the expert recruiter need to offer alternative solutions. The best recruiters will act as partners and collaborators and be your eyes and ears within the market.

Extended reach

Some candidates are hard to find. They may be passive, or they may be selective. If they aren't responding to your job advertisements, or don't see themselves as part of your “talent pool” they most likely have a relationship with some other trusted specialist recruiter. Sometimes they are just too busy, with a job and family activities, to search full time and it will be hit or miss with reaching them; it may take nights or weekends to reach them. A good recruiter must sometimes be relentless in seeking a quality candidate - using candidates you can reach to contact them. Agencies have many networks - each consultant, candidate, client or collaborator has the potential to leverage their network and contacts to help connect your company with candidates that possess the skills and experiences needed - many of whom will be off the radar of an in-house team or hiring manager.

Candidates not applicants

A lot of time, money, talent, and effort are aimed at attracting applicants, whether they are responding to an ad, applying on-line or through your website. Many of these people will not be a good match for the role or position you are trying to fill - a lot of time will be invested in filtering, assessing, matching, and communicating with them. When we talk with company HR or hiring teams we hear about these bad experiences. However, using a recruitment agency should mean you see only good candidates - job seekers who match all the criteria you provided within the job description, therefore, all worthy of consideration and an interview.

Help with employer brand

Large companies invest a lot of time and money in developing and marketing their employer brand, but many smaller businesses don't have the same resources. If you choose your agency wisely then they can give potential candidates a real insight into your business - what it's like to work there, benefits, career openings available, and a feel for your company culture. After all, you don't want tuna with good taste; you want tuna that taste good. If you partner closely with the right staffing or recruiting agency – they will want to spend time getting to know you and some of your key managers, and it is beneficial for YOU to foster those kind of relationships – this will enable the staffing or recruiting agency to represent YOU as the “**employer of choice**”.

Access to key strategic skills

In the most recent **Jobs Outlook**, the number one reason that companies gave for using a recruitment agency was to gain short term access to key strategic skills, a reason that has been growing in importance over the last 3 years and with talent shortages, due to low unemployment and the gap in technical skills (STEM), this is not surprising. Staffing or recruiting agencies can bring in qualified, experienced help on short notice and with most you have an opportunity to hire them permanently if they fit your culture and help enhance the team chemistry. These flexible solutions are particularly crucial for a long-term project, emergent needs, or some other initiative.

Budget/Resource

Recent in-house recruiter surveys have hinted at a decrease in agency use, due to a tightening of budgets and resources. However, when I asked corporate recruiters on social media to give me reasons why they were using staffing or recruiting agencies – many answered that it was due to budget and resources – they found it beneficial financially to use recruiters vice hiring permanent employees to recruit. Remember you ALWAYS “get what you pay for” and it is easier and cheaper in the long-run for managers to interview from an agency shortlist - in fact many hiring managers, themselves possibly placed by recruitment agencies in the past, often favor third party recruiters. There is little doubt that a hard-pressed HR or in-house team can benefit from the networks of a trusted agency partner.

Of course, most business will have their own reasons for using recruitment agencies. Most use us for either temporary staffing services or reducing cost (larger companies are using MSP – management service providers – to manage, monitor, and limit staffing costs. For some companies it may be the “short-term fix” but for others, it is our access to strong experienced talent (STEM) - they would never know about.