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Frontline Analysis by the MRINetwork Team of Global Search Experts

Employment Trends to Watch and Embrace in 2018

To stay competitive in today's ever-changing business environment, C-level executives agree that finding and retaining the right talent is essential. But how to do that effectively remains a challenge. According to a joint research study by Dow Jones and the HR Certification Institute, the area of talent strategy and engagement is a top concern. Surveyed C-suite executives ranked it among the top five items on the corporate agenda, yet only 59 percent consider their companies to be effective at attracting and retaining talent. "New emerging trends as well as trends that have been identified over the past several years indicate that more organizations are making talent management a top priority for 2018," says Nancy Halverson, general manager of franchise operations for MRINetwork. "We've identified several significant trends that are already having an impact, or that are poised to become increasingly relevant."

Gig economy

As the job landscape changes, more companies are creating blended workforces that incorporate contract or part-time employees into the traditional nine-to-five arrangement. According to a report by The McKinsey Global Institute, about 20 percent of the working-age population is engaged in some form of independent work, most by choice. Online and human cloud platforms have additionally expanded the potential of the gig economy, with gig workers expected to grow from about 4 million today to 7.7 million by 2020, according to a recent study conducted by Intuit and Emergent Research. "While technology is evolving the gig economy, traditional staffing firms will continue to provide value especially for companies in candidate-driven industries that need more access to highly-skilled contingent talent," observes Brett Felmey, director of contract staffing sales for MRINetwork. "Partnering with firms that have relationships with top candidates, and expertise as a single source solution provider can provide employers with the competitive edge required to recruit the top performers in their markets, whether on a permanent or contract basis."



Predictive analytics

As more technology becomes available, companies are using predictive analytics to determine how candidates will perform. Google, for example, has been using analytics to gain insights into the impact of every interview and source of hire since 2015, according to Deloitte's 2015 Human Capital Trends Report. Many in the human resources arena predict that the rising use of predictive analytics will be the biggest recruiting trend to drive productivity and profitability in 2018. By collecting early performance data on new hires, and matching it against assessments, a feedback loop is created that automatically updates and continually refines the profile of a successful employee.

Blind hiring

Bias in the workforce became a big issue in 2017. To minimize any controversy, companies are being encouraged to make hiring a blind process. In standard screening and interviewing, unconscious bias easily becomes part of the equation by including data that gives away key parts of a candidate's background: gender, age, race, even alma mater. By stripping away any information that may reveal demographic data, the first wave of screening can be done based purely on abilities and achievements. "This allows for a more diverse workforce built on merit," says Halverson, "but the problem is trying to achieve this with the proliferation of social media. Using a third-party recruiter is usually necessary to ensure a truly blind process."

Gamification

Gamification, a technique for turning engagement into a competitive game, is beginning to be used as a candidate screener. Tools such as ConnectCubed claim that games add to the attractiveness of the application process while delivering actionable insights into candidates' fit for the role. Although not yet in widespread use for recruitment, according to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), many companies are finding that virtual games, which integrate points, badges, competition and role-playing, can be used to effectively attract and assess candidates, particularly Millennials raised on Wii and Xbox. The results can be used by recruiters to identify the most promising candidates in their pipeline as under-the-hood algorithms track critical analytics while candidates play the games. "For candidates, gamification can take the chore out of the application process and add a bit of competitive fun while providing a measurable demonstration of their strengths to potential employers. Hiring managers gain access to valuable, actionable data to predict candidate fit and future performance," says Reagan Johnson, director of technology operations for MRINetwork. "The service a recruiter brings to organizations is to make sense of the data, using their experience and practiced intuition to make meaningful evaluations. This saves hiring managers significant amounts of time and helps them identify better candidates."

Preparing Employees for Future Change

Evolving technology is responsible for both the disappearance of many jobs across a wide range of industries and the creation of other jobs where skilled labor is needed; for example, when robots or automation techniques are introduced, companies still need technical talent to program, maintain and repair these robots. "In 2018, companies must think ahead to how they will do business in the future and determine the best ways to leverage their resources (e.g., people, systems, tools) to meet the future needs of their operations," advises Marquis Parker, vice president of business services for MRINetwork. "A key part of this will be to identify people who are willing to

embrace different aspects of jobs, including management, problem solving, troubleshooting, and other areas that require a human element, and determining how they can be deployed to align with a company's growth strategies. Depending on the industry, this could represent a significant transformation in overall human capital strategy and what different employees are tasked to do, so planning ahead will save the company money as it transitions to cheaper computer-driven labor while maximizing the human potential already on the payroll."

"Individualization may be the most important trend in HR today, because employees expect to have the type of experience in the workplace that they have as consumers, says Sherry Engel, vice president of learning and talent development for MRINetwork. "Learners do not want a complicated, long, one-size-fits-all answer to their skill development. They want a YouTube or a Google approach, where they can get quick, simple, targeted skill development right at the moment they need it. Like Googling a video on how to tie a tie."

The priorities and challenges inherent in these significant trends are clear, and readiness to respond to them is essential. The ongoing tight labor market means that companies will continue to be challenged with finding and retaining the right employees. "Given the importance that business leaders place on the talent management agenda," concludes Halverson, "it's a good time to reflect on what can be done and to take action, focusing on what should be done differently, and what might be improved to move the needle in this critical area."