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Frontline Analysis by the MRINetwork Team of Global Search Experts

Employer Concessions and Hiring in a Tight Candidate Market

In the executive, managerial and professional labor market, unemployment has been hovering around 2 percent, leaving companies across many industries struggling to find top talent. In a survey conducted by The Wall Street Journal and executive advisory group Visage International, University of Michigan economist Richard Curtin discovered that "the biggest challenge confronting firms is their need to expand hiring in an already-tight labor market." As a result of increased competition for high performers, employers are now more willing to make concessions to move their organizations forward.

Here's some advice that may help your organization with its hiring efforts:

Keep an open mind

When hiring managers look for potential employees, they often only focus immediately on the ideal candidate who has all the desirable qualities for the role. It's important to recognize that an applicant may not need to possess every single one of those qualities to become a great hire, and rigidly sticking to your list may mean that you lose out on a candidate who could be successful in your organization.

Someone can have exceptional educational and work backgrounds, and still fail at your organization if they aren't a good cultural fit, or if they don't share your core values. Think about the type of person who will fit in among your employees - the mentality they'd need to thrive and the interpersonal skills that will help them become part of the team.

After you draft a job description, revisit each requirement to determine if it is absolutely needed. You may find room for negotiation on professional designations or technical skill sets that would be nice to have but aren't essential to the job. Look beyond your wish list to see who might thrive in your company's environment even without all your ideal attributes.

Expand your talent pool

If you insist upon finding a candidate you don't have to train, you could add months to your search for a new hire. You could probably train someone in that amount of time while also benefitting from the value that person may add in other ways as they ramp up. Look for coachable, high potential candidates who have transferrable skills that will help them overcome the lack of specific experience.

According to the [2018 MRINetwork Performance Management Study](#), nearly 80 percent of the employers surveyed agree or strongly agree that finding quality industry-experienced talent is more difficult than ever, and that their companies are more likely to hire people who have

transferrable skills, but lack industry experience. By considering those with transferable skills, you can significantly expand the number of applicants and focus on more general skills, such as organization, teamwork and communication, which might be just as important for the role, but are much less teachable than specific, technical skills.

Both employers and candidates see poor communication as a problem in this area, according to the study. Companies need to make it clear they are open to candidates who have applicable expertise, despite their lack of industry experience. Candidates need to focus on how they discuss transferrable skills during the interview process and demonstrate how those skills can be applied to a different industry.



Offer sign-on perks that attract candidates

The MRINetwork study also indicated that half of the surveyed employers are increasing the rate at which they offer sign-on perks. Among the top perks that organizations are willing to provide are company-paid health insurance, sign-on bonuses and moving expenses. Candidates are on the same page as employers about the desirability of these benefits, with 76 percent citing both sign-

on bonuses and health insurance, and 54 percent citing moving expenses as most important to them. A number of employers stated they are willing to offer tuition reimbursement (33 percent) and even help in repaying student loans (23 percent) as incentives.

Employee perks can have a significant impact on your ability to attract desirable candidates and lower employee turnover. Some of the standard benefits packages offered by companies just aren't cutting it, which is why many firms have decided to augment them in order to stay ahead of their competition for top candidates. As one hiring authority observed, "There are severe shortages of qualified employees in many sectors of the labor market. This makes it an employee's market and it thus requires incentives (higher pay, bonuses, etc.) to acquire and maintain quality employees."

An interesting finding of the survey suggested that while employers are boosting sign-on perks, many candidates are unaware of the potential perks they could be leaving on the table. Organizations will need to become more forthcoming about these perks during the hiring process and address the skepticism that some candidates have about sign-on perks. "Companies are willing to pay for one-time extras to get the people who best match or exceed their ideal candidate profile," said one potential candidate, "but they may not, however, be willing to start at a higher compensation level."

In a down market, candidates will be less demanding and more flexible with employers. But in today's market, applicants have numerous options, so it is imperative that the way employers approach them and the advantages that are offered give candidates every reason to want to join a company.