

## Building the Workforce of the Future

The *Business Week* cover story, "The Future of Work," for their August 20 edition is must reading for all recruiting and HR leaders. The basic theme of the series of articles focuses on the impact of technology, globalization, demographics, and the relationship between employees and their employers over the next five to 15 years.

Here are the 10 ideas that stood out for me after reading the 22 articles and filtering them through my own perspective:

1. **Find Jobs for People, Not People for Jobs.** This is a paradigm shift of major proportions. Stop thinking that jobs need to be, or should be, filled requisition by requisition. This is quickly becoming passé. Instead, build pools of prospects by functions (e.g., product marketers, financial analysts, sales managers) and contact these people as opportunities become available. You'll be able to attract a bigger pool of top talent by marketing career opportunities and challenges rather than emphasizing skills and experiences.
2. **Retention is More Important than Hiring.** Workforce mobility is on the rise as the barriers to exit and entry employees continue to fall. Hiring a great person who doesn't work out, or leaves within a year or two is a loss of major proportions. In order to retain top performers a formal career plan needs to be developed based on what motivates the person to grow, excel and contribute. This also means selecting people based on a broader criteria than industry experience, technical competency, personality and intuition. The special needs of woman also need to be specifically addressed as they represent a growing and important part of the workforce. This means developing alternative career paths and providing a means to stay connected to women as they temporarily leave the workforce to raise families.
3. **Succession Planning is More Important than Workforce Planning.** As turnover rises and the independent contractor-model grows, there will be fewer qualified mid-managers available for promotion into senior and executive management positions. While self-management is an important trait, as organizations get flatter, strong mid-managers are still needed to build and develop the teams and ensure that projects are completed and performance objectives are met. Aggressive action needs to be taken now to develop and groom more managers for future senior level roles.
4. **Workforce Planning and Just-in-Time Hiring are More Important than Ever.** The workforce of the future will consist of a core of full-time employees supplemented with a flexible group of contractors and consultants. This will require strong workforce planning in combination with a well-developed pool of prospects to ensure that the right people are available exactly when needed. This flexibility will be essential to quickly adjust to changes in business conditions.
5. **Devalue Experience. Hire on Potential. Train on Skills.** While true today and for a variety of reasons (workforce mobility, demographics, changing attitudes) the supply of fully qualified people will continue to shrink as demand

increases. To offset this trend it will be far better to hire people with the potential to quickly take on more responsibility in combination with more formal training to ensure their success. This is also a great recruiting pitch and one of the best ways to improve on-the-job performance and increase retention.

6. **Think Consumer Marketing, Systemization, Technology, and Scalability.** Great systems and processes will be needed to manage workforces that are in a state of constant change. In most cases, today's career-focused technology is outdated and cumbersome. Career websites are not user-friendly, they are difficult to find, and are cumbersome to navigate. Corporate career and hiring systems need to emulate the best consumer marketing sites (<http://www.disney.com/> and <http://www.ted.com/> are prototypes of the career site of the future), be candidate-friendly (think Amazon.com techniques for finding jobs and making recommendations), and be search-engine optimized for candidates Googling for jobs.
7. **Don't Build a Corporate Recruiting Department Based on Third-Party Recruiting Practices.** Corporate recruiting is not the same as third-party recruiting. Corporate recruiters handle many assignments and deal with many different managers. Third-party recruiters handle fewer assignments and spend more time with each candidate. To address this fundamental difference, base the corporate recruiting model on targeting the best active and less-active candidates using advanced consumer marketing consumer concepts, advanced technology to manage data, and consistent processes to get them hired. The external recruiter model needs to be referral-based targeting passive and semi-passive candidates using advanced networking concepts.
8. **Hire and Train for the New Competencies.** The world of work is changing. Companies will need to adapt to the new realities of hiring and developing people who are able to work on a variety of international teams while dealing with constant change. To be successful in this environment, people will need to be flexible, multi-talented, multi-functional, adaptable, self-managed, self-motivated, work well in multicultural and multigenerational teams, and be able to step up to leadership roles one day and become great followers the next. Few people will have the experience in all of these roles, so the key to success in hiring will be to look for the capacity to handle these new types of roles.
9. **Convert Managers into Triple A Coaches.** Selecting and developing people will be more important than ever. Proactively pushing these people to move on to bigger and more responsible positions will be the key to increasing internal mobility, improving on-the-job performance, and reducing turnover.
10. **Make It About the People.** As the talent gap widens, those companies that can hire and keep the best will prosper. With workforce mobility on the rise the emphasis on retention is as important as selection and hiring. The Great Place to Work Institute offers a good definition of the importance of developing a people culture: *At the heart of our definition of a great place to work - a place where employees "trust the people they work for, have pride in what they do, and enjoy the people they work with."* Creating this type of culture seems to be a prerequisite for building a workforce of the future.

This is a lot to absorb, and building the workforce of tomorrow certainly can't be done alone or just by those in recruiting. Based on these predictions, here's some specific advice you might want to consider:

- Corporate recruiters need to become consumer marketing experts using all of the tools and techniques available to attract the best people who do look online.
- Third-party recruiters need to become subject matter experts using the latest technologies and the phone to develop deep networks of the best people in their specialties. (Corporations will gladly pay fees for hard-to-find top talent.)
- Corporate recruiting managers need to build and develop teams of recruiters all using the latest technologies and proven best practices.
- HR and recruiting executives need to convince their corporate executives to make the selection, development, and retention of top talent your company's number-one strategic objective.

Building the workforce of tomorrow will require vision, strategy, leadership, and courage. My concern is that these traits are in short supply.

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