2016 Candidate Engagement Study
Part Three: Communication
January 2017

Hudson

Great people. Great performance.

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2016 CANDIDATE ENGAGEMENT STUDY
PART THREE: COMMUNICATION

ABOUT THE STUDY

LinkedIn has made it easy to find virtually any business professional across the globe. This includes identifying candidates according to work experience, special skills and educational attainment – all within a few easy clicks.

No doubt LinkedIn has transformed candidate access; however, it's now an employee's market, and high-quality candidates in sought-after roles are constantly courted by would-be employers. As a result, many new employment solicitations go unanswered.

Today's challenge is no longer identifying and sourcing talent, but rather engaging them in the recruitment process. So how do talent acquisition professionals cut through the noise to get candidates' attention?

This study seeks to identify the best methods for getting and keeping candidates' interest, broken down by candidate demographic. It examines the engagement techniques that talent acquisition professionals claim are the most effective, then compares those claims against what candidates rate as most effective. The results highlight candidate outreach and engagement strategies that yield the greatest returns.

METHODOLOGY

The study consisted of qualitative and quantitative phases. For the qualitative phase, 10 recruiters and six candidates across multiple regions were interviewed by phone. These in-depth interviews defined the issues that impact candidate engagement most and helped focus the questionnaire for the next phase of research.

During the quantitative phase, 4,203 candidates from North America, Latin America, EMEA and APAC completed an online questionnaire. The candidates were sourced from social media and Hudson's extensive global database. Additionally, 153 North American recruiters also completed the survey. This report includes findings from North America only.

Unemployed candidates: Respondents who were unemployed were not classified as active or passive candidates. While this group most closely resembles active candidates, they have their own unique characteristics. In those tables where "total" responses are identified, the total contains unemployed, passive and active candidates.

ABOUT THE PROS

Separate from the study, commentary from a seasoned corporate recruiter, an agency sourcing expert and a Ph.D. organizational psychologist are peppered throughout the report to shed light on the survey findings. The pros included in the report are:

Kasey Butler
Senior Client Relationship Manager, Hudson Americas

Jenifer "Jak" Kihm, Ph.D.
Industrial/Organizational Psychologist, Operant

Mike Wolford
Sourcing Manager, Hudson Americas

JOB APPLICATION
AND INTERVIEW PROCESS

C

CANDIDATE QUESTION

How important is the organization's job application and interview process in your decision to join the company?

"Reject my application if I am not qualified, but do not let it languish in a queue for months and then reject me six months later. That is a surefire way for me never to apply for a job with that company since they lack attention to detail that they demand of their applicants." Male candidate, 35-44, Legal department

"For candidates, if you are looking for a job and haven't heard anything, it's hell." Mike Wolford

The job application process is often the first impression a company makes upon a candidate. The experience communicates if the company is technologically savvy, behind the times or simply lacks respect for the candidate's time.

In an employee-centric market, candidates are less likely to tolerate a cumbersome job application and interview process. Overwhelmingly, 85.7 percent of respondent candidates feel the job application experience is important, with nearly one-half (46.1 percent) stating it is very important. Active and passive candidates responded similarly.

Importance of Application and Interview Process

	Total
Important (Net)	85.7%
Very important	46.1%
Important	39.6%
Neither important nor unimportant	12.0%
Unimportant	1.9%
Very unimportant	0.4%

According to CareerBuilder's 2016 Candidate Behavior study, "One in five candidates said they are not willing to complete an application that takes them 20 minutes or more, and 76 percent want to know how long it will take them to finish an application before it starts."[1]

The exception to this is if the company is offering a higher base salary. Then the majority of job seekers said they would be willing to endure a lengthy application process.

FROM THE PROS

"The use of video continues to gain ground in the application and interview process. For high-volume, lower skilled jobs such as call center or bank tellers, prerecorded videos ask the candidate the first initial screening questions, and the candidate records the answers.

JOB APPLICATION
AND INTERVIEW PROCESS cont'd

This is convenient for the candidate and the recruiter. The candidates don't need to wait around for an interview, but rather record their answers whenever they are ready.

And it's more efficient for the recruiter who avoids the need to schedule a high volume of initial screening interviews, but rather can skip to the more qualified candidates.

Likewise, the use of Skype for professional jobs is becoming more common, particularly for recruiters interviewing in different geographies or for candidates who may need to relocate. It's the difference between taking two hours off from work compared to two days to fly to a location." Mike Wolford

"As a rule of thumb, when things go wrong, disgruntled candidates go to Glassdoor to write about it, which means everyone else looking up your company on Glassdoor will see it. The younger the candidate, the less patience they'll have with a cumbersome application process. That's why more companies are allowing candidates to apply using existing LinkedIn or Facebook profiles. Companies also need to measure where candidates are falling off in the application process to fix it. Otherwise it's hard to pin down where the issues are." Kasey Butler

C
CANDIDATE QUESTION

What are the most important things to you during your application and interview experience? (Please select the top three).

Most Important Aspects of Application & Interview Process
Top Candidate Selections

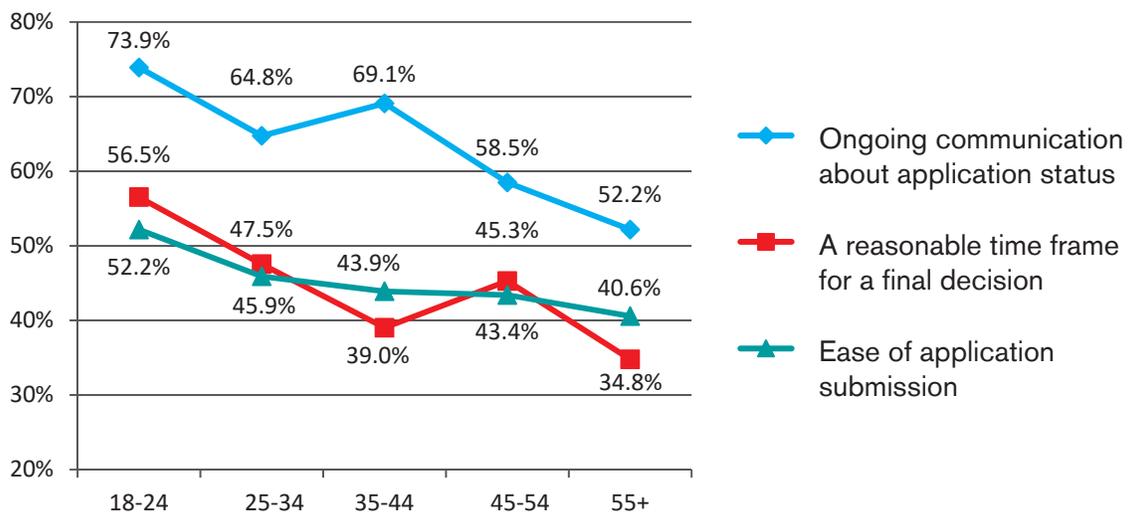|	Total	Active	Passive
Ongoing communication about application status	61.8%	62.0%	60.9%
Understanding the details of the position requirements	59.3%	57.3%	71.9%
Knowing the next steps in the process	51.9%	53.0%	60.9%
Ease of application submission	43.4%	43.2%	37.5%
A reasonable time frame for a final decision	42.9%	46.6%	29.7%
Respect for your time	23.0%	25.2%	25.0%
Interview flexibility	10.0%	9.8%	17.2%
Other	2.5%	2.1%	1.6%

FROM THE PROS

"Whatever is important to candidates should be important to employers. It all comes back to candidate experience and employer brand. Treat your candidates like you do your customers. Recruiters must set

SOURCES USED TO ENGAGE
PASSIVE CANDIDATES

expectations with candidates early on in the process so the candidates know what to expect. This makes candidates feel they are being treated fairly and equally. Recently a silver medalist for a senior IT role reached out to thank me for meeting my set deadlines for follow up, and now I can call on that candidate for other roles. In my experience, the one question everyone should ask candidates after the recruitment process is 'Would you go out of your way to discourage or encourage others to apply to this company?' On a 1 to 4 rating scale, 1 = discourage and 4 = encourage. The results will give you excellent insight into the candidate experience with your company." Kasey Butler

"The lack of communication on application status has to do with the paradox of the application black hole. Applying for a job can make a candidate feel like the resume is being thrown into a black hole. Rather than discouraging unqualified candidates from applying, this black hole feeling turns the job application process into a numbers game. The more a candidate applies for jobs (qualified or not), the more confident the candidate feels that he'll eventually get an interview. This onset of unqualified candidates creates a lot of extra work (and frustration) for the recruiters, and the time needed to get through the resumes takes time away from finding and communicating with the actual qualified candidates, and the communication problem compounds itself." Mike Wolford

Important Aspects of Application & Interview Process
Aspects that Decrease by Age

- Ongoing communication about application status
- A reasonable time frame for a final decision
- Ease of application submission

In almost all instances, "Ongoing communication about application status," "A reasonable time frame for a final decision," and "Ease of application submission" become steadily less important as the candidate's age increases.
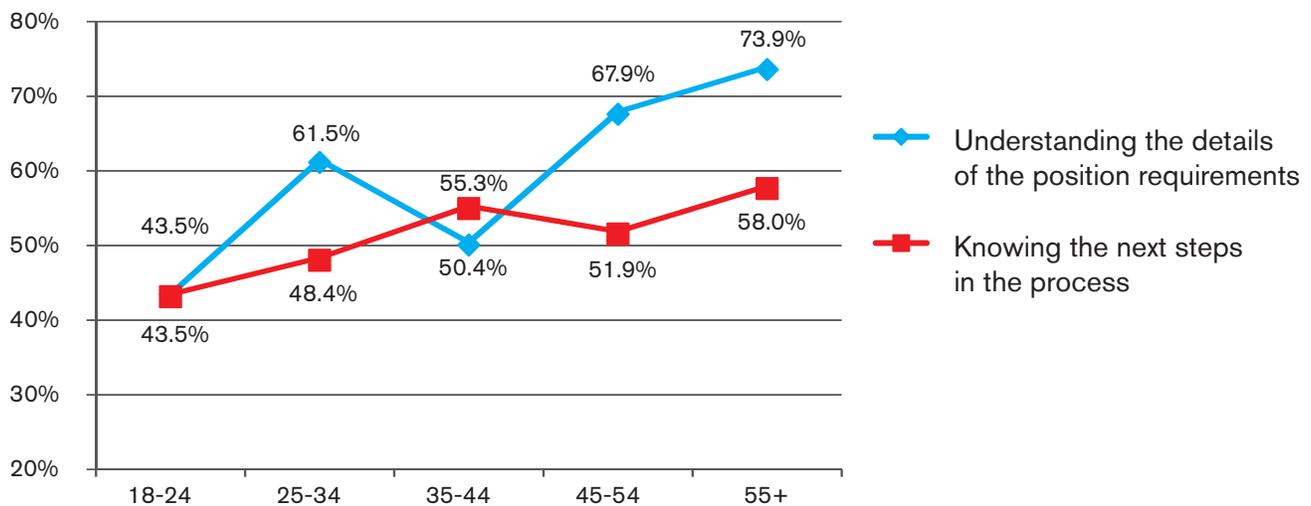
SOURCES USED TO ENGAGE
PASSIVE CANDIDATES cont'd

Important Aspects of the Application & Interview Process
Aspects that Increase with Age

In almost all instances, "Understanding the details of the position requirements" and "Knowing the next steps in the process" tend to become more important as a person ages.

FRUSTRATIONS WITH THE JOB
APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW PROCESS

C

CANDIDATE QUESTION

What do you dislike most about the job application and interview process in general when seeking a new job?

An unresponsive recruiter is the most disliked aspect of the hiring process, with an average rank of 2.39 out of 5. The next biggest frustration for candidates is being uninformed about their status in the hiring process, with an average score of 2.63 out of 5.

Frustrations with Job Application and Interview Process
Rank from 1-5 with 1 being the most disliked and 5 being the least disliked

	Average
Unresponsive recruiter	2.39
Not being updated about status	2.63
Long application submission process	2.79
Not being updated about next steps	3.08
Lack of recruiter flexibility for interview times	4.09

Candidates come to positive or negative conclusions about recruiters, hiring managers and the company during the application and interview process.

These reactions, both positive and negative, have broader implications than many companies realize. According to a 2015 Candidate Behavior Study by CareerBuilder, 82 percent of employers think there's little to no negative impact on the company when a candidate has a bad experience during the hiring process. The reality, however, is that 58 percent of candidates are less likely to buy from a company that doesn't respond to their applications. Additionally, the study found that 69 percent of candidates are less likely to do business with an organization if they had a negative interview experience during the interview, and the same is true of 65 percent of candidates when they don't hear back after an interview.[2]

On the other hand, a 2012 study by CareerBuilder found that 56 percent of candidates who had positive application experiences would consider seeking employment with the same company in the future, and 37 percent would suggest others seek employment with the organization.[3]

FROM THE PROS

"Ongoing communication is crucial, even if it's to inform the candidate that there is no update. If candidates don't hear anything, they lose interest and move on. You must set expectations up-front regarding frequency and method of communication and keep them in the loop. Our talent acquisition team acts as consultants to the hiring manager, and we drive the recruitment process to keep it moving quickly. At our account, if a requisition is not filled within a specific timeframe, it gets cancelled, so hiring managers have consequences if they fail to act in a timely manner." Kasey Butler

"It's almost impossible to over-communicate with a candidate." Jenifer "Jak" Kihm

FRUSTRATIONS WITH THE JOB APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW PROCESS cont'd

"The failure to communicate is the biggest systematic challenge we face, but there are two sides to this story. Candidates assume that if they do not hear from a recruiter, nothing is progressing. However, often the silence is due to the hiring manager's unresponsiveness. In MRI's 1st half 2016 recruiter sentiment study, 56% of recruiters surveyed said that "lengthy hiring practices" holds back managers from hiring.

Underlying "lengthy hiring practices"…the reason why candidate experience is so universally poor is simple…because there are no metrics attached to keeping candidates warm. Corporations don't tend to measure this, so recruiters don't care. It's the downside to running a business just by the numbers. It's great for profits but horrible for anyone trying to provide a positive candidate experience. Without measuring, no consequences exist for hiring managers that don't read resumes, fail to provide feedback after interviews, or even fail to give the correct job spec upfront. Often these causes are the bottleneck, not the recruiters' lack of desire to communicate.

In my experience, the companies that conduct candidate experience surveys are the ones that win candidate experience awards, and it is good for their employer brand." Mike Wolford

WHAT IS YOUR CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE LIKE?

You may not know how good or bad your process is in the eyes of candidates. Only 31 percent of employers claim to have tried applying to one of their company's open jobs to see what the process is like. Test the experience as if you were a job seeker. Go to your career site, apply for a job and interact with your company through the eyes of a candidate so you can make improvements where needed.[4]

CANDIDATES PREFERENCES
FOR INITIAL CONTACT

C

CANDIDATE QUESTION

How do you prefer to be approached by a recruiter about a potential job opening?

Candidate Preference For Being Contacted by Recruiters

	Total
Email	89.6%
Phone call	57.7%
LinkedIn message	44.9%
Referral	15.2%
Job alert	7.3%
Prefer not to be approached	1.2%
Other	0.8%

Candidates were very clear about their preference, with 89.6 percent selecting email for initial contact. Even passive candidates, who are less inclined to desire any sort of contact, preferred email contact (79.1 percent). Phone calls (57.7 percent) and LinkedIn messages (44.9 percent) were the next two most preferred methods.

It's best to start with an email outlining the job so that candidates have a reference when recruiters call. Those 45-55+ may be the exception, with more than 65 percent being open to phone calls for the initial contact.

FROM THE PROS

"Candidates are your external customer. They are 'buying' a job. A sales person would never email a prospect the full product brochure and ask, 'Do you want to buy this?' Yet, that is what recruiters are doing when they send the full job ad to a candidate on a cold outreach. You've got to sell the story. What is in it for them? Something like, 'We're working on cancer vaccines. Would you like to help us cure cancer?' is far more compelling than a job ad and 'if you aren't interested, can you connect me with someone who might be?'" Mike Wolford

"You need to set yourself apart and stand out in the crowd. It's about personalizing the emails. The time of day that you send the message also matters. Send the message when people are likely on their phones, such as first thing in the morning before work, during lunch, or after work between 6 and 8PM. This applies to sending social media messages as well." Kasey Butler

CANDIDATES PREFERENCES
FOR INITIAL CONTACT cont'd

However, your email must be customized...

Impact of Customized Email on Response Rate

	Total	Active	Passive
More Likely (Net)	85.1%	89.5%	79.1%
Much more likely to respond to a customized email	61.5%	66.2%	46.3%
More likely to respond to a customized email	23.6%	23.2%	32.8%
Makes no difference	13.5%	9.7%	16.4%
Less likely to respond to a customized email	0.8%	0.4%	1.5%
Much less likely to respond to a customized email	0.6%	0.4%	3.0%

Customizing email is absolutely essential in getting both active and passive candidates to respond. Overall, 85.1 percent of candidate respondents indicated that they would be more likely to respond to a customized email, with nearly two-thirds (61.5 percent) of them being much more likely to respond.

While passive candidates are always less likely to respond to any method of recruiter contact than active candidates, customizing emails significantly improves the likelihood of responses from this segment.

EMAIL IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT:
RECRUITER PERSPECTIVE

R

RECRUITER QUESTION

What is the impact of customized email on candidates' response rates?

Impact of Customized Email

	Total
Net Great/Moderate impact	92.9%
Great impact	43.9%
Moderate impact	49.0%
Very little impact	7.1%
No impact	0.0%
You do not customize email copy	21.0%

More than 85 percent of candidates say customized email affects response rate. Of the recruiters surveyed, nearly 93 percent believe that customized email has an impact on candidate response rates, yet 21 percent of recruiters surveyed do not customize email copy.

Through good storytelling that describes the company's mission and how the candidate could play an important part in that mission, prospects are more likely to imagine themselves in the role and begin to consider making a change. The story starts with an intriguing subject line and ends with a time-specific call to action, such as asking if they are available for a phone call the next day to discuss the opportunity.[5]

FROM THE PROS:

"The more you customize an email with at least four different message points targeted to the candidate, the higher your response rate. That said, I find recruiters also fall short when it comes to emailing is in the follow up. Don't just email a candidate one time. Send a follow-up message! Just don't use a 'form letter' email." Mike Wolford

"To build trust quickly, recruiters need to find a common ground to include in their email messages. Things like, 'Hey, I see we both attended University XYZ,' or 'A close friend of mine [person's name] also worked at Acme Company, do you know her?' These icebreakers help establish a comfort level for talking about specific jobs." Kasey Butler

If finding common ground is difficult, use the Crystal Google Chrome add-on. Crystal conducts personality assessments on people based on their online activity and gives advice on how to best engage with them when reaching out.

EFFECTIVE
JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Don't Wow Them with the Email then Bore them with the Job Description

Job descriptions need to capture attention and interest from candidates who would fit the position well. Too often they generically describe the skills and requirements of the job and fail to excite any interest. It's important to avoid jargon, buzzwords, and cut-and-paste job descriptions. Overused terms like "big picture thinker" and "strong communicator" are positive attributes for almost any position and don't clarify what a job involves. Lackluster job descriptions tend to be unappealing to people who are qualified, and vague enough to attract a lot of unqualified applicants.[6]

Below is a great example of an engaging job description from Meetup, a social media platform. The job description highlights the company's growth and sets realistic expectations around the day-to-day responsibilities. It is direct, uses active and interesting language, and it has a call to action asking qualified candidates apply.

MEET-UP JOB ADVERTISEMENT

Core Engineering Manager

Meetup is looking for an Engineering Manager who wants to lead a team of Core engineers across all of our product teams. With 20+ million members across 182 countries and 125% year-over-year growth in the number of people joining Meetups, it's a thrilling time for us.

If you are an engineer who loves to mentor and manage other engineers, has a strong background and experience in back-end platform engineering (using technologies like Scala, Java, Redis, RabbitMQ, and building APIs), and has ideas on how to innovate and improve the way people Meetup, this is the job for you.

As an Engineering Manager at Meetup, you will be part of the engineering leadership team. You should have:

▪ At least 5 years' experience as a web or other type of software engineer
▪ At least 3 years' experience mentoring and/or managing engineers in technical and non-technical areas
▪ Top notch communication skills with other engineers, product managers, and designers
▪ Experience managing engineering teams on large, fast-paced, projects
▪ A deep understanding of how engineering and product teams work well together and motivation to get involved with helping improve things
▪ A strong desire to focus on managing people as well as developing and managing career growth plans with engineers
▪ A passionate interest in being the face of Meetup culture for their team
▪ Experience allocating and optimizing engineering resources for product teams
▪ An internal drive to help remove roadblocks and solve problems with teams and individuals
▪ The ability to keep engineers focused on the most important things for both the company and themselves
▪ Comfort with managing engineers with different experience/skill sets than their own
▪ Experience leading recruitment efforts by finding new recruitment opportunities and motivating engineers to participate in the tech community

Our team is ambitious, supportive, and above all - we are excited by what we do. While meeting regular deadlines and being focused on quick, quality shipping of software - the environment is relaxed and fun. If the above describes you and what you're looking for, please send us your resume!

COMMUNICATING VIA PHONE CALLS
DURING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

CANDIDATE QUESTION

Which of the statements below best represents your views about receiving phone calls from recruiters during all phases of the recruitment process?

Nearly one-half (46.8%) of all candidate respondents feel phone calls are appropriate during all phases of the recruitment process. However, only about one-third (35.4%) of passive candidates feel that way, so proceed with caution when calling them, assuming you have the phone number.

Candidate Views on Communicating via Phone Calls

	Total	Active	Passive
Phone calls are appropriate during all phases of the recruitment process.	46.8%	44.3%	35.4%
I prefer email communication to phone calls.	21.0%	21.7%	27.7%
Phone calls are a good way to receive updates about ongoing communications regarding interview scheduling, hiring manager feedback, but not as a means to initiate the recruiting process.	20.1%	21.3%	26.2%
Phone calls are a good way to notify me about potential openings, but not to receive updates about ongoing communications regarding interview scheduling and hiring manager feedback.	12.2%	12.8%	10.8%

Two-thirds (67.6%) of those 55 years of age and older agree that phone calls are appropriate during all phases of the hiring process, while only 17.4 percent of those 18-24 agree with that statement. The youngest group (aged 18-25) is more likely than any other age segment to prefer email to phone communications (34.8 percent), or to feel phone calls are good for updates, but not for initiating the recruiting process (34.8 percent).

Communicating via Phone Calls: Attitudes by Age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Phone calls are appropriate during all phases of the recruitment process.	17.4%	34.7%	44.7%	59.4%	67.6%
I prefer email communication to phone calls.	34.8%	28.9%	21.1%	15.1%	13.2%
Phone calls are a good way to receive updates about ongoing communications regarding interview scheduling, hiring manager feedback, but not as a means to initiate the recruiting process.	34.8%	20.7%	22.0%	16.0%	11.8%
Phone calls are a good way to notify me about potential openings, but not to receive updates about ongoing communications regarding interview scheduling and hiring manager feedback.	13.0%	15.7%	12.2%	9.4%	7.4%

COMMUNICATING VIA PHONE CALLS
DURING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS
cont'd

FROM THE PROS

"In 2015, seven trillion text messages were sent. Game, set, match. Millennials text, they do not call. Yes, you have to use the phone to move along the process, but use text to set it up.

Expecting recruiters to cold call via phone is unrealistic. Save for a few old school recruiters (who formerly had no other communication options), the rest simply won't do it. Human beings hate cold calling. We have an entire generation of young recruiters who have used LinkedIn and haven't had to cold call. Obviously they will call once contact and a dialogue has started, but they aren't going to call as the initial point of outreach." Mike Wolford

"Phone calls are not the way to engage with a candidate the first time, but if you have worked with the candidate in the past, phone calls are a good way to reconnect with a new opportunity. Calls are also ideal for when a recruiter is in the process of screening, is providing coaching to a candidate or is seeking to provide clarity in the process. I also call all finalist candidates when a hiring decision has been made, even if that candidate wasn't selected. It's common courtesy." Kasey Butler

IMPORTANCE
OF THE TALENT POOL

R

RECRUITER QUESTION

Importance of Talent Pool

- ■ Very important
- ■ Important
- ■ Neither important nor unimportant
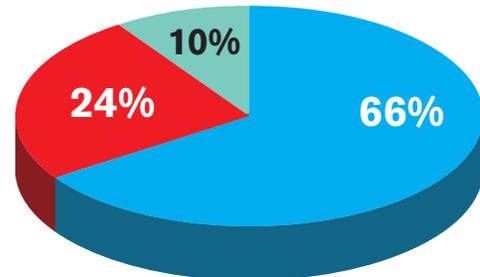

24% 10% 66%

How important is it to have a talent pool?

The vast majority of recruiters (91.7%) indicated they have a talent pool. Nine in 10 (90%) of those with a talent pool considered it important, and most of them (66.0%) rated it "very important."

Talent pools can reduce the cost of recruitment, reduce the time to hire and identify quality candidates for the future. When jobs become available at a company, today or in the future, these candidates can be shifted more readily and quickly into the talent pipeline.

The key to attracting passive candidates is building relationships, rather than attempting to directly sell a passive candidate on a particular job. Here is where relationship-oriented social media conversations and employee referrals can be particularly valuable for passive candidate engagement.

FROM THE PROS

"You have to keep your talent communities active. If the talent acquisition team feels the data is old, they won't use it. This is where RPOs play a role because they provide critical services for a large number of clients. They can invest in these tools, build talent communities and even have an analytics person on their team. I've worked for companies that have paid 25 percent of a starting salary to a recruiting company for a candidate who was literally in the database already because he had applied and actually wanted to work for us." Jenifer "Jak" Kihm

"The challenge with the 'talent pool' of resumes inside your ATS is that it can be messy and cumbersome to access. Typically, you need an ATS technical expert to pull large amounts of data (such as reports or resumes). There are likely a ton of duplicate resumes inside the system as well.

Many limit how many resumes it will return in a search, such as 250. If every time you run certain search criteria, you are probably accessing many of the same resumes over and over again.

IMPORTANCE
OF THE TALENT POOL Cont'd

"To effectively market to talent pools, Marketing and Sourcing need to align just as Marketing and Sales align to drive customer leads. Marketing creates the employer brand and a compelling story and shares it with a specific talent pipeline. Once the target candidates express interest, Marketing hands off the candidate lead to Sourcing and Recruiting. It needs to be more targeted and deliberate than just trying to pull out data from a messy ATS." Mike Wolford

"As a corporate recruiter, to me the talent pool is not the ATS. The talent pool consists of the people we are engaging with for upcoming opportunities. These candidates see our posts about the company and the industry. We keep them warm so that we can provide hiring managers with a pool of qualified candidates faster. These are also the people we go to for referrals. We now have a function in our ATS where we can tag these people. Prior to that we used LinkedIn folders to keep them organized." Kasey Butler

Hudson is able to track specific talent pools within a designated geographic location as well as their likelihood of switching jobs. This creates amazing hiring efficiencies. Contact us to learn more.

SOURCES
CITED

[1]"New CareerBuilder Study Unveils Surprising Must Knows for Job Seekers and Companies Looking to Hire." CareerBuilder. Web 1 June 2016

[2]"Nationwide Study From CareerBuilder Reveals Six Facts Every Employer Should Know About the Candidate Experience." CareerBuilder. Web 21 May 2015

[3]"Seventy-Five Percent of Workers Who Applied to Jobs Through Various Venues in the Last Year Didn't Hear Back From Employers, CareerBuilder Survey Finds." CareerBuilder. Web 20 Feb 2013

[4]"New CareerBuilder Study Unveils Surprising Must Knows for Job Seekers and Companies Looking to Hire." CareerBuilder. Web 1 June 2016

[5]Adler, Lou. "10 Email Best Practices for Attracting Passive Candidates." LinkedIn, Talent Blog. 24 March 2015

[6] Zeller, Derek. "Why Your Job Postings Suck (And What You Can Do About It)." Recruiting Daily. Web 27 Oct 2015

ABOUT
HUDSON

Hudson is a global talent solutions company. We help transform the workplace and unleash the full potential of organizations and individuals. Our expert team and proprietary tools provide you with unique insights and services that help you maximize your success. Across the globe, we deliver a range of recruitment, talent management and recuitment outsourcing solutions to get you and your business where you want to be. More information is available at http://us.Hudson.com.

Hudson
Great people. Great performance.