

Outside-the-box Hiring Tools for Today's Competitive Job Market

By Paula Mathias-Fryer

Employers have been navigating the hottest job market for candidates in years. While it has experienced a cooling off period since the onset of the Great Resignation last summer, a recent [Bureau of Labor Statistics report](#) says there are nearly twice as many job openings (10.1 million) as unemployed persons (5.9 million). Job seekers with the right skills still have the upper hand in this economy. Here are three outside-the-box tools hiring managers can use to secure talent in today's competitive job market.

Screen for Attitude, Train for Aptitude

In a market where talent is difficult to acquire, businesses should focus on the type of candidates that have the best retention prospects. [According to LinkedIn](#), 89% of hiring executives said that bad hires often lack soft skills. While industry skills are important, they can always be taught later through programs or from established employees who have the opportunity to grow through mentoring and teaching.

Hiring with an attitude-first mindset involves screening candidates for soft skills such as teamwork, creative thinking, or conflict resolution. It's also finding talent whose goals and values align with the mission and values of the organization.

This will ensure the fit is right, for the candidate and the business, and improve retention. [Hays reported](#) that 47% of job seekers are leaving their job because of company culture. SLO Partners has used this method to select applicants for its boot camps. Their graduates often become standout candidates, known for being self-starters with coveted soft skills.

Open Up Nontraditional Talent Pipelines

One of the biggest opportunities for increasing talent pipelines is revamping where and how candidates are sourced. Pursuing nontraditional talent pipelines can give employers a competitive edge in a challenging job market. They also produce a more diverse workforce. Here are some examples:

- **Local community groups:** Businesses can engage local community groups that have unemployed or underemployed individuals looking for opportunities.
- **Industry councils:** Joining an industry council can expand your network among your target candidates and create a new pool of potential hires.
- **Boot camps:** Building relationships with boot camps is an excellent way to create a talent pipeline of candidates with both industry skills and soft skills. Boot camp graduates often have careers prior to their training and are upskilling to pursue opportunities that align more closely with their interests and passions.
- **Utilizing your team:** According to LinkedIn, businesses can expand a talent pool 10 times by recruiting through employee networks. [The report](#) also stated that employee referrals are the number one source of quality hires.

Don't Limit Your Talent Pipeline

Employers may be unwillingly limiting their talent pipeline right at the start of the recruiting process with job postings that alienate

half their applicants. For example, women read job advertisements differently. If they don't satisfy 100% of the job requirements, they don't apply.

It takes a concerted effort to try to attract women to apply for jobs. Using words like “adaptable,” “collaborate” and “create,” for example, make job descriptions more open to interpretation and attractive to women. If your business is offering benefits such as remote working or flexible hours, spotlight this to attract women looking to re-enter the workforce. Employers can also include a note on applications that says ‘we encourage you to apply, even if you don't meet every bullet point.’”

For the interview process, include a woman on the panel and offer a range of interview times and days. A Monster poll found that 58% of women would turn down a job at a company with no female leaders. Millions of women left the workforce to care for children during the pandemic and many are now looking for new opportunities. Companies should ensure their job postings are attracting female applicants as opposed to alienating them.

Employers can also limit talent pipelines with job posting requirements. According to [U.S. Census Bureau data](#) released in March 2020, only about one-third (36%) of Americans over 25 years old have a bachelor's degree. Of those, 26% are black and 18.8% are Hispanic. Requiring a bachelor's degree, therefore,

screens out a significant percentage of applicants, particularly in minority groups. Including less-stringent education criteria in job postings can increase talent pipelines and still attract qualified candidates. In the tech sector, for instance, boot camp programs, industry-standard certifications, and self-taught abilities have all emerged as suitable alternatives to a college degree.

Candidate hiring continues to evolve. Employers need to keep abreast of the changing job market and adapt recruiting strategies to recruit quality candidates who will stay and thrive at the business. Thinking outside the box, being open to change and deploying new strategies is crucial for success. Hiring with an attitude-first mindset, opening nontraditional talent pipelines and creating inclusive job postings are examples of alternative approaches hiring managers can take to stay competitive and source candidates in a competitive job market.

*Paula Mathias-Fryer is senior director at SLO Partners. She can be reached at info@slopartners.org. Visit SLO Partners at slopartners.org —*N**

