

## **RECRUITING IN A .COM WORLD**

**Lynn A. Novo, CPC  
Netsysco, LLC  
9300 Shelbyville Rd. Suite 1006  
Louisville, KY 40222  
800-888-9028  
Fax: 502-327-9334  
lan@netsysco.com**

It's never been easy to recruit top-notch technical talent, but the Internet has made recruiting IT people even more challenging. The proliferation of job posting sites like Monster.com and the media advertising of those sites has changed the expectations and behavior of job seekers. If you or your company is not radically changing your approach to recruiting in this .com world, you will struggle to get the best HP talent to join your team.

We'll start by looking at some places to recruit HP candidates on the web and then concentrate on evaluating the prospects. Getting the candidate is just the first part of recruiting in a .com world, however. We'll also examine how the interview and hiring process have changed, and what you can do to ensure that you are more successful in getting the right candidate to come to work for you.

### **POSTING ON THE WEB**

What are some of the best places for recruiting on the web? Most sites offer databases for both resumes and postings. Let's focus on the places to post your opening; that is, places where job seekers will view your job and respond.

Many IT Managers have associates in HR who will be responsible for doing the postings and prescreening the responses. Please be sure they understand exactly what you are looking for and how to enter the appropriate information into the posting. In addition to the text you provide in the body of the posting, most sites also require that you give selected skills a ranking (expert, intermediate, beginner). If you don't do the posting yourself, get a printout of the site's posting data entry fields, so that you can provide the correct information for the site's search engine. Also make sure that the job title is an industry standard. You want to be certain that your posting gets read by the right people.

### **GENERAL SITES**

Your company may post jobs on its own web site and if you are a popular employer like Hewlett Packard, you will get plenty of responses from job seekers who are specifically interested in working for your company. But if your company website is not a popular destination for job seekers, there are several places to

post your opening. These are general sites, not specific to IT, where your IT posting may be seen.

### **Careerbuilder.com**

**Vault.com**

**Flipdog.com**

These general recruiting portals have numerous links and provide a range of services for employers and job hunters alike. Each allows job postings, and jobs that require HP skills can be found on each.

Here are two other general web sites where your HP job can be posted. All of these general sites and portals market themselves on the net, in print and on TV. Their popularity becomes a disadvantage when it creates too much clutter and unqualified responses. But everyone seems to have had a successful hire from:

### **Monster.com**

One of the largest job boards on the Web with a broad range of positions. New jobs added are daily, but some may be as old as 60 days.

### **CareerMosaic**

Large career site with international gateways. Job search is based solely on keywords. Job listings pulled from leading newspapers and employer Web sites, but allows companies to post directly. Jobs updated weekly.

These general sites are huge, and the disadvantage may be that IT jobs are not well-defined enough. But because these sites charge employers to post, they are popular with companies that post a range of different positions.

## IT-SPECIFIC SITES

There are other sites that are specific for the IT profession. These include:

### **Hotjobs.com**

Jobs for computer professionals. Jobs are uploaded daily and remain on the site for 30 days. A great place to post openings where HP experience is not required, like project leaders and managers. New jobs are posted daily, but they can be as old as 5 months. No recruiters are permitted to post jobs on this site.

### **ITcareers.com**

Information Technology careers site from IDG.net, the *ComputerWorld* people. All jobs may be applied to through an online form. Posting date included for every job listed. Also part of CareerBuilder.

### **ITClassifieds.com**

IT jobs database. Positions may be applied for through an e-mail link. Job listings have no date information.

### HP-SPECIFIC SITES

#### **3K.com**

This site is popular because it provides news and information specifically for HP3000 users. Employers can post job openings for free.

#### **SearchHP.com**

This new portal covers all areas of HP technology and has an HP Job Search section.

Whichever site you use, your next step after posting is evaluating the responses.

### **SCREENING THE RESPONSES**

How can you tell if your ideal candidate has responded to the posting? Here are some ways to “read between the lines” of the resumes you review.

**Personality** – When you read enough Internet responses, you will get a feel for the type of person who wrote the resume by the words and style of writing. You also will get a sense of the candidate’s personality from the information he chooses to list in the “Objective” and “Personal”.

**Communication skills** – Is accuracy important to you or important for success on the job? Then you will notice spelling and typographical errors. How about the cover letter or email response? How well did the person communicate?

**Technical Summaries** – Candidates have realized that their resumes are scanned for keywords, so they often overdo it when they list their technical summary. Does the technical skill listed in the summary appear anywhere else in the resume? Does the substance of the experience match the range of keywords listed?

**Missing Information** – What’s not listed is just as important as what you see. Check for sufficient information in these areas:

- Education
- Dates of employment
- Location of employers

**Lack of Detail** – Be wary of resumes that don’t give enough particulars. “Self-employed Contractor” without details of the assignments might mean the person was unemployed.

**Clarity** – Can the candidate describe his experience succinctly and understandably? Is the job description just a string of technologies, or does the candidate accurately describe the work he has performed?

Red flags in any of these areas are just that: signals that something might be wrong. Too many and the candidate may not be worth pursuing. But reading between the lines of a resume will alert you to areas that you will need to probe with the candidates that you do choose to interview.

## **INTERVIEWING**

The Internet speeds up the candidate's access to job openings, so it should speed up your response time. You'll wow candidates if you respond within a day or two of their contact to you. But more importantly, in this .com world, the candidate probably will have responded to several postings at the same time. Good candidates can be off the market in lightning speed; your prompt reply increases the likelihood that the candidate is still available and will remember your particular posting.

You have to assume that today's candidate has plenty of career options; not only other companies, but his current employer will compete with you for his talent. So update your strategies for interviewing.

### **5 Rules for Interviewing In A .Com World**

**1. Act fast and use email to establish initial contact.** Prescreening the resumes should be done as soon as they come in, so why not just fire off an email to the people you're interested in? Candidates will be impressed that they received a response so quickly, but there are additional benefits. Email is a great way to qualify marginal candidates. Also, the speed and quality of their response gives you another window into their communication skills and seriousness about your opportunity.

**2. Don't be afraid to ask the tough questions.** Resolve any red flags as soon as possible. If you had any concerns when you reviewed the resume (or at any time during the interview process), question the candidate until you are comfortable with the explanation. If there's a skeleton in the closet, get it out quickly, before you invest a lot of time and money in the process.

**3. Money is an issue.** This is one of the big changes in our .com environment. We used to deal with the money issue toward the end of the process, but the ".com mentality" of most candidates requires that you move salary front and center in the interview process.

Many of the resume posting formats used by the web sites include salary, but don't make assumptions about what that number represents. Even if the current salary is listed, the expectations of the candidate regarding desired salary might be much different. The following questions must be asked at least once, and I recommend that the hiring manager ask them as soon as possible in the process.

“What is your current base salary?”

“Do you get any bonus or incentive money?”

*If yes:*

“How do you earn it?”

“When do you get it?”

“How much do you expect to get this year?”

“What was your total compensation last year?”

“When is your next salary review?”

**4. Do what you promise.** If you say, “I'll get back to you before the end of the week”, you owe the candidate a call even if you have no new information. A day can make all the difference to a candidate who has responded to several postings. And while you may consider that ‘no news is good news’, your candidate will surely think just the opposite.

**5. Tech people need tech interviews.** Not only is it risky for you to assume that what you read in the resume is a factual account of the candidate's technical depth, we find many candidates who are disappointed that their technical skills aren't scrutinized more closely. Use a senior technical person, an outside consultant, or computer-based tests to drill the candidate on the technology.

## THE INTERVIEW TEAM

You can't do it alone, and we think multiple interviews actually help you and the candidate. But do more than assemble a team of people who can free up some time to talk to the candidate the day he comes in to interview. In this market, you need to choose the people who will help you not only evaluate the candidate, but also sell him on the opportunity you offer. Select people to fill each of the following important roles:

- **Salesman, visionary**
- **Tech expert**
- **Peer perspective**
- **User / Customer**
- **Interrogator**
- **Closer**

Each interviewer should know his role and be prepared to do it well. One person can serve more than one role, but it is helpful to split that person's time into

separate segments for each. Questions should be prepared and saved for use with each candidate. Remind the interviewers to do more listening than talking, since the candidate can only be sold on your opportunity when he feels that you can offer him what he's looking for.

How much time should you spend interviewing the candidate? We feel that interview time has become dangerously short, no doubt because everyone is in a hurry to make hiring decisions. But it takes time to learn enough about a candidate to know if he will be a good long-term investment. So we recommend this formula:

**Cumulative interview team time including the phone interview should equal 1 hour for each \$10,000 of candidate salary.**

The Hiring Manager, the person the candidate will report to on the job, has a key function in the process. Although the hiring manager can serve one or more of the roles listed above, he should also take on other duties.

## **HIRING MANAGER DUTIES**

**Serve as the primary interface with the candidate.** The hiring authority should spend the most time with the candidate and be the primary contact for the candidate. Why? As the primary stakeholder, who could better ensure that the candidate's needs are being met, whether they involve travel arrangements or benefits information? The candidate will also get to see his manager conducting business. This is important because in this competitive .com world, the candidate's ability to relate to you as a person may be the deciding factor for him to choose your company over the competition.

**Fight the counter offer.** Expect your candidate's employer to throw more money and perks at him to convince him to stay. Don't be afraid to discuss the issue early in the process. Ask:

“Why are you considering leaving your company?”

“What do you expect will happen when you tell your boss you quit?”

“What would your company have to do to get you to stay?”

“What do we need to do to convince you to join us?”

**Own the salary issue.** You may have always relied on your human resources department or recruiter to talk with the candidate about his salary requirements, but this .com world shifts the burden to you. In addition to the information gathering questions about salary listed above, the manager should also ask these questions later in the interview process:

“What salary offer would you like to see from us?”

“Would you accept an offer of that amount if we made it?”

“What other factors besides salary are important to you in your decision?”

Handling these other duties will give the hiring manager the information needed and the confidence to “go to the well” to get an offer that will likely be accepted.

## GETTING THE CANDIDATE

Once your interviews have been completed, call an interview team debrief meeting. Rather than checking with each interviewer individually, the team debrief lets everyone voice any concerns from their session. Once they are mentioned, others might recognize similar concerns or be able to provide a different perspective that might counter any negatives. In any case, if you value the interviewer’s opinion enough to have him involved, you owe him the opportunity to provide thorough feedback after the interview.

When you have decided to move forward with an offer, here are a few strategies that can help you at the offer stage of the interview process.

**Be sure the candidate is ready to accept.** Make sure the candidate has all the information on non-compensation issues that he needs (benefits, relocation information). Does the candidate have any other interviews pending? Ask:

“If you get an offer from us, when will you be able to accept?”

**Test the offer verbally.**

“Would you be receptive to receiving an offer of \_\_\_\_\_?”

**Expect to negotiate.** Candidates of all levels in this .com market are likely to try to get as much as they can from you at this point. In addition to salary negotiations, be prepared to negotiate on a variety of perks. Know your negotiating flexibility and company policies for each of these issues:

- Start date
- Vacation days
- Accelerated performance review
- Flex Time/ telecommuting
- Relocation assistance
- Signing bonus
- Stock options
- Technology (pager, laptop, cell phone, etc.)

**Get a conditional “yes” before sending the formal offer letter.** When the final offer is ready, present it to the candidate and ask if he will accept. Give him the

day or two he might request to think it over. But a candidate who wants an offer in writing before accepting it is probably going to use the offer letter as evidence of his “worth” on the market and attempt to get a counter offer from his current employer. The candidate who commits to joining you before going to his boss is more likely to resist a counteroffer.

## **AFTER THE ACCEPTANCE**

Your work is not complete just because the candidate has accepted your offer. Not only can the counter offer occur at any time up until the candidate actually joins you, but any of those other companies the candidate posted his resume to may still contact him. What can you do? Pull the new hire into your organization as quickly as possible. If the candidate is local, have him join your team for lunch or invite him to stop in to the office before his start date. Give him a book to read or a manual to review to help him ramp up before he starts. If he’s out of town, call frequently to make sure the relocation process is going smoothly and offer to meet him if he will be coming to town before he starts.

Does it seem like you are jumping through hoops to get a candidate to join your company in this monster.com world? You should be! There are not enough good IT people in the market, and the Internet lets IT people see that, so you need to go to battle to get the good ones. But finding them is just the start... you have to use these new strategies to ensure that they’re a good fit for your organization. If they are, you have to use new techniques to get them to accept your offer. And still no rest for the battle-torn! You need to get your prize candidate to start. Only then can you begin the management struggles of motivating and retaining talent in this market, but that’s another story.