

PRESS RELEASE

Winning the War for Talent?

by *Ladd Richland*

Are you battling (with your competition) or winning the War?

The Chief Executive Officer of Contract Recruiting Incorporated, shares several strategies he has implemented to assist Fortune 1000 and emerging growth companies attract and land talented workers. In addition, Ladd points to the impending skirmishes and how to organize your troops.

According to statistics from the 2000 Census Bureau, by 2010, 15 percent fewer Americans will fall in the 35 to 45 age range than currently. If the economy grows at its historic pace of three to four percent per year in the same time frame, worker demand will increase significantly, while supply is shrinking. Businesses will fall short of the management candidates they need. This worker shortage is part of the heated battle for talent.

In addition, there's the issue of talent itself. "Talented workers" make a significant difference in their workplace. Not only do these "A" players successfully complete their work, they also bring innovative ideas to the table and aren't opposed to "rolling up their sleeves" to implement these ideas. They think like business leaders, they take their job and their organization's goals seriously, and they treat issues as if they "own" them

They are thought leaders who wonder how to "beat" the competition. Whether they're executives in the boardroom planning the next strategic move or factory workers devising ways to better produce a product, they can be working in one of two places - for you or for your competitors.

"Just plain workers" ???

Companies that concentrate on upgrading their workforce from just plain workers to talented workers have an advantage in the marketplace. In fact, according to a McKinsey & Company study, on average, *organizations that scored high in the ability to manage talent earned a 22 percent greater return to shareholders than their industry peers.*

How much of the entire workforce consists of "talented workers?" Estimates range from ten to 15 percent of currently-employed workers

How can you upgrade your organization so "talented workers" represent 20, 25 or even 30 percent of your total workforce? The task can be split into two distinct disciplines: attraction of talented employees and aggressive pursuit of them.

Attraction.

A campaign to hire talent only works if your company is attractive enough for talented individuals to want to work there. It's important to create a company environment that includes the characteristics employees want today:

- o A sense of appreciation from management
- o Inclusion in decisions and knowledge
- o Ability to make an impact on the business

- o A feeling that the company supports family values

Additional ideas for making your company more attractive to talented workers include:

- o Allow your employees to have flexibility in their daily work; for example, with options for telecommuting and flexible hours.
- o Offer a competitive salary package.
- o Develop a candidate-friendly interactive Web site that describes your company culture glowingly (and honestly!) and highlights your focus on people.
- o Create an application process that's simple, fast and hassle-free.

Aggressive Pursuit

Once you've made your organization an attractive place to work, you must launch an aggressive outbound recruiting campaign:

- o Identify respected companies, especially your competitors, who you believe have the best talent.
- o Develop and maintain a database of talent through org-charting, cold call searching, networking and referrals. Call your competitors to learn the names of employees who work in key positions according to the company's organizational chart, then contact them. Follow the careers of key players.
- o Build relationships with staff at all levels of competitive and target organizations.
- o Write a detailed job description for positions - before recruiting - to make sure you really understand the positions.
- o Develop a consistent way to identify whether a candidate has talent. A good method is behavioral-based interviews - asking open-ended questions that elicit responses demonstrating past behaviors and capabilities.
- o Consistently perform reference checks. Treat references as part of an interview, not just confirmation of a positive decision. Ask references in-depth questions about the candidate. Most applicants are smart enough to provide a reference who will say good things about them. However, most references are not prepared to answer in-depth questions regarding the candidate's quality of work, commitment to job, loyalty to employer, preferred management style, and the other qualities that make up talent.
- o Create a structured employee referral program that rewards employees who find you talented candidates. Your best source of referrals is right in your back yard!

One of the key indicators for success in any organization today is hiring talented employees. By following these steps, you can improve your odds in finding talented "A" players instead of just plain "B" workers. Good luck!

Ladd Richland is Chief Executive Officer of Contract Recruiting Incorporated, a firm that provides recruiting professionals and recruiting information resources to Fortune 1000 and emerging growth companies on an interim or long term basis. Mr. Richland can be contacted at lrichland@contractrecruiting.com or (310) 791-7428.