
The Race For Talent:

A Guide to Perfecting your Recruitment
in a Candidate-Led Market

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Who We Are

Reuben Sinclair is a leading recruiter helping a variety of organisations hire talented people who create, analyse, and promote brands that succeed.

In this step-by-step guide, we're going to discuss the idea of the Employee Value Proposition (EVP). If it's something you've heard or read about but never taken the time to look at in detail, we hope to convince you of its vital importance in attracting and retaining the absolute best talent in your industry. At a time when the jobs market is weighted heavily in favour of candidates, it could be the answer to all your recruitment challenges.

Contents

The Unprecedented Challenge of Recruiting Candidates Today

How To Attract Candidates To Your Roles

How To Enhance Your Candidate Experience

How To Retain Existing Talent

The Importance of Being Clear on Your Business Vision



The Unprecedented Challenge of Recruiting Candidates Today

Today, businesses across almost every sector and industry face significant resourcing challenges. There are several core elements to these difficulties, and hiring managers and key decision-makers must have a comprehensive understanding of the current candidate-led market's challenges.

This information will ultimately help to shape a robust and effective recruitment strategy, which will attract top talent with the skills and knowledge to make a positive difference to your organisation.

The Impact of a Global Pandemic

Nobody needs reminding of the extent to which Covid-19 has impacted the business world; however it is crucial to highlight its effect on the recruitment landscape. The uncertainty that came with each wave of the pandemic has created a situation in which many employees are reluctant to consider pursuing job opportunities outside of their current workplace.

The good news is that EY research¹ indicates that over half of employees would consider a role change as the effects of the pandemic start to abate if their current employer fails to offer enough flexibility as to when and where they work.

This mindset is understandable since political and financial uncertainties mean that looking for a new job right now feels somewhat risky. However, this also means that the number of active candidates in the current talent pool is far lower than pre-pandemic.

The Skills Gap

Three quarters² of Human Resources professionals state that they see a significant shortage of suitably skilled applicants expressing interest in job openings. If a skills gap of this magnitude can progress unchecked, then it is anticipated that the talent shortage will amount to more than 80 million people globally by 2030. This would adversely impact annual global economic output, with forecasts suggesting that \$8.5 trillion³ could be lost.

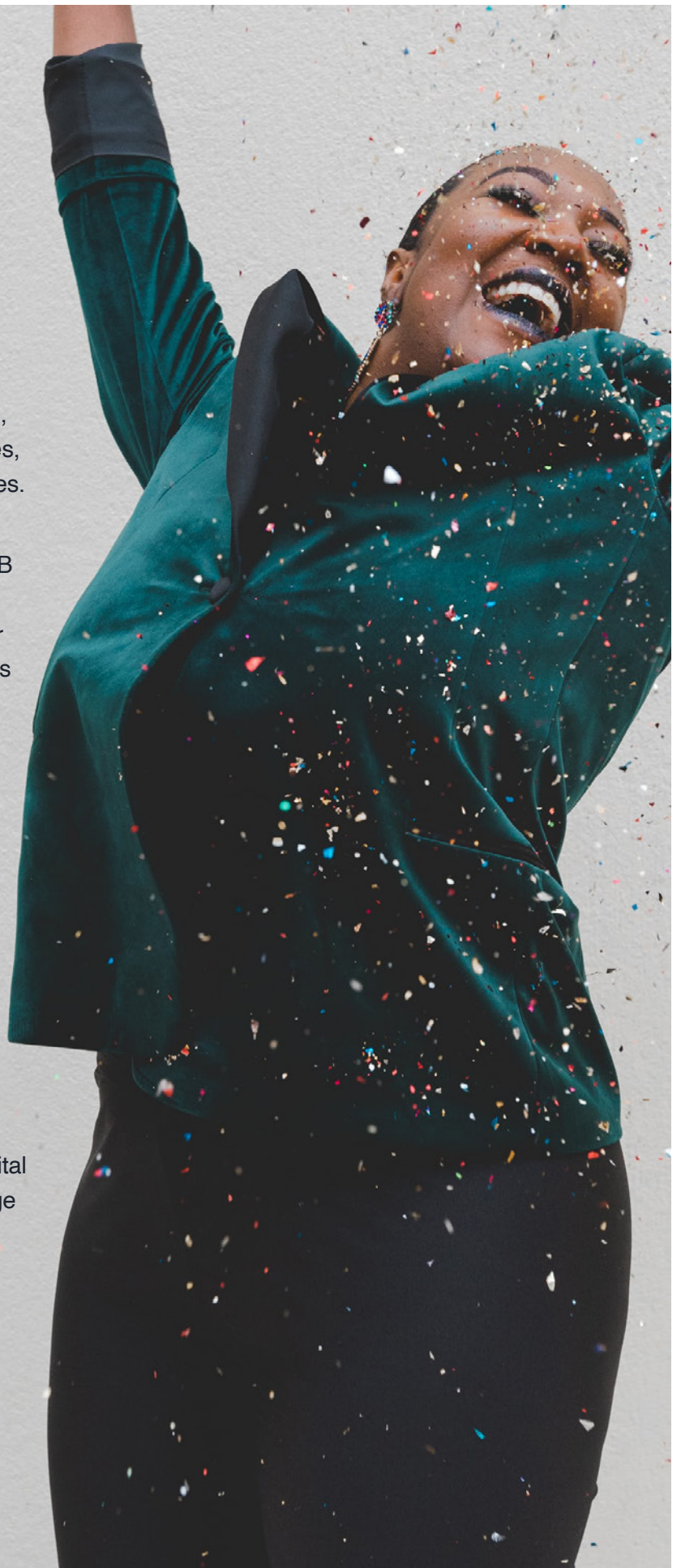
More than 50%² of talent management professionals point to the failure of education systems globally to adequately address the skills shortages that have been well-documented for many years. As a result, many employers may find it beneficial to incorporate pre-employment assessments into their recruitment process, particularly those designed to assess soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

How to Attract Candidates to Your Roles

The secrets of effective recruitment are preparation and attraction. To recruit well, you need to appeal to the best candidates, which begins long before a vacancy arises.

You need to apply the same principles of your brand marketing in consumer or B2B environments to the development of a unique and easily recognisable employer brand. Just as you promote your products or services to customers, so you need to sell yourself as an employer. Suppose you can create a brand that is associated with success, personal growth, reward, satisfaction, and an unbeatable work-life balance. In that case, when the time comes to recruit, your story is already known, and talented candidates will take minimal persuasion to knock on your door.

We've covered the concepts of Employer Branding and Employee Value Proposition in detail elsewhere. Still, we make no apology for emphasising how vital these are in giving you a competitive edge over your rivals in the war for talent. You need to offer not just a satisfying job but also an environment in which ambitious, gifted individuals can grow both personally and professionally.





Your company values must be those that will make a candidate proud to join the team: diversity, inclusion, environmental responsibility, and a commitment to social justice. They must be genuine and exist at the centre of your business vision.

Employer branding and EVP are part of the same strategy. The elements of your EVP will include specific rewards, which naturally will consist of salary and bonuses. Still, these don't always have to be numerically the best in the industry if other features are attractive enough. You might offer health and life insurance, free travel, gym membership, flexible working conditions, extended holiday - anything that adds real value for individuals.

In addition to these specific benefits, the company culture will also be decisive. This is where employer branding merges with EVP. You are creating a comprehensive package, almost a lifestyle, to tempt the most promising talent to apply for your vacancies.

The advantages of employer branding extend beyond recruitment. A culture and an environment that attracts top talent will also be one that retains it. Employees will want to stay, morale will remain high, and productivity will rise. You'll need to exercise sound reputation management to maintain the status you've worked so hard for.



Having created this offer, how do you communicate it to the people you want to attract?

There's no instant solution. You have to make use of every platform and channel available, which means networking, speaking at graduate and trade events, using email and other digital marketing tactics, sending regular press releases and newsletters to trade publications, and encouraging your existing employees to put the message out through their own personal and professional networks. Plus, of course, social media.

LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and even Instagram are excellent forums in which to spread the word. If the demographic fits, you might even consider TikTok. Recent research reveals how LinkedIn's influence on recruitment continues to grow, with 830 million members, 58 million registered companies, 50 million people searching it for jobs weekly and 87% of recruiters regularly using the platform¹.

Put real thought and resources into your social media posts. Eye-catching headlines are all very well, but they won't tell your story. Make the most of the opportunity to demonstrate that your business genuinely does what it claims. Use videos and images, which are often far more persuasive than words alone.

¹<https://kinsta.com/blog/linkedin-statistics/>

Your social media material should aim to be as powerful as the Hollywood trailers that drive millions into the cinemas. You're in control of the message, so articulate it loud and clear.

As we said at the start, this is work that needs to be done as early as possible and long before you need to hire. Once you advertise that dream job, your reputation will have preceded you, and you can expect an exceptional response. Of course, you can't take your foot off the accelerator because, throughout the recruitment process, you must maintain the promise that attracted candidates in the first place. That is the subject of our next piece.

How to Enhance Your Candidate Experience

Once you've mastered the art of attracting top talent, you face the next set of challenges in the recruitment journey. Finding the best candidates is only the beginning: next, you need to make sure you deliver a winning candidate experience.

What do we mean by candidate experience? Firstly, it's important to remember that for even the most self-confident candidates, applying for a new job can be nerve-wracking. If recruitment is a major issue for the employer, it's no less significant for the applicant. The experience from job advert and application to interview and final decision should always be positive.

Even if a candidate is ultimately unsuccessful, it's essential for their self-respect and your company's reputation that they should have no complaints. A survey conducted by Talentegy found that 69% of candidates with a negative experience would share it¹. Social media could spread the bad news to thousands of people in your industry.


It's a long, anxious process for the candidate for whom the successful completion of each step feels like a mountain climbed. They have to check their CV and references, complete the application form, submit everything, and then just wait. If they're lucky, they'll reach the interview stage, but here too, there will be a lot of waiting between rounds, hoping to hear good news.

After enduring all of this, if they get the job offer, they must be taken through the onboarding process before they can feel like a fully integrated team member.

If you don't manage this process properly, a candidate could become discouraged at any stage resulting in the loss of someone who might have been the perfect hire. In the same Talentegy survey, the same percentage of candidates – 69% – said that a bad experience had changed their mind about the company to which they had applied.

A poor experience can result from many different factors, some of which you can't control. Still, of those you can, the most significant ones are communication, the application itself and the interview process.

A Reed UK survey quoted in a LinkedIn article illustrated the different attitudes of applicants and employers, with 69% of candidates expecting feedback, even if unsuccessful, but only 8% receiving it. It also showed that 73% of those with a bad experience might never use that company's products or services again²,



Clear, consistent, and swift communication is vital because it makes a candidate feel involved and valued. Application forms should be stripped back to the essentials and not try to anticipate the work of the interview stage. Needlessly lengthy and complicated shapes can be extremely off-putting. Then there is the interview stage, which is a potential minefield of mismanagement.

Each interview needs to be clearly focused and necessary – four rounds of interviews are not uncommon, but they are rarely warranted. Apart from anything else, you and your recruitment team could fall victim to interview fatigue if you have to spend hundreds of hours in the interview room repeatedly talking to a parade of applicants. An interview should also never feel like an interrogation. LinkedIn found that 83% of applicants found a negative interview experience was enough to put them off the job³.

The methods of providing a good candidate experience should be fairly self-evident from the above. Treat applicants respectfully, keep them informed, even when there are delays, and make them feel valued. Don't construct the application process as an obstacle course but as an opportunity to shine. Ensure that every interview has a purpose, a logical structure, and the feeling of a conversation in which you're not trying to catch the interviewee but learn about them as a professional and a person. Make decisions quickly and let your interviewees know those decisions as soon as possible.

So far, we've talked a lot about how to attract great new talent and convince them to join you. The other vitally important issue in maximising your human resources is, of course, staff retention, which we'll look at next.

¹<https://www.talentegy.com/blog/cxreport-businessimpacts>

²<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/poor-communication-recruitment-process-damaging-your-brand-bill-wynn/>

³https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/talent-solutions/global/en_us/c/pdfs/global-talent-trends-report.pdf

How to Retain Existing Talent

Hiring the best available talent in a candidate-led market is both difficult and expensive. With unemployment at a record low, every vacancy is hard to fill, but it is even more difficult in industries where rare skills and experience are in high demand. Once you've successfully assembled a winning team, it's essential to guard against losing key players.

There are numerous compelling reasons to prioritise employee retention, not least the disruptive effect on the business as a whole and the team, which is losing a valued member. You are also losing the abilities and knowledge of that person, which is virtually impossible to replace because they have been an integral part of your infrastructure.

According to a 2017 survey, which is every bit as relevant today, the average costs incurred when an employee quits can be as high as 33% of their annual salary¹. This is based on the costs of recruiting and training a replacement staff member but also includes a calculation for lost productivity. A high staff turnover is also potentially demoralising for your other team members, for whom the disruption to established relationships can create its own set of difficulties.

Clearly, both attracting and retaining talent are equally essential resourcing challenges. How, therefore, has drawn together an efficient, confident team can you ensure that people stay? Naturally, some circumstances, personal or otherwise, will motivate an employee to resign, about which you can do very little. Still, apart from these intractable situations, there are plenty of protections that you can put in place.

Making the right hires in the first place is a good starting point. That means having a very clear idea of the skills and the personality you're looking for when recruiting staff. Getting the right fit with your company vision and culture is crucial. According to The Harvard Business Review, 80% of employee turnover results from poor hiring decisions².

The next step is onboarding once a new employee has accepted your job offer.

This is more than just an exercise in paperwork and box-ticking; it's about training and integration into the company and should be as carefully managed as the recruitment process. Evidence shows that as many as 40% of employees who feel their training and onboarding have been inadequate will leave their job within the first year³.

Feedback is a crucial communication between managers and employees, senior executives, and the rest of the company. It's not about patting people on the head: feedback is a highly constructive way of spreading understanding as well as appreciation. It can also be a tactful means of rectifying problems and disputes. You should endeavour to hold regular one-to-one meetings and circulate employee surveys to gauge your workforce's general opinions and attitudes.

It's essential to recognise the contributions of individuals. Even a verbal acknowledgement is valuable but tangible benefits are obviously welcome too. Studies suggest that 66% of employees would cite a lack of appreciation as a reason for leaving⁴.

Another compelling incentive to stay is the potential for personal and professional development. When a highly talented individual joins your company, you should assume they have ambitions to rise within the industry. If they can do that while working for you, then so much the better for everyone. Setting long-term goals, providing coaching and mentoring schemes, promoting internally, and allowing employees the autonomy to use their own initiative are just some of the most common ways to make the working environment seem an excellent place to grow. Research indicates that only 38% of employees leaving their job feel that the company offered adequate development opportunities, and only 45% felt the job aligned with their career goals⁵.

Much of this takes us back to the notion of your employee value proposition. You need to remain true to the elements of your EVP – it's what helped you recruit from a relatively limited talent pool and will help you keep hold of that talent.

¹https://www.benefitnews.com/news/avoidable-turnover-costing-employers-big?brief=00000152-14a7-d1cc-a5fa-7cfffccf00000&utm_content=socialflow&utm_campaign=ebnmaga-zine&utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social

²<https://www.hrfuture.net/talent-management/hiring/how-much-are-bad-hires-costing-you/>

³<https://www.elucidat.com/blog/why-employee-training-is-important/>

⁴<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/thanks-but-no-thanks-survey-reveals-strangest-forms-of-workplace-recognition-research-also-finds-two-in-three-employees-would-leave-their-job-if-they-didnt-feel-appreciated-300438300.html>

⁵https://www.quantumworkplace.com/future-of-work/employee-turnover-trends?__hstc=45788219.3e78f75ca045f438a76462dc34719c72.1635861122132.1635861122132.1635861122132.1&__hssc=45788219.1.1635861122133&__hsfp=2077487610

⁶https://www.quantumworkplace.com/future-of-work/employee-turnover-trends?__hstc=45788219.3e78f75ca045f438a76462dc34719c72.1635861122132.1635861122132.1635861122132.1&__hssc=45788219.1.1635861122133&__hsfp=2077487610



The Importance of Being Clear on Your Business Vision

A good business can succeed with original ideas, marketable products, dedicated employees and adequate funding. However, it is unlikely to become a great business if it lacks a solid and explicit vision. Many people start companies to make money, which is the extent of their aspiration. Exceptional people go into a business driven by a passion for effecting change, disrupting and innovating, changing and improving lives, and making their company the very best at what it does.

A company's vision is more than the sum of its business goals. It is an image of a more prosperous future because of the company's contribution to it. That may sound more akin to philosophy than the economy, but the two are often inseparable. Microsoft, Apple, Nike and Virgin are all companies with visions that have sustained them for decades and remained at the core of everything they do.

A vision is far more than a motto or slogan. It shouldn't be expressed in broad terms that are open to convenient interpretation. It needs to cover small details as well as the big picture. It will encompass your branding and reputation, ethical policy, sense of social responsibility, attitude to your customers, and relationship with your greatest resource; your employees. It should portray your business as you intend others to see it.

The vision of your company defines you, your aims and your strategy for achieving them. It is a clearly articulated expression of your values. It is something you should enshrine in a vision statement that can be shared with clients, customers, employees, and competitors. It will be a priceless asset and one that will guide you through decades of innovation and growth.

A vision statement will make a significant contribution to your company culture. It will help your employees to appreciate their position in the broader scheme and motivate them to meet its standards. Importantly, it will empower them to be proactive rather than reactive. Once they understand its importance, they will be encouraged to embody that vision in both their professional and personal lives.

Your company vision is a kind of north star against which to measure how you conduct business, treat suppliers and attract new talent. It is advantageous when faced with difficult decisions, helping you always do the right thing. If expedient action is at odds with the values embodied in that vision, it will enable you not to lose sight of what is right. In this sense, a company vision not only guides the conduct of business but even forms part of your recruitment strategy. A company with this kind of ethical compass is a desirable place to work.

An ethical vision is good for business. An identifiable vision is of enormous benefit in your relationship with your customers. As long ago as 2015, research by Nielsen discovered that 66% of consumers were willing to pay more for goods produced sustainably¹. In the UK household spending on ethical products and services more than doubled between 2010 and 2019².

It may take time to develop a vision of this depth. At the very start of your company, you may already have the framework in mind, and as you grow, your vision will develop and solidify. Have the patience to let it develop. A crucial part of that development will be your team's contribution, from the trusted colleagues you surround yourself with within the early days to the gradually or rapidly expanding workforce that accompanies your business growth. Every person you employ will feed into that vision, abide by it, promote it and sustain it. That is just one of many reasons it is vital to perfect your recruitment strategy. The people who work with you and for you are part of that vision.

At Reuben Sinclair, we believe passionately that a company's vision is indispensable. When you appoint us to fulfil your recruitment aspirations, we will ensure that every hire is in perfect alignment with your vision.

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¹<https://www.nielsen.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/04/global-sustainability-report-oct-2015.pdf>

²<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2021/dec/31/uk-annual-spending-on-ethical-products-surpasses-100bn-for-first-time>

A Competitive Salary Alone Just Doesn't Cut It Anymore

Promoting a competitive salary was once a sure-fire way to get candidates through the door. However, it doesn't have the same impact amongst Millennials and Gen Z. Candidates from these generations are actively looking for roles within which they can progress and develop.

In response, businesses must ensure that they are positioning themselves to appeal to suitable candidates rather than relying on job titles and salary expectations to do all the heavy lifting. For example, over 50% of Millennials will accept offers from businesses with a clear and strong career progression path.⁶

In Conclusion

The employment market has evolved in a concise time, which means that many employers have yet to adapt to these new parameters. This could be good news for your organisation, provided that you take the opportunity to refresh your hiring processes ahead of your competitors.

The first step to winning the race is to ensure you are attracting candidates to your roles.

Please contact Reuben Sinclair to access market-leading expertise in creating compelling employee value propositions and hiring process success.

¹https://www.ey.com/en_gl/news/2021/05/more-than-half-of-employees-globally-would-quit-their-jobs-if-not-provided-post-pandemic-flexibility-ey-survey-finds

²<https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Documents/SHRM%20Skills%20Gap%202019.pdf>

³<https://www.kornferry.com/insights/this-week-in-leadership/talent-crunch-future-of-work>

⁴<https://www.aberdeens.com/hcm-essentials/the-pros-and-cons-of-pre-employment-screenings/>

⁵<https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/content/other/businesses-paying-the-financial-consequences-of-bad-hiring>

⁶<https://www.pwc.com/co/es/publicaciones/assets/millennials-at-work.pdf>

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