

In the war for talent, here are three ways to help your hiring process

While it's a competitive jobs market, landing your next great talent is not impossible - and the first place to start is by sharpening your hiring process, advises business leadership coach Simac Konkader.

The number of job vacancies being advertised offering bonuses has more than doubled since the start of last year, to 200,000, according to new research from Adzuna, as employers seek to reduce the cost of attracting talent without committing to inflation-proof pay rises.

This is just one way bosses are making their business stand out to a sea of people that have likely taken the opportunity over the past two years to reassess their careers and what they want out of work. Staff being more demanding than ever has fast become one of the biggest challenges for SMEs.

As the number of *job vacancies in the UK* reached a record high of 1.3 million in the three months to May 2022 - around 535,000 more vacancies when compared with the same period of 2021 - so too have candidate expectations risen around flexible working, benefits, career paths and purpose.

But it doesn't mean securing your next game-changing hire won't happen - it just means you need to change your game, too, when it comes to attracting them. Here's what I advise.

Handle your recruitment process in the same way you'd sign new clients or customers

The experience you give a candidate during the recruitment process speaks volumes about the work environment in your business, to the extent that even candidates that aren't successful would feel positively positive about you.

But why are so many companies not investing the same amount of time, effort and goodwill in how they treat candidates, as they would in how they would entice and onboard a new customer? I was definitely alarmed to read that 70% of the 1,500 people surveyed in June by hiring software company Greenhouse had been ghosted after interviews, yet 60% would reapply to a company they had previously received feedback from.

More tellingly, 61% say recruitment processes overall need improvement – 65% say they won't submit a job application if it takes longer than 15 minutes to complete, and 53% expect to hear back from companies in one week or less regarding their initial application. 73% want feedback. What are your KPIs compared to these statistics?

Would you expect a prospective customer to spend longer than 15 minutes expressing their interest in your product or service? Would you leave them hanging for more than a week to get back to them? Or would you not get back to them at all? I didn't think so.

Having your recruitment process emulate the steps of your customer marketing and onboarding journey will definitely feel like a big investment – but one that will prime you to secure your next hire from the 65% of talent in the UK who Greenhouse's data shows to be job hunting.

Review your employee benefits – and shout about them

Better *employee benefits* is a top engagement driver for 33% of the 1,000 SME employees and employers in England surveyed last December by employee benefits platform Sodexo Engage. Better pay, naturally, topped the list for 45%, while for 36%, a better work/life balance is a top priority.

It's time, then, to review your employee benefits and how they're being communicated in your recruitment process, right from that first ad. If you offer hybrid working and flexible hours, give that some airtime, with some examples

of how that's already working for some of your team members. This gives a sense of relatability and allows candidates to visualise themselves in your ranks.

Likewise, if you offer unlimited holidays, swappable bank holidays, birthdays off, increased holidays each year or something even more special like sabbaticals. You might not have the deep pockets of your corporate counterparts to develop the most luxurious benefits package, but look at what you can offer that will make a big difference to people.

And if you can, be transparent. Sharing a salary range, for example, demonstrates part of how you're creating a more equitable and inclusive workplace, as open negotiations often favour men and can perpetuate pay gaps. Similarly, if you offer enhanced parental leave, shout it from the rooftops, rather than putting the onus on candidates to ask what might be an awkward question for them.

These are small steps that go a long way towards demonstrating the kind of culture you're creating – and that someone would want to work in.

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