

# **Improving The Post-Pandemic Talent Recruitment Process**

*From a worldwide pandemic to international protests against social injustices, 2020 gave many recruiters a sudden reset. Now that COVID-related hiring freezes are coming to an end, how can recruiters improve the way they fill open positions?*

Recruiters face a strange new world right now. After the involuntary “hard reset” provided by the pandemic, many must restart their talent pipeline flow in a world that has been remade. Here, the key choices and opportunities for recruiters will be examined, with an emphasis on the ways that recruitment processes can be improved to adequately account for the economic, technological, and social justice ripples of 2020.

## ***Making the first choice: In house or outsourced?***

When looking for new employees, companies can turn to recruitment agencies for assistance in filling open positions, or develop their own in-house recruiters. Recruitment agencies can be an invaluable timesaving resource for large organizations, especially those with short-term contract positions or specialized, executive-level needs, because they allow those companies to devote resources to talent development.

In-house recruiters, on the other hand, are essential links in developing and building company culture because they not only find new talent but also help employees assimilate and learn their new roles. For hiring managers in organizations that desire to address past social injustices in their hiring processes and thrive in a post-2020 global economy, changing these recruitment approaches will be essential going forward.

## ***Recruiting in a COVID-19 world***

COVID-19 had a tremendous impact on the global economy in nearly every sector and every part of the world. According to research undertaken by Alexander Mann Solutions, a global talent acquisition and management firm, 38 percent of companies put talent acquisition on hold because of COVID-19. These hiring freezes are finally being thawed, with the need to fill open positions rapidly gaining priority. Many openings will be filled with contract workers as businesses continue to monitor changes in restrictions, sales, and employee retention.

While presenting a huge challenge, COVID-19 also provides opportunities for companies to adjust their traditional hiring processes. Nicola Hancock, Managing Director, Americas Region at Alexander Mann Solutions, noted that almost every organization has been impacted in some

way by the pandemic. The firm's research revealed that for many, the pandemic illuminated skills gaps and opportunities for reskilling and upskilling workforces.

One of the most glaring needs? An increased focus on workforce planning. Traditional approaches to staffing and recruiting won't help today's organizations effectively manage uncertainty, maximize hiring investments, or prepare for the future of work. Forward-looking firms that are using this "global reset" to rethink their talent acquisition strategies will be much further ahead when pandemic guidelines end worldwide.

### *Recruiting in a social justice world*

In 2020, there was not only a global pandemic, but also numerous protests and other revelations that highlighted growing awareness of social injustices and demands for change.

Millions of workers who lost their jobs due to the economic downturns in 2020 will now be looking for new opportunities. It's estimated that one in 16 workers will need to change occupations by 2030, as automation and other COVID-induced impacts linger. In the United States, according to consulting firm McKinsey & Co., these workers looking for retraining are most likely to be Black or Hispanic and female. Now more than ever, companies are being scrutinized to gauge their commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In 2021, "70 percent of job seekers said they want to work for a company that demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion," according to Workplace Intelligence.

For organizations that want to tap into the well-documented benefits of a diverse workforce, careful consideration of hiring practices can reveal unnecessary barriers or even past injustices. For example, expecting job applicants to have done unpaid internships can automatically preclude many low-income students from consideration. Even the prerequisite of a college degree can exclude many applicants who would be able to learn the role if this requirement were removed. Be clear on what is actually essential for the position, and what is merely nice to have, and more candidates will apply.

### *Recruiting in a digital world*

Once job descriptions have been written, it's time to find talent. With many in-person networking events moved online due to COVID, or reimaged altogether as virtual gatherings, smart recruiters need to adjust to these new formats.

Video calls have replaced in-person job interviews in many cases. This not only saves time and travel, but also allows for a broader applicant field across geographic boundaries. Industry leaders will invest in developing the skills needed for video interviews and prepare to onboard candidates for remote positions. Practical tools like headsets, cameras, monitors, and familiarity with platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams can make these processes smoother.

Considering that many candidates and even hiring managers may be making these calls from their home environments, there are opportunities to incorporate questions based on their person's surroundings that can give both participants deeper insight into one another.

Rather than merely posting an opening on an online job board, consider partnerships with recruiters that pay per applicant. This incentivizes both parties to write job descriptions well, attract quality candidates, and utilize algorithms to promote good matches. Search engine optimization, or SEO, allows postings to be found more readily in online searches. Building in appropriate terms can make a dramatic difference in how results are viewed.

Finally, social media and other online networks can no longer be ignored by recruiters. Companies should consider developing their own pages to advertise open positions, showcase current employees, and allow potential new hires to become more familiar with the organization. A business network like LinkedIn is an ideal place to find a new employee; according to LinkedIn, three people are hired every minute through their platform. There are countless tools available in LinkedIn alone that can assist organizations in finding top talent and broad candidate pools in various professional groups and personal networks.

The world after 2020 will never be the same. But for recruiters and companies willing to embrace this next normal of an online and social justice-aware world, opportunities to grow and develop abound as open positions are filled with fresh perspectives.