THE ULTIMATE 7 CHALLENGES

(For recruitment agencies)

Several trends point out that 2014 is going to be a challenging year for recruiters. With a wealth of positions now available on the market, placing a candidate has never been easier, but nor has the competition doing it been so high. Check out these tips to make the most of the next few months.

1. Speed up your time to hire

Projections for 2014 indicate a general optimism regarding the growth of vacancies and future opportunities in the upcoming year. However, according to the 'Annual membership survey' carried out by the 'Forum of In-house Recruitment Mangers' (FIRM), there is a continued move towards direct sourcing of talent and a shift away from the use of agencies and outsourcing.

In light of this scenario recruitment agencies have to highlight the advantages of outsourcing recruitment tasks, and in this sense, speed can be the silver bullet, because 91% of the in-house recruitment teams report an average time to hire of 4 weeks or more.

The competition among agencies to make the latest CVs available to Recruiters starts by increasing the efficiency of administrative tasks like loading new CVs into the database or conducting searches through the internal and external CV sources. In this sense, it is worth rethinking these processes and assessing how existing technology is working and whether it is worth investing in new solutions that can put us ahead of our competitors by saving us time in tasks that do not add value.

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2. Evolve in the same direction as the environment

You have obviously heard about natural language semantic search and how it has changed the way internet search engines work today, not just by matching words, but understanding their context and thus, their real meaning.

So, if the environment is evolving towards natural language semantic search, Shouldn't your business and technology follow the same path?

The application of this discipline to business processes and especially to the recruitment industry, is directly related to how your CV database process and understands data.

The traditional way of processing CVs was based on keyword-based parsers which identify words, phrases and simple patterns in the text of the CV/Resume and then applying simple heuristic algorithms to the text they find around these words. However, the time for this kind of search and matching way as passed, both in the internet in general, and in recruitment industry in particular.

Technology has evolved to Grammar-based parsers which also consider grammatical rules that seek to understand the context and occurrence of every word in the CV. These contain an enormous number of grammatical rules that seek to understand the context of occurrence of every word in the CV/resume. These same grammars also combine words and phrases together to make complex structures that capture the meaning of every sentence in the resume. Statistical parsers attempt to apply numerical models of text to identify structure in a CV. Like grammar-based parsers, they can distinguish between different contexts of the same word or phrase and can also capture a wide variety of structures such as addresses and work/education histories.

Recruiters must implement intelligent technology that go beyond a basic key word match. CV search tools that utilise natural language semantic technology, enable recruiters to accurately identify those candidates that have held a role and has exposed them to the relevant skills and competencies. These intuitive tools also score and rank jobseekers according to their level of skill.

By automating the search and match process in this way, recruiters can significantly reduce the time spent finding suitable candidates, enabling them to present a shortlist of the best applicants to the employer before anyone else. A skills shortage shouldn't hinder the recruitment process – with the right

technology, it is a matter of finding those hidden gems!

3. Trust your internal data base

For a recruitment agency, the CVs database is key to business processes, thus populating it with accurate and relevant information is a must in order to make it work to full capacity and ensure business productivity. However, there are three main threads to the reliability of your data base:

- *Scarce information* – very little information is input when the record is created. Just the name, contact details and the CV is attached.
- *Outdated information* – although the candidate may exist in the active job market, there is no way of firstly verifying if the candidate on the database is the same as the candidate that you have found on a job board. There will be new information on the online version of the CV, but to merge the two records will be to risk corrupting the existing data.
- *Duplication* – everyone is prone to laziness or taking the path of least resistance. On average 60-70% of CVs processed are updates to existing data that you already have. However, it can sometimes be easier to create a brand new record for a candidate, even though they may already exist.

For you to be able to trust your database, it is not just about increasing the number of records it contains but making sure that these records are unique. Your system has to be able to recognise if an incoming candidate already exists in the database and update the new for old automatically.

4. Discover and exploit the power of your internal data base

Trusting the information that your internal database gives you is just a starting point. However, agencies have to be able to understand the hidden power of a reliable database and go one step further.

While a well-populated and updated database creates a tremendous opportunity for business leaders to gain insights into day-to-day operations, recruiting managers and business owners have become overwhelmed with data and frequently lack the tools needed to analyse information about their business.

Even companies with data analysis software often miss out on the true potential of business intelligence because they don't take the critical step of moving from insights to action. While business intelligence may seem complex, it

offers enormous growth potential if used effectively to enable better decision making and better business performance by giving you visibility of what is happening within your database, allowing you to analyse the effectiveness of CV sources, skills, geographies, clients and even industries.

5. Don't mess up with the different sources

2013 has been the year of the consolidation of external recruitment sources. In 2013 approximately 1,100 job boards have been counted in UK. If we also consider the rise of social media and LinkedIn, recruiters can't complain about a lack of sources, but about too many.

There is a huge amount of data out there, half of which is redundant but half of which is awaiting interrogation. In a competitive market where having the business edge is key, recruiters need to do all they can to obtain a true candidate profile.

However, chances are, if the search process is not properly structured and systematised, recruiters can easily "get lost" and feel like the information they are missing holds more value than the one they are finding.

Thus, agencies must invest in intelligent technologies that readily collate candidate details from multiple sources - CVs, social media and previous agency interactions - in one central location. This gives the recruiter a complete picture of candidates' relevant abilities and experience, reduces the time spent identifying the most suitable candidates for each placement but also keeps all information within the confines of the database.

6. Take the leap out of your comfort zone: Think global

Industry experts recommend UK recruitment entrepreneurs to take advantage of opportunities abroad and go into international markets. However, moving out of your region involves a set of challenges and agencies should have the systems in place before taking the leap.

Going abroad means a multicultural and multilingual approach to all your business processes, including to the analysis of CVs, which is not just about key words translation, but also about understanding the linguistic mannerisms of each language.

The skills contained within the search may be referred to differently from location to

location. Differences in the way business is done in those locations will affect the search, as much as the rules of the language itself.

7. Let your staff focus on what only humans can do by making technology do all the rest

Have you thought how your ROI improve if your recruiters could focus on the tasks that only humans can perform by making technology do all the rest?

With constantly evolving technology, you'd be right to question why the recruitment sector hasn't moved on dramatically in terms of candidate placing. But in reality, can technology ever be a substitute for human intuition?

More often than not you're trying to attract like for like and there is only one sure fire way of doing that – knowing and talking. Recruiters need to know the company and the candidate well enough to find the perfect match and the only way that can be done is through human interaction and one person judging another's skill.

New technology, regardless of how high-tech it is, will never overrule the power of conversation. Variables are intangible, there is no point in using algorithm based search technology, when you don't know what you are matching against, after all, it cannot quantify what the employer needs. Instead, recruiters need to invest in technology to aid their job, not do their job. Conversation is key.

Investing in a system that automates the employment application workflow, you can concentrate resources on the challenge of actually placing candidates.

From here, recruiters can then spend their time wisely and actively search and place candidates, drawing upon their judgement and experience, instead of investing valuable time with manual updates and admin.