

HR Examiner

*Examining practical HR issues business owners
and managers encounter every day*

Where Are All The Qualified Candidates?

Arlene Vernon

While some of you are thrilled with the responses you're getting for qualified candidates, some companies are struggling. Today's applicant market is different than in previous times because for some positions we have an overabundance of candidates and for other positions we struggle to find even one person who fits our needs.

While I can't magically find the hidden candidates for you, the following are some considerations to make your employment ads work better for you.

See if any of these apply to you:

- **The job title doesn't match what people are looking for when they search for jobs.** You may have an industry-specific title or a title that someone randomly created. Step back to see whether you'd respond to an ad with that job title or whether there's a more attractive one for the ad. You can always call the job anything you want internally, but will it attract qualified people?
- **The employment ad isn't specific enough or it doesn't really describe what the tasks and responsibilities are.** Candidates are first attracted to the title, and then they read through the ad

to see whether the job sounds interesting and whether they have the skills or capability to perform the job. Make sure the description is a true reflection of what the person will be doing. And if you can make it sound exciting or fun, go for it!

- **No one's heard of your company.** Make sure your ads include a description of your organization. Include what you do and what aspects of your work culture make you special. If you're a small friendly informal group, include that fact. If you're a larger organization with opportunity for growth, share that important attribute.
- **Too many under-qualified candidates.** Reality is that you will spend time scanning resume of unqualified people who are just trying to get into a company hoping someone will give them a chance. Learn how to skim those resumes quickly. Or for more entry level positions when people aren't appearing with the experience you're seeking, determine whether you can hire someone with a specific base skill set and then teach them how to apply those skills in your job.
- **You're advertising the position in the wrong places.** If you're hiring a generic job, then craigslist and other generic web job posting sites will work fine. If the position is industry-specific, be sure to target your ads to where your audience is reading. Also, attend local industry meetings and start networking to see who knows someone who might fit the job specifications.
- **Know when print ads are more effective than online ads.** Since print ads are typically more expensive than online ads, our tendency is to ignore that option. But sometimes print ads pull the right candidates, so incorporate that as part of your advertising strategy. For example, if your target employee doesn't need to be computer literate to perform the job, perhaps those candidates conduct their job search from print ads rather than online ads. Try it.

I know there are many other employment ad tips to help you attract better candidates, but remember advertising is only one part of a strategic approach to hiring. Work with your team to make sure you're applying as many techniques as possible to let the community know what a great company you are, what kind of employees you're seeking and what opportunities you have.

About Arlene Vernon

Arlene has provided HR consulting and management training services to over 300 organizations since starting HRx, Inc. in 1992.

If you're seeking a hands-on, practical HRxpert to assist your organization with employee relations, policy development, strategic HR activities or fun/doable management training, call on Arlene – Your HRxpert.

If you're planning a conference, seminar or special event, Arlene specializes in keynotes, seminars and workshops to meet your talent management needs. And if you're seeking a more lively entertaining activity, Arlene's custom songs and musical-inspirational keynote may be perfect for your organization!

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