

# STRATEGY



## Recruiting Tapping the talent pool... without drowning in resumés

**Despite the mass layoffs** dominating the headlines, plenty of companies are still hiring. But doing one's part to lower the unemployment rate can present some challenges. Just ask Raising Cane's, a chain of 80 fast-food restaurants that booked sales of about \$140 million last year. The Baton Rouge, Louisiana-based company, which has 3,500 employees, recently decided to open another office in Dallas. To staff it, Clay Dover, the com-

pany's president, needed to hire 32 people, including a receptionist and a human resources manager. Dover's first step was to post the positions on major online job boards such as Monster and CareerBuilder.com. He also bought ads in *The Dallas Morning News* and on local radio stations. Within days, the company had received more than 10,000 resumés, so many that Dover wound up hiring a local recruiting firm to help him

screen and interview the applicants.

“We wanted to find the very best people, so we cast as wide a net as we possibly could,” says Dover, who ended up paying the recruiter a six-figure fee. “But it didn’t take us long to realize that we wouldn’t be able to handle it alone.”

Unfortunately, not every business has the deep pockets to enlist a recruiter. Here are some tips and tools that do-it-yourselfers can use to take advantage of the employer’s market without getting buried under a stack of resués.

#### KEEP IT IN THE INDUSTRY

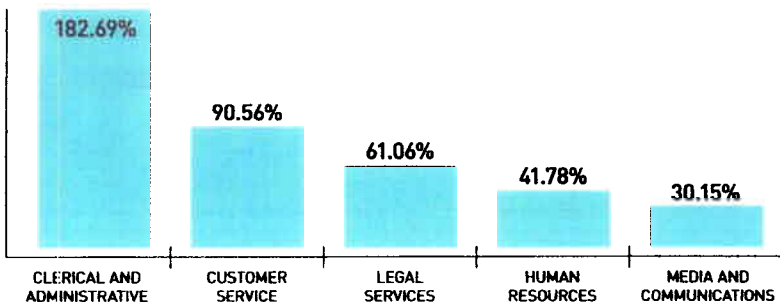
Using online job boards that target a particular industry or city is an easy way to reduce the number of applicants that are either unqualified or too far away. *Jobing.com*, for example, maintains 41 city-specific job sites in 19 states, and *Beyond.com* hosts more than 15,000 industry-specific communities in which employers can post jobs and view resués. *SnagAJob.com*’s niche is hourly jobs. Many job boards now let companies create automated e-mail responses and draft prescreening questions that help whittle down the number of resués. *Eggspout.com*, a Seattle job board, uses an algorithm to recommend candidates, similar to the way *Amazon.com* recommends books based on past purchases. No matter where you post openings, try to clearly specify a job’s requirements. That way, says Shawn Boyer, CEO of *SnagAJob*, “you set the candidate’s expectations, and you won’t get as inundated with applicants.”

#### GO FOR A KNOCKOUT

Not so long ago, only big companies could afford applicant tracking software, which makes life easier by compiling candidates into a searchable database. Today, however, there are many inexpensive options for small and midsize companies. Web-based programs from *Taleo*, *NuView Systems*, and *Accolo*, for example, are designed to accept resués and automate much of the screening process. *NuView*, which costs about \$6 to \$15

## Need an administrative assistant?

Prepare to be deluged. According to the job-listings site *Beyond.com*, these professions saw the largest increases in resués postings in the past year.



per month per user, can instantly ask candidates questions when they submit a resués, such as, “What is your level of education?” Certain answers can be set up as “knockouts,” says Shafiq Lokhandwala, the company’s CEO, meaning that if a candidate doesn’t give the desired answer, the software will send an e-mail that all but says, “Thanks, but no thanks.”

#### GIVE OUT GRADES

One popular way of screening candidates is to test skills early in the application process. There are online tests that assess an applicant’s typing speed, proficiency at *QuickBooks* accounting, or even ability to sell over the phone. Companies such as *PreVisor* and *Kenexa* offer close to 1,000 online assessments, with prices ranging from a couple of bucks to \$50 a test.

#### POLL YOUR INNER CIRCLE

Tapping friends and employees for recommendations is a time-honored hiring approach, and social networking sites such as *LinkedIn*, *Facebook*, and *MySpace* have made it easier than ever to mine company contacts. Some employers, like Kevin Mercuri, president of *Propheta Communications*, a public relations firm in New York City, are turning exclusively to their social networks to fill open positions. Mercuri, who stopped running ads on *Craigslist* after being inundated with resués,

now announces job openings through *LinkedIn*. “I get people vouching for each applicant, so I don’t have to spend hours sorting through resués,” he says.

#### SEND A RECORDING

Too many interviews, too little time? Have candidates interview themselves first. *InterviewStream*, a company based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, records online video interviews for about \$30 to \$60 a pop. It works like this: The candidate receives an e-mail invitation with a link. When he or she clicks on the link, a video pops up with an interviewer who asks prerecorded questions chosen by the company. The candidate’s answers are captured via webcam. Employers have the option of allowing candidates to review and rerecord their answers. Hiring managers can go through the videos at their convenience.

A similar service, *VoiceScreener*, from *HarQen*, a Milwaukee-based start-up, conducts automated phone interviews. Employers prerecord questions, and candidates are given about three minutes to answer. The audio responses are compiled online. Hiring managers can listen to them, make notes, and share them with others. *VoiceScreener* is still in free beta testing, but Kelly Fitzsimmons, *HarQen*’s CEO, plans to charge a monthly fee. “We’ve made it easier for employers to evaluate personality instead of just a piece of paper,” she says. —*Darren Dahl*