

HOW DOES YOUR RECRUITING PROCESS RANK?

Recruiting top notch talent is a constant priority for architecture and engineering firms. And although the immediate need for staff may be lessened at times by fluctuations in the economy, the topic of recruiting should always be found on a firm's long range planning agenda. When done thoughtfully and properly, recruiting can be a way to improve marketing efforts, bolster growth into new sectors and geographies and retain and attract key staff.

So how do architects and engineers approach the challenges of recruiting? Hall & Company, a management consulting firm that specializes in A/E recruitment, conducted a survey of A/E firms ranging in size from 2 to 226 to find out. The survey asked firms about their recruiting practices; what techniques they find most effective and what sort of process is used to screen and filter candidates.

With more than 85% of firms reporting that principals or other firm leaders are always actively involved in the hiring process, it is clear that recruiting is important to A/E firms. What's not clear is whether or not there is sufficient resources available inside A/E firms to be effective at it. The results of the survey are presented and evaluated in this article.

Strategic Planning

More than 70% of the firms surveyed do not have a strategic recruiting plan, and conversely, only 18% reported satisfaction with the results of their efforts. This indicates that planning may impact effectiveness.

Recruiting is a lot like marketing: it works best when it begins early and is ongoing. It is not effective as a last minute effort made in desperation. Firms that have a strategic plan in place are better able to project long term staffing needs and fill the more urgent, unexpected vacancies.

Planning should occur once a year with quarterly evaluations to measure the results and make any necessary adjustments. The plan should promote the firms' business goals and include a projected number of hires, a recruiting budget, a candidate sourcing strategy and an outline of how the recruitment process will work.

Sourcing Methods

There are a myriad of resources, from local newspapers to obscure trade journals to vast internet job boards, for sourcing candidates. The best practice is to know what's available, identify what works for your firm and

use a variety of sourcing methods in order to saturate your market, maintain a steady flow of interest in your positions and create a substantial pool of candidates matching your firm's basic criteria.

Our survey asked firms to identify their top three methods for sourcing staff. For top level professionals, networking ranked number one followed by internet job boards and unsolicited resumes. The best methods for sourcing entry-level staff was identified as newspaper advertising, college placement programs and unsolicited resumes.

Tools of the Trade

Surprisingly, the survey showed that less than 3% of the firms operated company websites that allow candidates to apply for specific jobs online, and more than 30% of the firms have no recruiting information or functionality on their websites at all. Because unsolicited resumes are one of the top three sources of candidates for all levels of jobs, it is critical that firms have the proper infrastructure to collect, sort, store and respond to these candidates.

Your website is an ideal place for "passive" recruiting. It is available to candidates 24/7, it can hold an infinite amount of information about your firm's projects, culture, goals and job openings and if it's structured properly, it can facilitate resume collection and storage.

Practical Process

Even though talented staff is commonly thought of as a significant asset to A/E firms, only a minority use a meaningful recruiting process that is designed to find the best people. In practice, 65% of the firms surveyed never train hiring managers on how to conduct an interview, more than 70% don't even prepare job descriptions to define the position internally or for the potential candidates and only a little more than half of the firms take the time to check references before hiring. However, 85% of the firms do involve leadership in the hiring process.

These stats illustrate that firms do understand the value of recruiting, but don't back it up with the appropriate resources that make the effort genuinely rewarding.

Conclusion

Recruiting is vital to a firm's health. Those that institute and stay committed to a long term strategy will perpetuate growth and expansion goals as well as make short term crisis much less painful. Granted, it's not easy, but the pay off in quality staff is worth the investment.

To learn more about Hall & Company's selection process or to have your firm's process evaluated, contact our recruiters at 800-583-0379.