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MANAGEMENT

**Feature: Recruiters Say Doing Business as Usual Isn't an Option**

## Recruiters Say Doing Business as Usual Isn't an Option

Economic conditions and new technology are changing the way recruiters meet the demands of clients and job seekers.

By **Jon Hindman**

**T**hose who have been in the recruiting business for more than a decade have likely been through this type of hiring environment before.

It can be summed up like this: Companies are waiting to hire for key positions. A slew of nonqualified job applicants are vying for the potential job openings. And companies are being extra picky about their hiring moves, even when there is clearly some top-notch talent that could fit the open position like a tailored Armani suit.

“I started my career in the mid-’90s, and I worked through the uptick of the recession of the early ’90s. And I worked through the dot-com boom and bust, which affected a lot of other industries, as well,” says Robert L.S. Boroff, managing director of San Francisco-based executive search firm Reaction Search International. And, adds Boroff, the present economic conditions haven’t been friendly to recruiters from his company or other firms nationwide.

Yet recruiters have been survivors, even dating back to the 1930s.

“The executive search industry was actually created during the Great Depression,” says Boroff, giving a quick history lesson. “It was created because there were too few jobs and too many people applying for those jobs. And companies needed an agent to basically screen through those people to find the very best.”

Similar to other tough economic times, the oversaturation in the current market can be a thorn in recruiters’ sides.

“Thousands of people are applying for jobs, which can be very frustrating and a real time-waster, especially as companies are laying off some of their internal recruiting and HR functions,” Boroff says.

New technology has come to the aid of recruiters, something that wasn’t readily available in prior years—even in the wake of the dot-com meltdown. According to Wayne Cozad, managing partner of Cube Management in Beaverton, Oregon, using Internet-related social networking and other available technology has been one key to surviving the recession.

Cozad says Cube, which focuses on placing sales and marketing managers and executives, uses “social networking sites for advertising positions and finding candidates, and for networking with folks who may not be a candidate but might know a candidate. We also use about 800 job boards to post ads, and we feel it’s important to be an Internet-savvy company. We’re definitely part of the electronic age.”

He’s also confident that adopting new technological advances will position Cube well once the economic recovery materializes.

But don't expect that recovery soon, Cozad says. He expects the job market to affect recruiters, companies and job seekers at least into the fall.

Cozad is not alone. According to the recent Execunet Recruiter Confidence Index, a survey of executive search firms, only 28 percent of recruiters are confident or very confident the executive employment market will improve in the next six months.

Boroff isn't quite as pessimistic, saying, "Traditionally if you look at the ebbs and flows of hiring, the first part of the year is strong. It wasn't that way this year. Then usually it goes through the dog days of summer and things slow down. But since we missed that first big hiring influx because everyone was thinking the sky was falling, now companies don't have a choice but to fill some of those critical roles."

Boroff's prediction for the job market may differ from Cozad's, but one thing they do agree on is that too many of their colleagues in the recruiting field are hanging on to the traditional ways of doing business.

Now it's more important than ever to listen to a client's needs and work the referral networks, Boroff says. On top of that, he says recruiters at RSI are direct-recruiting instead of waiting for candidates to come to them.

"Things that we're doing differently today are using sites like LinkedIn," Boroff says. "It really gives you a chance to access people that you normally would not be able to get to on a résumé search or database search because they're not on the marketplace."

Astoundingly, Cozad says the number of recruiters not using LinkedIn and other social networking is higher than he would have thought. A recent example: "I just got back from a national show down in Tampa with all these recruiters," he recalls, "and I was really surprised how many sales and marketing recruiters, in particular, still do the 'old' résumé/call/referral kind of work without using the Internet and other electronic means that are out there."

Cozad insists that just tapping into online resources such as Monster isn't going to cut it.

"Using Google AdWords and other avenues out there to promote your business will bring candidates and clients to you if you're creative about where you place yourself on the Internet," he adds.

In other words, adapt or become extinct.

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*Jon Hindman is a San Diego-based freelance writer. E-mail [editors@workforce.com](mailto:editors@workforce.com) to comment.*

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- 350% of salary
- 450% of salary

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