



Skills Shortages: A Paradox Resolved (In Principle)

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IN TURNING OUR FOCUS TO THE FUTURE, IT IS interesting how often the past provides resolution to present challenges.

The ever-looming paradox of the skills shortage is unresolved. Changing technologies and titles aside, need it be? Has not much the same held true since the inception of what we recognize as HR?

As we realize in our daily lives only three things have truly changed: the pace, the perspective and the talent pool. The first is picking up, the second is broadening and the third is off the deep end of complex. It was a point driven home by the “Complexity Made Simple” theme of BC HRMA’s 2011 conference.

In “Founding our Future” with the 50th Annual Conference, how might we as HR professionals look to the past to explain the prevailing paradox of the present?

The Question of Supply and Demand

For simplicity’s sake, let us focus on the paradigm of supply and demand. At present, there are tensions on both sides of the equation: a vast supply of candidates claiming opportunity lost and a surplus of organizations in demand of the ‘right fit’.

As one who works closely with the recruitment field and sees firsthand the challenges of local and international job seekers, I find this disconnect a little

puzzling. Is the problem that these two groups are not finding each other or that each is approaching the other in the wrong way?

Can the supply and demand for qualified candidates be reconciled in a practical sense? People who are good at what they do will always be in demand.

The increasingly specialized skills, training and talent sought by the employer are as unique as the skillsets possessed by the candidates in crafting their career paths. As our technologies evolve, so do those roles and talents. The pace of that change is exponential, so let’s focus on the principles of good recruitment practice and leading HR.



Principle)

Principles of Good Recruitment Practice

Most directly, employers must take the lead with their approach to recruitment. To do so, they need only empower the HR function to what is essential.

Candidates respond and present themselves based on the information that is communicated to them. The representatives, whether it is the hiring manager or the recruiter, needs to be clear and concise with all stakeholders in order to hire properly. This “demand” influences how the “supply” responds because employers are offering the jobs which require the skills and abilities of the workers.

Unsurprisingly, the ball falls in HR’s court:

1 Know the business and work closely with your leadership.

Human resources professionals and hiring managers who are involved in recruiting must be knowledgeable and informed about the company and its “business” in order to perform effectively. Regardless of whether your role is to lead or execute, recruiting must understand where the leadership’s thinking and direction is headed. How can new employees be hired for the right function(s) when the hiring process doesn’t clarify what is required and how it will fit into the organization?

2 Keep the big picture in mind - don’t fall victim to the “fire fighting” mentality.

Closely related to understanding the business and working with the leaders, recruitment shouldn’t be an isolated function or event. Bad hiring decisions are made because a manager is desperate for help and ends up hiring for the wrong skill set. Recruiting should have a much bigger scope than simply hiring; it ideally encompasses the bigger picture of where the company is heading, not just making the numbers in this quarter.

3 Conduct a needs analysis which reflects your practical parameters.

When companies are reactive versus proactive, they miss the mark. Doing a proper needs analysis on the position helps identify the practical considerations and limitations of a job vacancy. Too many companies have no staffing or HR plan which is surprising since operational growth and success is directly related to its employees. Because of its importance and impact on the bottom line, salary budgets and headcount should not be an afterthought. The other key to this practicality principle is to remember to check in regularly to make sure the parameters are still valid because the speed of business can derail or affect an important hire if conditions change.

4 Set up an “organized” process with flexibility for change.

By setting up a fair and consistent recruitment process, employers can “hire on demand” because the planning,

**better
selection**

**better
protection**

**better
retention**



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