snowflake

get the people you need

need-based, market-aligned resourcing can help you overcome your hiring problems

having trouble filling key jobs?

Your high-profile, mission-critical opening needs someone like Chelsea or Michelle, but your recruiting efforts only connect with Kirk, Rick, and Jennifer. You need Meg's skills, experience, and out-going personality, but she's taking her talents elsewhere. Meanwhile, Daniel is a perfect fit for your requirements, but it will cost you three times your compensation budget just to get him to take your phone calls.

You're not the only one struggling to get the people you need. Many organizations face this seemingly hopeless situation. Hiring managers spend countless hours sharing their frustrations through social media or over a few Happy Hour beers. "We're just barely keeping or heads above water," they tell each other. "We just can't *[find, attract, pay… fill in the blank]* people who can do the work!" Meanwhile, the people they hire give their best, but can't deliver what their employers truly need.

it's a critical business challenge

Both the "digital ink" spilled posting desperate pleas for answers and the frosty mugs of Coors Light that drown manager sorrows are warranted. When staff can't meet key job requirements (e.g., perform functions, use technologies, exercise appropriate judgment, generate new ideas, etc.), they systematically destroy the integrity of core business strategies. It's not that those strategies aren't sound—they just won't get properly executed, and won't produce the desired results.

That's not the only issue. Even if you can marginally deploy your strategies, anything beyond isolated hiring difficulties can affect quality and customer relations, and limit options for opening new markets. They can also impact other functions, increasing workforce stress, management risk, and operating costs. All of this can sink morale, making it even harder to recruit for and retain key skills. These effects become endemic as under-skilled employees are integrated into your day-to-day operations.

Hiring under- or inappropriately-skilled staff can arguably be just as bad as not hiring anyone at all.

Managers often expect that incumbents can and will do the work described in the job posting—the original design—even when they know they've made concessions in hiring. Resulting quality issues, unmet responsibilities, and similar problems may go unnoticed for some time. When finally recognized, corrective actions can be counter-productive.

it seems hard to overcome

There are many reasons for on-going hiring difficulties. Broadly, the most common are labor market availability (few people with the required skills and attributes) and access (inability to attract target candidates), sometimes in combination. Most managers believe that the heart of the problem is their organizations' inability to offer competitive compensation or reasonable alternative incentives. Scarcity compounds this problem, and usually results in even higher costs for desirable resources.

Solutions to these challenges can seem hard to come by, as visible options appear either impossible or unlikely to succeed. Significant time is spent trying to adapt incentives and the accompanying messages to align with labor market demands. Unfortunately, many organizations are unable to create stories that will consistently attract prospective employees.

Use of potential recruiting advantages may be infeasible or ineffective in the organization's context.

- **Competitive compensation ranges for target positions may not be fiscally or politically feasible under constrained budgets.**
- **Technologies, facilities, etc. that don't meet candidate expectations may be too involved or cost-prohibitive to upgrade.**
- **Marketing the mission and the "chance to make a difference" attracts only part of the compatible labor pool, usually with stiff competition.**
- **Even esteemed employer brands can take a hit when on-going hiring difficulties cause operational issues, and this takes time to reverse.**

you can change the dynamics

If you can't *adapt* to the target labor market, you may still be able to *alter* labor market parameters and expand the range of potential candidates. This may be as simple as opening up geographic areas, if viable resources exist elsewhere and your infrastructure supports, for example, remote work. More often, changing market parameters means shifting how you define and pursue requirements—not to downgrade, but to prioritize and strategically organize them.

The latter instance is the basis for *need-based, market-aligned talent acquisition (MTA) strategies,* which combine job and labor market analysis, job design, and a range of talent fulfillment approaches to help you position, pursue, and fulfill requirements at an affordable cost. If you are flexible to how the answers to your requirements are "packaged", reconfiguring them to align with the labor market can help generate solutions that fit your business model, budget, culture, and other key factors.

the right people are within reach

Market-aligned talent acquisition strategies can be developed through eight principal steps designed to address your total requirement by taking what the labor market gives you.

1. **Know your requirements**—It may seem obvious, but you have to know and be able to articulate what you're looking for before you try to find it. Too often, organizations miss the right people because they aren't sure what they want. Clearly define what you need—and why—and you're more likely to draw interest from candidates that will best fit your situation.

"Nice to have" is nice to know.

When defining requirements, think about your "must haves" vs. skills that will help, but aren't absolutely necessary to be effective. Also, don't fall into the trap of simply listing the previous incumbent's responsibilities. Functions often evolve based on an individual's capabilities, and they may actually be a poor reflection of both the need and the labor market.

2. **Profile the "whole candidate"**—People with exactly the same experience can be completely different performers based on personal attributes. Using personas to model the traits that will make a candidate most successful in your business model, work environment (e.g., site-based vs. remote), and culture allows you to better target the search, and makes interviewing and evaluating more effective as well.

3. **Research labor market feasibility**—Once you know your ideal "what" and "who", examine the relevant labor market. Your recruiting function or a consultant can help you scan the field to see if matching candidates exist and, if they do, the price they're commanding. Do this before launching a full recruiting effort—it's quick, and a fraction of the cost.
4. **Determine the constriction points**—If the labor market is marked by scarcity and/or high cost, find out why (you can include this in the market analysis). Identifying "constriction points" enables you to isolate the requirements that shift the market from accessible to unattainable. This knowledge is essential to identify the best ways to meet your needs.

Your internal strengths can tilt the balance.

Scarcity isn't just a numbers game. Research shows, for example, that employers can gain a market advantage with a faster, more personalized recruiting and hiring experience. It helps to know something about your competition for the people you need, since internal process issues may effectively eliminate some organizations from contention.

5. **Analyze a range of alternatives**—Get creative to overcome constrictions. Consider the required skills, and your business drivers and resources. Do they support hiring less proficient candidates and training up to the need? Will reallocating some functions to other jobs help? Is it feasible to outsource some or all of the requirements? Don't restrict your options.

Aligning your approach with what the labor market supports can generate numerous options.

Examples of strategies include, alone or in combination:

- Invest at the full market rate
- Hire down and train up
- Broaden the search (e.g., H1B)
- Reconfigure/modify jobs
- Outsource partial or whole
- Change work conditions
- Recalibrate incentives
- Alter business strategies

6. **Review associated impacts**—In the integrated organization, every action has effects on other aspects of the business. Aligning requirements to the labor market is no different. To fully understand your options, you need to know the impacts that practicable market alignment approaches have on business strategies, other jobs, processes, technologies, etc.
7. **Select the best approach for the context**—The right market strategy is a business cost-benefit choice. Failing to get the resources you need has business-level impacts, and so does succeeding. Focus on the total net business benefits—e.g., if paying the full market rate will ultimately deliver more than hiring down and training—and don't ignore the intangibles.
8. **Execute, evaluate, and adjust**—While your analysis will be rigorous and your decisions well thought-out, things don't always go according to plan. Early problem identification and resolution is key to ensuring that in the end, you get what you need. Monitor how well your approach is working, both in process and after acquiring and integrating your resources.

Think positive thoughts. Go out again in search of what you need. The right people are out there, and when you find them, Happy Hour will finally live up to its name.

learn more

To find out more about need-based MTA strategies and determine how they apply to your organization, please e-mail info@snowflakellc.com or contact us through www.snowflakellc.com/contact.

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