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## Thirty Innovative Recruiting Tips for 2012

By David Spark and JP Whalen

Recruiting is a tough job. It's especially tough if you're doing it the same old tired way. There are tons of new technologies, new ideas and new attitudes to finding and hiring the absolute best talent. We asked some of the best and brightest recruiters (at the ERE Recruiting Innovation Summit and online) to give us their most innovative tips for 2012. Here's their advice.

### **TIP 1: Chase Down the 'Un-recruitable'**

When sourcing candidates, Robert Friedland, founder and president of Essential Human Capital asks, "Tell me about the candidates who I have zero chance of bringing to the table."

Friedland wants to know who is extremely happy in their current job, well-compensated, and has no reason or time to consider his position. Although counter intuitive, it produces excellent results, he says.

In one case, Friedland provided four exceptional candidates who were way beyond his client's expectations. Three rejected the opportunity for the security of their current job, but the fourth accepted.

Observes Friedland: "The rising star who is disinterested today may be a motivated candidate next week."

### **TIP 2: Don't Get Locked to your Desk**

"Recruiting is not a passive activity, the best need to be wooed," believes Richard O'Malley of The O'Malley Project, "find out where the talent is and chase it down." Free and paid recruiting sites like Monster.com are OK but only if you use an applicant processing system to weed out the chaff.



### **TIP 3: Find the Best People First, Train Later**

“Always be looking for and open to hiring the right people, not just when you have a slot to fill,” says Ford Kanzler of PR Savvy. “Recruiting only on occasion means you typically get the best of a bad lot.”

Kanzler admits to hiring people with zero PR experience. What matters more is that the candidates have the right attitude and smarts.

Eric Papp, a trainer of Gen Y employees, agrees, “Hire for attitude and train for skills.” Yotam Benami, CFO of Wholesale Applications Community remembers one company (unnamed) that hires based on values and abilities, not skills.

“They believe skills can be learned relatively easily and it’s the core values and abilities of the candidate that matter to ensure fit with the culture and performance,” Benami says.

Use a pre-hire system like the ALC or SFA or Prevue that once hired can be converted into an on-boarding and training system. Remember, there are no “perfect” candidates. New hires are what you make them.

### **TIP 4: Make Sure Everyone Likes the Candidate**

“For any new candidate, the majority of the staff will meet them and if everyone likes the candidate, they’re hired. It’s how we get really motivated people who enjoy spending time with the whole team,” says Joyce Hsu, director of communications for ResellerRatings. “On the other hand, if anyone has reservations, it takes them off the candidates list.”

Keeping the whole team happy is ResellerRatings’ CEO’s mantra for hiring and productivity. “When I come into the office, my job is to make sure the employees are happy. If they are happy, they will make the company profitable,” says Scott Wainner, the CEO.

Meeting the team is the final step in the hiring process.

### **TIP 5: Be Where Your Best Employees Are**

Your best talent is good at what they do, and good at who they know. Quoting the old saying, “Birds of a feather flock together,” Joan Williams, vice president of Human



Resources at Willco, suggests you not only ask your star employees for recommendations, but also ask what organizations they belong to, what publications they read, and what activities they participate in. Follow up with all these outlets and place ads in the magazines and newsletters. Attend the meetings and make a pitch for your company. When you place a help wanted ad refer the candidate to your company by website to be screened by an Applicant Processing System. This allows you to focus on top candidates.

In one example, a colleague was looking for a star engineer to work an assignment in Vietnam. He went to a popular Vietnamese restaurant and talked to the owners. Through their connections in the Vietnamese community, Williams' colleague found the perfect candidate and hired him.

#### **TIP 6: Target Recruitment Ads to Your Top Fans**

The best people to hire are the ones who have already shown an affinity with your brand. Utilizing the Facebook ads filtering mechanism, Jayson Gagnard of TicketsCanada.com — a ticket reseller for sporting, music, and cultural events — only serves up ads to people who frequently “liked” the site’s events on its Facebook page. This filtering option ensures that the ads only appeared for the true fans of TicketsCanada.com, thus weeding out the unnecessary volume of applicants that often plague the online talent scouting process. Gagnard calls this technique “Social Talent Acquisition,” and has successfully scouted and hired three new employees using this technique.

#### **TIP 7: Answer the Question, “What Can I Expect to be Doing at This Job?”**

Sean Walberg, a web developer at Wave Accounting suggests a way to improve the traditional bulleted requirements job listing. Instead of a standard listing...

Needs experience in FooBaz 1.0 and BlingBling 4.2

...try explaining how the requirements will be used in the context of the job:

Last week, you would have updated some BlingBling 4.x routines to support our Bling system and spec’ed out the second phase of our FooBaz implementation.

Make a series of specific job duties and questions about them a part of the automated screening process in your Applicant Screening System.



Similarly, David Ciccarelli, CEO of Voices.com suggests enticing readers of your job listing by “showing off your company culture by suggesting the types of people that already work there.”

### **TIP 8: Rewrite That Dated Job Listing**

“Too many times a client’s company will pull out a set of job specs for a position that they have used since the 80s, and it’s the same set of specs they used for the person they just fired,” says Andrew Scarano, VP of TCI-SEARCH. “Take the time to talk to the clients and really understand what is required for the position. We find most of the time the initial specs are outdated and not accurate.”

Do something you were told not to do:

List the salary range for the job you are offering. Example: Salary range 35 to 50 K plus benefits, based on level of experience.

Why waste time screening candidates who will not accept your offer anyway?

### **TIP 9: State What You Don’t Want**

“A job ad has two specific goals: To attract the ‘ideal’ candidate and to deter everyone else,” says Leon Noone on his blog “Staff Performance Secrets.”

The success of your ad is determined by how many ‘ideal’ candidates you attract, not by the total number of applications. If you attract large numbers of candidates you’ve written a poor ad.

The more you try to obscure essential details, the more likely you are to attract unsuitable people. Include statements like ‘only apply if ...’ or ‘do not apply unless’ before ‘a degree with ...’ Remember this: it costs you money every time you receive an application from someone who lacks the background and experience you want. The intelligent use of an applicant processing system screens out inappropriate candidates.

### **TIP 10: Seek Out Alternative Solutions with Economical Resources**

Instead of hiring an expensive research firm to analyze media data, Rhonda Silva, founder of Optimum Media Training, hired a former professor of hers for an assignment with one of the world’s largest PR firms. The professor in turn requisitioned her students



to participate, She got a better rate than she was currently billing and the students got some real world experience. Together they evaluated the client's data and uncovered and corrected errors with the client's primary data.

“You never know where you might find qualified candidates,” say Silva, “stay in touch with everyone within your community, former teachers, employers, staff, professional colleagues, friends – even family.”

### **TIP 11: Lean On Your Own Network First**

“Your own network will be a better match for finding the right synergy than a headhunter or tools like LinkedIn ‘alone’ ever could,” says Renee Blodgett, founder of Magic Sauce Media and We Blog the World.

Mark Sullivan of Ascent Technical Group agrees. “DO NOT rely on social media, e-mail and other technical gadgets to do the work for you. Good relationships are hard work and always pay dividends in the end.” “If you’re not utilizing your own network to the max, then you’re missing major opportunities,” Blodgett adds. “For every person once or twice removed from me, whether that’s via Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn, there are five great referrals.”

### **TIP 12: Keep Your Candidates Warm**

Rejection for one job offer is never a dead end. “If I’m doing a good job keeping in touch,” says Victoria Schanen (@VixGigs), Senior, IT Recruiter for McKinley Consulting, “the candidate who turned down my offer six months ago could quickly turn into the candidate who calls me first to let me know he is available.”

The Prevue APS-PRO system screens and interview applicants and assess all qualified candidates. This information is retained so when the next job opening occurs you can instruct the system to review previous submissions to help find suitable candidates.

### **TIP 13: Build Trust With Top Talent**

Kathryn Duncan, a partner for talent services at FRWD, has noticed that some talented prospects, especially those in emerging technologies, are “wary of ‘old school’ HR types...and genuinely believe that HR departments have no idea what they do or how to assess their skills.”



To dispel the myth and build trust, Duncan inserts herself into their world by attending their networking events.

“By attending events and inserting yourself into the conversation, you build trust with the best candidate pool ... and identify the best talent.”

#### **TIP 14: Request Basic Math to Weed Out Thoughtless Submissions**

When hiring freelancers, Viktor Nagornyy, founder of event planning guide Viktorix, requires a little basic math in every cover letter submission. Getting the correct answer to  $2*2+2$  lets him know that they're paying attention to details and not just mass mailing a cover letter. For those that refuse to answer or get it wrong, they fall into the rejection pile immediately.

When the APS-Pro system is used, candidates who pass the interview screening questions are administered a Prevue assessment that measures numerical, word, and people skills. Top candidates are presented to you in an easy-to-read report.

#### **TIP 15: Require Homework**

A good looking resume and great interview won't necessarily tell you how a potential hire will do once they're working full time. If you want to know how a candidate will perform, ask them to do a little homework. From this unpaid assignment you'll learn who are the passionate candidates, and who has really been thinking about your company and the job they'll need to perform. You'll be able to weed out a bunch since many simply won't do the assignment or give you an excuse why they can't do it.

“Homework will tell you volumes about things like the candidate's attention to detail, his creativity, his ability to think critically, and how he communicates an idea,” said Chris Harvey (Lâm), CEO of VietnamWorks and Navigos Search, in his blog post, “Homework is good.”

#### **TIP 16: Ask Their Favorite Cuss Word**

Stealing a tip from James Lipton of Inside the Actors Studio, Mark Wilson, VP Sales Western Region at LogLogic, asks his candidates what their favorite swear word is.



“It’s so unexpected, that it catches them off guard and I can see how they act on their feet,” he says. “You see if they follow instructions to a tee and say a cuss word, or it throws them off so much that they can’t recover.”

Some get completely turned off and flustered, and some take it in stride and roll with it, he says.

“Regardless of the position for hire, there is always an element of adaptability,” Wilson believes. “This is a great way to get an idea of how this person will conduct themselves.”

Some Companies administer an Emotional Intelligence Assessment for management personnel to evaluate how they will respond to stress, emotional situations, and people issues.

#### **TIP 17: Test Their Integrity and Stamina**

Before hiring developers full-time, Chris Prescott of Fantasy Shopper asks that they start working part-time in the evenings. The part-time test, one that many people echoed, is a great way to “try before you buy,” and to see how the potential hire could work with the rest of the team. This is helpful in lower level jobs like customer service, warehouse worker, or service positions.

Requesting evening work alongside a candidate’s current work tests out two other important elements, says Prescott.

First, their integrity: “If they ask us to keep it quiet as they don’t want to upset their current employer, that’s a major fail,” he says. “Conversely, if they ask to speak to their current employer first to make sure their employer is okay with the situation, that’s a win.”

Second, their stamina: “If they can consistently work a full time job in the day time, and then come straight to our office and work with us until midnight, we know they have the stamina to work huge hours if and when required,” Prescott explains. “It’s something his whole team is capable of and he needs to make sure anyone he hires is capable of it as well.

Many Companies use our “Reliability Register” assessment to test reliability, integrity, and work-ethic in semiskilled jobs.





### **TIP 18: Host a Contest**

You could jump through all the hoops of the traditional hiring process, or you can make candidates fight for the position by holding a contest.

Staci Hausch of UQ Marketing recruits college talent to represent their favorite brands on campus. To find that top talent, she asks students to participate in a YouTube contest to show why they love the brand and why they would be the best candidate.

While still specific to hiring students, it's hands down the best method they've used so far, she says.

Many candidates for other than entry level jobs find this approach demeaning. A better method is to use the APS-Pro employee processing system where all qualified candidates are administered the Prevue Assessment. Candidates are rated and ranked according to their suitability to the job.

### **TIP 19: Provide Value on Social Networks**

Amish Shah of Millennium Search participates heavily on the Q&A site Quora, and gets fantastic leads as a result. For example, he answered a post on who are the best search firms in Charlotte and the next day got e-mails from a few companies and candidates, with one business turning into a client in less than 24 hours. In addition, the talent he's looking to recruit end up following him because of the advice he provides, such as tips on job interviews, resumes, what startups are hot, and how much stock a developer should get.

"You can find clients or candidates off Quora if you add value and are part of the community," Shah says.

### **TIP 20: Look Deeply into Their Social Networks**

Utilizing a Gmail app called Rapportive, Tyler Anderson of Casual Fridays can peer into a person's entire social identity on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Skype with just a single e-mail address. By reading their online identity, "you really can see what they're about," Anderson says.





Even so, using a behavioral assessment provides greater insight into the individual and is not colored by personal preferences or opinions. The Analyst-Link, Success Factor Analysis, or Prevue pre-hire assessment is ideal for this purpose.

### **TIP 21: Streamline the Process by Matching Requirements to Skills**

Scanning resumes to see if a candidate has the skills necessary is a time-consuming process that no one wants to do. Lynda Zugec, marketing director of The Workforce Consultants, uses the Resunate widget to scan resumes against requirements to see if they're a match. The tool in essence forces resumes to become custom-made for the job posting. Zugec found her marketing intern this way.

“The candidate submitted her original resume, but then went into Resunate, using our widget, to create a resume screened against the job description,” she says. “The resulting resume was significantly more tailored. It was like a different candidate.”

The Applicant Processing system performs this task for you with ease and accuracy.

### **TIP 22: Remove Unnecessary Constraints**

“Don’t get caught up in the details of a job description. Understand the overall need,” suggests Bettina Seidman, career management coach with SEIDBET Associates.

Bob Rose, owner of the Rose Porterfield Group, agrees. You need to stop looking for the “perfect person” who can match all your criteria. “If you set two or three nonnegotiable ‘gotta have this’ factors – and those are, not always but usually, character and intellect factors – you focus on what is key,” he says. “When we see clients saying ‘must have an MBA’ we always ask, ‘Why?’ and they usually remove that unneeded restraint.”

As an example, many Companies find a High School Education quite adequate for nontechnical sales or customer service. Often these candidates have strong self-motivation levels and drive, so ask yourself if the education requirements listed vital to success?

### **TIP 23: Seek Out Those With Passion**

“The quality that is make or break for me is ‘fire in the eyes’ of the candidate,” says Joseph Puglisi, president of the Fairfield/Westchester chapter of Society of Information



Management. “Nothing trumps a candidate who is genuinely excited and driven by the opportunity to excel. I’ll take this over education or experience every time.”

The Prevue assessment includes a “Working Characteristics” section that measures “Attitude” toward work, the Company, and the job. A great attitude can often be the determining factor between success or failure at the job.

#### **TIP 24: Value Cultural Fit Over Skill Set**

“Recruiters (or hiring managers) need to set aside their egos and hire the ‘right’ candidate for the position, based on the candidate’s fit with the company: ethics, integrity, personal vision, then skill set,” says Linda LoCicero, operations manager at The Staffing Company.

“(If you don’t make a cultural fit) you will find yourself replacing that person in a relatively short period,” adds Andrew Scarano, vice president at TCI-SEARCH.

#### **TIP 25: Hire People You Don’t Like**

Stephen Shapiro, author of *BEST PRACTICES ARE STUPID: 40 Ways to Out-Innovate the Competition*, doesn’t agree with the need to hire based on corporate synergy. He offers up a completely contrary point of view.

“Organizations typically hire based people who ‘fit the mold,’ but innovation is predicated on divergent points of view coming together,” he notes.

#### **TIP 26: Forget Résumés**

With a very controversial viewpoint, Leon Noone of the Staff Performance Secrets blog argues, “Never, ever, ever ask for written applications or resumes. They are the biggest single reason for staff selection errors.”

You will be influenced by the quality and ‘perceived professionalism’ of the resume or written application.

That means those who write or hire a person to write their resume will be seen as “the best” candidate. In addition, “your decision is based entirely on what candidates have done for other employers in the past, not on what they’ll do for you in the future. You can only guess about that.”



Let's face it though, a resume' does provide valuable, albeit unverified information. Rather than potentially inviting its own wave of new complications, using an applicant processing program with a detailed interview, followed by a phone call to top candidates produces outstanding results.

### **TIP 27: Automate the Follow Up Process**

Adam Kruse, broker with The Hermann London Group, writes a series of four to seven automated follow up e-mails, with subject lines such as "We should talk," "Did you get my e-mail, I want to meet you," and "I am still hoping we can grab a coffee and chat." After writing those, he programs them to go out once a week or so via a program that's connected to his mailing lists. "My response rate is much higher than if I just sent one e-mail," says Kruse. "Automatic follow up is an amazing thing."

### **TIP 28: Probe a Candidate and Find Out What They Want**

"The biggest mistake recruiters make when trying to place potential candidates is they don't ask questions to see what the candidate wants," says Aaron Hughes, recruiting coordinator at Marchex. "The recruiter tells the candidate what they want and they try to place them based on false assumptions."

"One of our key questions at interviews is 'What is your ideal dream job?'" adds Rod Dalton, director at Sydney@Work.

Sue Wotruba, director at Cornelian Limited, probes even deeper with the use of psychometric questionnaires to better understand an individual's motivations and preferences. This, accompanied by a follow-up interview, helps ensure a correct fit between candidate and organization, Wotruba says.

### **TIP 29: Ask the Candidate to be Reflective on Their Past**

Todd Rogers of TriMedx finds the most useful questions have to do with understanding a candidate's thought process whenever they've made shifts in their career. Essentially, he asks, "How did you go about moving from this position to that position? What was going through your mind?"

This line of questioning reveals a lot. If they're uncomfortable discussing a past job, maybe because they were fired, you'll see a fight/flight mechanism with awkward pauses.



Ultimately what you learn from career reflection is “the degree of proactive thinking that this person utilizes when it comes to career management.”

When asking a question, Rogers makes sure it satisfies three distinct criteria. It must: Be relevant to things that have already been established in the discussion.

Invoke some degree of creativity on the part of the interviewee.

Demand that the interviewee be reflective in order to answer.

Rogers provides the following examples of good reflective questions:

When you decided to leave the job you had after college, how did the job differ from what they told you it would be during the interview process?

After you accepted a project, were there more times in which you felt underutilized, or would you say it was perhaps at times excessively demanding?

### **TIP 30: Be Active in Your Community**

“Recruiting great talent is a result of getting GSN Digital’s brand into the marketplace, and that starts with my (shameless) promotion of our properties,” says Peter Blacklow, the company’s executive vice president.

Blacklow sits on multiple boards and admits that his involvement in the entrepreneurial community, from both a regional and industry standpoint, has unearthed great talent.

“Senior management of technology businesses have to be active outside of their own four walls to spread the gospel of their brand and find great talent,” he observes.

These may be great tips, but I’m sure you’ve got some wisdom of your own to share. Provide the most innovative recruiting tip that you’ll carry — and hope others will carry — into the new year and contact us today at (661) 810-2446, or visit us on-line at [www.azarandassociates.com](http://www.azarandassociates.com) for inexpensive applicant processing, site licensing, and assessment programs.

