

Sullivan is “the Michael Jordan of hiring.”

-Fast Company Magazine

CATCH THEM *if* YOU CAN!

HOW ANY MANAGER CAN
WIN THE WAR FOR TALENT
IN THE GLOBAL LABOR SHORTAGE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: Here Comes the 18-Wheel Truck with No Brakes

- Statistics on baby boomers and the labor shortage
- 7 Ways to Prepare for the Global Labor Shortage



CHAPTER 2: You're All Headhunters

- Why recruitment is not just an HR task anymore
- 7 Methods to Change Attitudes About Recruitment

CHAPTER 3: Quit Fishing in the Wrong Places

- Beware the trap with newspaper ads and Internet job boards
- 6 Ways to Stop Wasting Recruitment Time

CHAPTER 4: Fishing Equipment & Recruiting Tools: They Keep Evolving

- Why social media and new technologies have changed everything.
- 9 Tips on Social Media & New Technology For Recruitment

CHAPTER 5: Stop Using the Wrong Bait

- The Candidate is the Customer! Adapting sales/marketing techniques to recruitment.
- 6 Approaches to Landing Top Performers

CHAPTER 6: How Do They Take Their Coffee?

- Doing a needs assessment with The Magic Interview Question
- 6 Ways to Close Candidates and Improve Your Hiring Success

CHAPTER 7: Look Out for the Career Chasm

- Understanding the types of top talent, and which to go after.
- 4 Techniques to Stop Wasting Time With the Wrong Candidates

CHAPTER 8: From Maybe to Yes

- Employer branding, employee value propositions, and amazing job profiles.
- 6 Methods to Create Amazing Job Descriptions That Work!

CHAPTER 9: Ready, Aim...

- Aligning organizational strategy and business goals with recruitment activities.
- 7 Paths to Better Recruitment Planning

CHAPTER 10: Weigh and Measure Your Catch

- Evaluating recruitment activities with KPIs
- 8 Tips On Recruitment Metrics

CHAPTER 11: Concession Planning

- Made-to-measure jobs, guerilla recruitment, lower profitability.
- 6 Ideas About Flex Hiring

CHAPTER 12: The Battle Plan: Your Recruiting Strategy

- Adapting your sales and marketing plans into a Recruitment Plan.
- 3 Thoughts on Building Your Recruiting Plan Like Your Marketing Plan

EPILOGUE

INTRODUCTION

Statistics show that the baby boomers are exiting the workforce in huge numbers, and by the year 2020 one out of every thirteen jobs will be vacant. Projects will go unfinished, customers will be left waiting, revenues will decline, and managers will be more stressed than ever. Until business leaders adopt a new mindset toward talent, they will continue to feel the pain of being short-staffed.

Catch Them if You Can! is a book about talent acquisition, written not just for Human Resources people but for everyday managers struggling to win the “Worldwide War for Talent.” Written in a story-based format, it is a quick, easy read about three managers who learn how to find employees during the labor shortage.

No matter what sector you’re in, no matter what size your organization is, you’ll gain a new appreciation and attitude toward recruitment. You’ll find practical applications that can be implemented easily, in any organization. You’ll get straightforward advice—backed by statistics—and a step-by-step recruitment plan that you can take away and apply immediately.

Examples include:

1. how to re-engineer hiring practices and eliminate the traditional job-centric point of view
2. how to treat the candidate as a valued “customer”
3. how to identify the candidate’s career chasm, and bridge that person’s needs’ gap
4. how to market the “Wow” (employee value proposition) in any job opportunity
5. how to create a KPI driven recruitment plan that delivers results

Appendix includes:

- Checklist: Preparing for the War for Talent
- Resources for Understanding the Labor Market
- Employer Branding and How to Craft an Employee Value Proposition
- How to Find Talent Using a Candidate Behavior Profile
- The “Give Me Five” Referral Program
- How to Tell an “A” Performer from All the Rest
- How to Make Your CEO Your Chief Recruiter
- Relationship Recruiting and “Personal Courting”
- How to Identify “Job-Switching Criteria”
- 50 Ideas for Recruiting Top Performers Away From Your Competition
- Applicant’s Bill of Rights
- Recruiting Effectiveness Questionnaire
- Onboarding “Understanding You Better” Questionnaire
- Easy-to-Use Retention Tools for Managers

CHAPTER 2: You're All Headhunters

Chapter 2 Learning Goals

1. When recruitment fails, it is the client manager who suffers; therefore, managers must 'own' recruiting.
2. The reality is that managers are hiring the best talent they can from whatever pool their processes produce. If your processes produce mediocre talent, you are hiring the best from that mediocre pool.
3. Realize that world-class recruiting is a 24/7 activity, not a periodic event. Make recruiting your day-to-day responsibility, rather than just an HR duty. Educate your executive team on the need to be heavily involved.
4. Understand the true importance of recruiting and the return on investment that top talent can deliver for you.

"First 'who' then 'what.' Get the right people on the bus before you figure out where to drive it."
(Jim Collins)

A log in the fire crackled, and a spark jumped onto the floor in front of us. Dale, Sue-Lee and I started, but Hawk just kicked the ember back toward the grate.

Sue-Lee looked baffled at Hawk's last remark. "What?! You want me to be a *headhunter* now?"

"You're *all* headhunters. Whether you like it or not, recruiting will be one of your top priorities from now on."

Sue-Lee folded her arms across her chest. "Maybe our human resources manager should be here instead of me."

Hawk's voice became quieter. "Your HR department is not getting the job done, is it? Otherwise you wouldn't be here."

"They do a good job in HR," Sue-Lee said. "It's just that they have so much to do, and we have so many openings to fill. I thought that by coming here I might learn some other way our organization can do things. Perhaps a new way to re-structure our old processes."

A manager at a multi-national electronics firm who had consistently been one of the harshest critics of his corporation's recruiting department realized one day that a vacancy in a key design role could cause delays in getting a product to market or mistakes in the design process that could cost the company millions of dollars each day in lost revenues. Recruiting immediately became a business problem versus a functional problem.

"That's just it. You're talking about fixing a broken system," exclaimed Hawk. "Instead, you need to throw out the old system and build a new one. The people in HR are well-intentioned and do good work. But you have to realize up front that managers—and even employees—must 'own' recruiting because they are the ones who suffer when they're short staffed. HR, although concerned, cannot truly feel your pain and understand your needs on a day-to-day basis. The people who are affected the most by an output must take charge of the input."

"That sounds a little radical," Dale mumbled.

"Of course it's radical. But desperate times call for you-know-what," Hawk said. He began telling us about a former MIT professor named Dr. Michael Hammer, who has been called the father of re-engineering. "Hammer says that in the new business revolution, companies can't tinker and fix, but have to start over, to re-invent themselves around processes."

Suddenly the phone rang, but Hawk just reached over and flipped a switch, letting his answering machine kick in.

A multi-national software firm, realizing that future generations were driven by different ideals, undertook a dramatic restructuring of how work was assigned and managed. They started by determining what future generations were interested in and reverse engineered a project-centered work-allocation model that enabled incoming top talent to literally write their own job descriptions and offer letters, including such elements as narrow descriptions of what type of projects they would work on, how many hours a week they would contribute, what benefits they wanted, and where the work would take place. While this notion may seem complex and unmanageable, the software giant made it possible by embracing the same management systems that have been in use at professional service firms for many years. In other areas of the business where utilization of top talent didn't make economic sense, the software giant invented new tools that enabled individuals without application-specific education to accomplish what once required specialized skills.

"When it comes to the process of finding employees," he continued, "almost every company needs to rethink its hiring methods. Too many companies are stuck in the old days when they opened the cattle gates and the cows stampeded toward them. Companies could take their pick of the herd back then, but not anymore."

"But we offer them great opportunities," Sue-Lee protested. "Isn't that enough?"

"Well, let me ask you this," said Hawk. "If you are starving, do you stand at the gates of the pasture, stare at that one cow out there and say, 'That cow sure is lucky that I have this hay in my hand. I hope she walks over here sometime'? Or do you put on your boots and go after the cow?"

Sue-Lee's lips curled up in a tight smile. "You have a way with words, Mr. Hawkston."

"I do my best," he replied, crossing his legs. "Great recruiting is putting on your boots and going after people. In good economic times, potential employees have numerous choices. If you don't proactively seek out potential applicants and vigorously try to sell them on your job, you will end up with the dregs and numerous unfilled positions."

I sighed. "The balance of power has shifted."

"You're darn right," Hawk said. "Remember Tom Peters, the former Stanford professor and McKinsey partner who wrote *In Search of Excellence* back in the early eighties? He wrote another book called *Re-imagine*. In it, he talks about a 'Brand You World.' He says that big companies no longer rule and employees don't have to genuflect on command. Workers have been liberated, and the good ones know they are in demand. So if your prospective hires have picked up on this, you're going to have to go after them."

"You're talking about poaching staff from our competitors," said Sue-Lee. "Doesn't raiding employees go against business ethics?"

"In the new war for talent, no. In fact, I'd say that your fiduciary responsibility to your company includes finding the best employees to help drive profits."

Dale looked thoughtful. "We need to take ownership of recruiting as *our* responsibility, that's what you're saying. And it doesn't matter whether we're hiring nurses or welders or bus

drivers. If they report to us, or directly impact our jobs, then we have to become individually accountable for recruiting them.”

Hawk gave us a look that confirmed this.

Sue-Lee was still defensive. “I can see that it’s becoming more important, but I’m a partner. My focus isn’t on recruiting.”

“Then you’re going to have a big problem,” said Hawk, matter-of-factly. “Because I assure you that if you don’t start spending more time wooing top talent, your competitors will have a field day, because they are out there recruiting already.”

A CEO at one of the largest hotels in Las Vegas stood up before all 7,000 of the property’s employees and declared that one of the company’s primary objectives was to recruit and retain the best hospitality workforce in the world, and that he would lead the charge. Since that date, the CEO has scheduled blocks of time each week to chat with top candidates in hard-to-fill and mission-critical positions. In addition, he has made it a point to meet candidates personally who interview for high growth positions and who currently work for a competitor. Overall, offer-acceptance rates have significantly improved, as have operating margins.

Dale winced. “I don’t know. I’m with Sue-Lee. I’ve got a lot on my plate.”

“Is that right?” said Hawk. He sat back and gazed out at the black expanse of lake. “Bill Gates spent about a quarter of his time as CEO of Microsoft flying around the country to meet with potential stars and their spouses, explaining his vision for the new hire’s role in the company, trying to convince that top talent to work for him. And Microsoft did all right, didn’t it?”

“Not bad, I guess,” chuckled Dale.

“Gates always said that his best business decisions had to do with picking people. You can learn from that. Most high-achievers are extremely goal-oriented, possessing an unparalleled desire to win. And that includes winning top talent.”

“Jack Welch was like that, too,” I said, recalling the former General Electric CEO’s autobiography, *Straight from the Gut*, that I’d recently read. “He said that it wasn’t him that made the company so successful, but the people he hired.”

“But a good company still needs one leader who is the brains behind the operation, right?” Sue-Lee asked. “Someone who has a vision and can get others to execute it?”

Hawk waved his hand. “That’s a flawed model called ‘the genius with a thousand helpers,’ according to Jim Collins in his book, *Good to Great*. The great companies Collins studied were all led by savvy CEOs who aggressively raided the best and the brightest people, enlisted their ideas, and then let them loose to run the show. Those leaders got the right people on the bus—and the wrong people off the bus—and *then* figured out where to drive it.”

I cleared my throat. “It’s easy to pay lip service to that. But how involved do those CEOs actually get? I know a few who only meet with the final shortlisted candidate, almost as if to rubber-stamp that person.”

“Many of the top bosses are like that,” Hawk said. “But I’ll wager that the CEOs of most successful companies are *very* involved in staff hiring and retention.”

“Any examples?” Dale asked.

Hawk nodded. “I knew a CEO of a bank in Ohio. He felt that recruiting was so integral to the company’s success, that he invited the head of recruiting to make a presentation at the annual

shareholders meeting. The presentation emphasized how critical recruiting was to increasing shareholder value.”

“Well, sure,” said Sue-Lee. “People are vital to the company, not fixed assets.”

Hawk held up a cautionary finger. “Let’s take it one step further and say, ‘The *right* people with the right skills in the right jobs are your most important asset.’ That distinction also comes from the book *Good to Great*.”

“That’s a no-brainer,” chimed in Dale. “Of course our best people are our best asset.”

Hawk sighed. “Most managers blithely recite that litany, but in most cases it is pure lip service. If employees truly are the number one asset, then finding employees should be the number one priority...or at least in the top three. But I can’t tell you how many times a recruiter will send great resumes to a hiring manager only to have the resumes sit unnoticed for days or even weeks. Or, a candidate will show up for an interview and be made to wait for fifteen or twenty minutes. Or, after the interview the candidate will not hear back from anyone for weeks. These actions send a message to applicants that hiring great people is well down the priority list. Companies don’t treat prospective customers this way, so why do they treat prospective employees like that?”

A small regional healthcare organization realized that hiring great people required a great partnership between line managers and recruiting. They set out to create a “Candidate Bill of Rights” that outlined the role of all relevant parties in securing top talent and set forth a standard for the experience each top candidate should be guaranteed. Demonstrating their faith to the partnership, recruiters and line managers alike proposed that a portion of their compensation be placed at risk and be awarded solely on their performance at providing the desired experience as measured by a predetermined set of metrics. The firm, which once had a vacancy rate as high as 29%, now maintains one of the lowest vacancy rates in the healthcare industry at 4.7%.

The three of us quietly contemplated our own companies’ recruiting performance. I sensed Hawk’s gaze on us, and felt as though he had plunged a dipstick into our collective managerial prowess and pulled out a reading that was disappointingly low.

“You keep talking about ‘top talent’,” said Dale. “But in today’s tight labor market, there are more nags than thoroughbreds.”

“Not true. That’s an excuse that many hiring managers will offer up because they don’t know how to find and sell the best performers. Top talent is out there everywhere, including right under your noses. You just have to find them, sell them on your opportunity and then keep them happy.”

“Keep the *best* people happy,” I clarified.

Hawk sat back and nodded. “McKinsey & Company issued a report that emphasized the need for companies to pay more to top employees to retain them. A company’s top performers—the ‘A’ players—are 50 to 100 percent more productive than average or underperformers. ‘Even if you pay an ‘A’ player 40 percent more to retain him/her,’ the report stated, ‘your investment yields a 300 percent one year return on investment.’ It’s the same thing we see in entertainment. In sports, *everyone* understands the value of top talent in winning.”

A murmur of understanding echoed among the three of us. “Look at the 2004 L.A. Lakers,” said Dale. “They lost a coach and just one key player—Shaq. Just two people in a huge organization. And in one year they went from the championship game to a team that didn’t even make the playoffs.”

“Finding and keeping top performers is absolutely one of your highest priorities in the years ahead,” Hawk continued. “Welch has a great line in his autobiography: ‘Losing an A is a sin. Love ‘em, hug ‘em, kiss ‘em, don’t lose them!’ Welch explains that GE holds its managers accountable every time they lose an A employee. Take a guess how many A’s they lose in a given year.”

“I’ll bet it’s less than ten percent,” I ventured.

“In fact it’s one percent,” stated Hawk. “How’s that for outstanding retention?”

“Not bad,” I murmured.

There was silence for a moment before Dale spoke up cheerfully. “Well, after that speech, I guess I’m a headhunter and a retention manager. Where do we go from here?”

Hawk laughed and stood up. “There are a few motels along the beach in town. Go get some sleep now so you’ll be well rested when we start tomorrow.”

“When we start what?” Sue-Lee said, her voice rising in uncertainty.

“The training program. Isn’t that why you’re all here? To learn how to find top talent?”

We stared blankly at him. Finally I spoke up. “I think we were just looking for some tips or tricks of the trade. And I heard that you helped companies develop overall recruiting strategies.” I realized I had no clear expectation of *how* this gentleman would impart his wisdom.

Hawk nodded. “I *will* teach you about developing recruiting strategies for your companies, something I’ll wager you don’t have now. It’s difficult. It involves a complete change of mindset.”

“That’s good,” Dale said. “Peter could use a new mind.”

Hawk laughed. “What I teach is not so much how to become a headhunter. Instead, what I’ll teach you is how to *think* like a headhunter—that’s the key. The difference is that top headhunters have a candidate-centric point of view, while employers have a job-centric point of view.”

“But doesn’t the headhunter work for the employer?” I said, confused.

“Of course. Make no mistake; the headhunter’s first allegiance is to the client, the employer. That’s who pays his or her fee. But to deliver the new hire, they have to focus on the pool of candidates and identify the best fit.”

Dale sat forward. “I get what you’re saying. The headhunter has to have an employee-centric mindset to best help the employer. That’s what you teach.”

“That’s it,” Hawk said. Then he stood and clapped his hands. “So, if we’re going to do this, I want you here for breakfast at seven in the morning. I’ll have activities planned for the entire day. It will be almost like a one-day boot camp. From now on, you can call this place Camp Hee-Ho-Head-Hunt-Ha.”

“Hey, I like that,” chuckled Dale. “*Camp Hee-Ho-Head-Hunt-Ha.*”

Sue-Lee did not laugh. She looked outside at the night sky, and I could tell she felt uncomfortable about how this was shaping up.

I spoke on her behalf. “Thanks, but perhaps we can just get together for a lunch in town tomorrow, and, you know...pick your brain a little.”

Hawk dismissed this idea with a wave. “It’s been picked over like a ham bone in a dog pound. The *only* way to really learn this stuff is to do the activities I have planned.”

“We couldn’t impose,” I tried again.

“You’re not imposing upon me,” grunted Hawk. “If you want to learn anything, you *have* to take part. That’s my only condition. Otherwise, see you later. It’s your choice.” His face

then softened a bit, and he smiled. “Besides, I make the best omelet you’ve ever laid your lips on.”

We looked at one another again. Dale shrugged and gave me the same look I had seen a thousand times, the one he wore just before he was about to do something mischievous that he knew he might regret later.

“I suppose we could give it a shot,” Dale said.

I had to ask the question. “Hawk, how much...umm...what kind of consulting fees are we talking about here?”

“You mean, what I charge for the training?” said Hawk. “Don’t worry, it’s mice feed compared to the problems you guys have. I’ll send you the bill.”

“Can we afford your recruiting expertise?” said Sue-Lee with a little laugh.

“You can’t *not* afford it,” replied Hawk. “Not if you want your companies to thrive.”

“What kind of training program is it?” asked Sue-Lee warily. “I’d like to know what I’m getting myself into.”

Hawk smiled. “Spoken like someone who specializes in risk mitigation,” he said. He went on to explain that we would be playing a game. The three of us would compete against one another, each winning points for how well we did at challenges and tests he assigned. At the end of the day, the one with the most points would win the contest.

“Win what?” asked Dale, sitting up like a kid who’d been told there was a shiny trophy on the line.

“That’s a surprise. You’ll find out Sunday morning.”

“What kind of challenges are we talking about?” asked Sue-Lee. “They’re not physical, are they?”

Hawk stood and walked over to the fire, where he reached on top of the mantel and grabbed a plastic water bottle. “Don’t worry, everyone can complete these tests. They’ll be fun.” He started sprinkling water on the fire, and it began hissing and smoking, dying for the night. “For now, it’s time to get a good night’s sleep,” he said. “The contest begins tomorrow.”

Dale looked at me and in a taunting voice said, “Hand me a twist-tie, ‘cuz this game is in the bag.”

On the way to the motel, we used our cell phones to call home, telling our spouses where we’d be staying and when we’d be home, but leaving out the details about what we had gotten ourselves into.

If we had only known.

The Difference between a Recruiter and a Headhunter – “Skin in the Game”

Corporate recruiters may be less involved than external headhunters because they are on salary and have less financial motivation for hiring top talent. As a result, they are sometimes more passive and often focus on the administrative aspects of recruiting. They recruit during the day and then go home. In contrast, great headhunters get huge bonuses for success. Because they have “skin in the game,” headhunters don’t see their work as a 9-to-5 job. Headhunting is an integral part of their lives and they are constantly identifying, building relationships with, and selling top talent on their job opportunities.

Chapter 2 - Manager Action Steps

Seven Methods to Change Attitudes About Recruitment

1. **Change the roles** -- It's important to realize upfront that the role of talent acquisition is shifting from HR to managers. Job descriptions, measurement systems and performance goals must be revised so managers and employees "own" recruiting. Everyone must develop the mindset of a headhunter.
2. **Change HR's expectations** -- Because great recruiting needs to be done close to the actual work, it's essential that managers increase the amount of time and budget that they spend on recruiting. Simultaneously, it's important for senior managers to work with HR to ensure that they understand that HR's role must change. Their role must shift from a "doer" to an expert consultant on effective recruiting tools, strategies and metrics.
3. **Make it 24/7** -- Rather than being a periodic "event", recruiting must become a continuous process. The expectation must be that it is on the mind and the agenda of every manager (and every employee) every day. View recruiting as a constant process, even when there are no position openings at the present time.
4. **Calculate the performance differential** -- Work with cost-accounting in order to calculate the value of a top performer in your own organization. Compare the difference in performance between a top performer and an average performer where it is easy to measure output and quality (example: sales or customer service). McKinsey & Company reported that a company's top performers—the 'A' players—are 50 to 100 percent more productive than average or underperformers. The report states: "Even if you pay an 'A' player 40 percent more to retain him/her, your investment yields a 300 percent one year return on investment."
5. **Make the CEO your chief recruiter** -- Top CEOs understand the value of star performers, and they personally make recruiting top talent a priority. CEO's must act as role models and send the message to everyone that they are the chief recruiter for the organization. Senior officers must attend recruiting events and activities and periodically add to their calendar candidate calls and prospect lunches. Have your CEO call superstar candidates. Provide the CEO with information on the candidate, the job and your firm's best selling points.
6. **Become a retention expert** -- Managers must realize that if they don't control retention they will be required to continuously recruit to fill those vacancies. In order to minimize that burden, it's essential that managers become experts in retention. They must spend the time to identify what motivates, excites and frustrates each performer on their team.
7. **Dedicate some time** -- Spend time wooing top talent, or your competition will. Workers have been liberated from your competitors, and the good ones know they are in demand. Visit www.ereexchange.com and read about recruiting everyday. Don't limit your learning to the US; it's essential that you also learn how to hire around the globe because global hiring can increase your productivity as well as the quality (performance after hire) of your new employees.