

# BirdDog

## JOBS

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### Always On Recruiting March 8, 2011



*We have a term around the office that has evolved to describe how progressive companies approach their talent search. It's called **Always-On Recruiting**. This means the company is always building its talent bench and extending the virtual welcome mat, even when it does not have a current job opening.*

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Ranger  
Your BirdDog



# Always On Recruiting:

## Introduction

Here at BirdDog we have an Always On philosophy. We know the hiring process is tough, stressful, time consuming, and expensive. That's why our goal is making the process of bringing the best talent together with the best companies easy and pain free.

As the traditional "job posting to fill a vacancy after it happens" model wanes, companies are seeing the recruiting landscape change before their eyes. In this paper, we'll examine some of the ways in which companies like yours are not only adapting to those changes...they're embracing them.

This paper is a compilation of articles focused on the construction sector, including Federal Contractors who are subject to some pretty extreme compliance issues. However most of the concepts and strategies put forth in the following pages are applicable no matter the industry.

If you have questions or would like to continue this conversation, please reach out to me at [dmitchell@birddogjobs.com](mailto:dmitchell@birddogjobs.com), or by phone at 515.473.9206.

Thanks for reading.



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# Always On Recruiting:

## Part 1 – Social Media Fills the Pipeline

It's easy to blame panic hires on "the nature of the business." Yes, turnover is high in our industry. Yes, the need for workers can be unpredictable.

But, there is a difference between a quick hire and a panic hire. Most notably, panic hires are made from a pool of unqualified – and potentially damaging – job seekers. (Think the owner's out-of-work nephew or the guy who stopped by the office last Tuesday.)

A quick hire, on the other hand, is pulled from an established list of qualified, pre-screened – one the contractor has built proactively over time to prepare for those inevitable last-minute openings. It's a virtual treasure trove of workers perfectly tailored to the specific needs, wants – and requirements – of the company.

So, how does one build such a goldmine? Much of it can be done using new and emerging technologies. Among them is social media.

Many construction businesses have jumped on the social media train, using blogs and other social networking tools to promote their businesses, expand their reach – and most importantly – introduce their company culture to qualified jobseekers.

These contractors are no longer willing to wait for their ideal candidate to stumble across their listing in the want ads or on a static website. They're proactively going after the top talent by networking inside of social media and other online tools.



Social media is the fastest growing communication outlet, allowing business owners to meet job prospects right where they are. Google it. You'll see article after article encouraging the out-of-work set to get on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Today's job-seekers are in a hurry to get back to work. They want to assess an employment opportunity and the culture of the business they're investigating quickly. Simply put, engagement in social media tools makes a construction company more "findable." And because these tools are real-time applications, contractors can instantly customize and advertise their open positions in a way that attracts exactly the type of candidate they are looking for – more effectively and economically than their counterparts who are still relying on out-dated advertising methods.

Of course social media is not an effort to be jumped into without giving thought to the purpose. It requires a defined strategy where it and other online technologies, such as talent acquisition services, take on the task of recruiting hand-in-hand.

Thinking of giving it a try? Here are a few tips to keep in mind.

**Do your homework.** Mistakes usually result from jumping into the social media realm too quickly and without enough research, knowledge or the right skill set. This can lead to using the wrong tone in your writing, focusing on the wrong demographic or targeting the right demographic with the wrong message.

**Stay focused.** Social media exposes a construction business to a very large audience, so it's important to remain true to your niche. Keep your content specific to the types of audiences – colleagues, associations, prospective and current employees, clients, etc. – you most want to reach.

**Supplement with other technologies.** Many recruiters have stumbled into the temptation of broad-market online talent services to reach the masses. But, as with the developing social media realm,



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niche services provide a more targeted approach to recruiting – delivering news of your open positions right to the virtual doorsteps of the most qualified candidates.

Through a niche talent acquisition provider, business owners and hiring managers are able to effectively slice-and-dice audience segments to promote their employment brand to the most relevant job candidates, who in-turn, can easily submit their resumes. Today's online Recruitment services go beyond the "online job board" model and offer candidate sourcing and scoring services for hiring managers with too little time or staff to produce the all-important candidate "short list."

And, because you're working with an industry specific expert, niche providers are more likely to be partner in helping to ensure that your job postings and search processes are compliant with OFCCP and other agency regulations.

**Keep up the website.** Your company website is still the bread-and-butter of comprehensive information about your business. A social media strategy must incorporate the specific URLs inside of your site that are most important to a candidate audience. Likewise, your website should push visitors out to your social media efforts, introducing them to the most up-to-date information available about your company, its achievements and the opportunities to join you as an employee.

**Keep it fresh.** Launching a social media effort is a promise to your target audiences that you are going to deliver brand-spanking new information frequently. Why else would a job-seeker want to, "follow" "like" or "get connected" with a construction business?

Taking a proactive, strategic approach to hiring – one that centers on the creation and maintenance of a fully vetted candidate pool – puts contractors in a much-improved position to hire the right workers, quickly. Using social media and other online technologies is just one of the bench-building steps construction business owners can take.



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## Part 2 – Extreme Makeover: Career Page Edition

You've seen the tab on nearly every construction company's website. It's usually found along the top of the page, and it reads something like "Jobs" or "Careers."

Likely a lot of thought was given to this tab. But what most contractors don't realize is that **the majority of people interested in the content on this page will never even click it.** That's because jobseekers typically find their way to a company's career page through a search engine, like Google, or from an online job board linking back to the career page.

This means the company career page is very often the first impression a prospective employee will have of a company. That's a lot of responsibility for one little Web page.

Understanding the importance of the company career page is the first step toward achieving your goal, namely to represent the company as an attractive employer with respect for its employees, clients, and community.

There are four simple ways to achieve this goal:

First, talk to your employees. Ask them what their first impressions of the company were when they applied. How is what they thought they knew when they applied different from what they know now? Take the lessons you learn from this informal study of your employees and apply it to the design and content of your company career page. Maybe your employees thought you were strictly a concrete operation before coming to work and learning that you really specialize in road construction. Show pictures of your recent jobs to help illustrate exactly where your expertise lies.



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Perhaps your workers were under the impression that you worked only in a specific region. Include an interactive map of your most recent jobs.

Second, switch your mindset. Think of the career page as one of the tools you can use in your workforce development strategy. Around here, we call it "always on recruiting." It's **a simple way to describe the efforts of companies looking to build a workbench of employee candidates.** Working to build your own tailored pool of applicants – even before you have a particular opening – helps to eliminate the panic hires we've all come to know as a real temptation in the construction industry. For companies in a perpetual hiring state, the career page is an economic no-brainer. That's because it simply is not feasible to post the same job 30 times a year, often at more than \$400 per listing. With a career page, you have unlimited job postings.



Taken a step further, contractors who tie that career page to a recruiting service like BirdDog Jobs get their listings distributed to national job aggregators. This means greater exposure, more links to their page, and generally better "findability" on search engines like Google.

Third, understand your responsibilities with regard to workforce diversity compliance. If you are a federal contractor or a supplier of more than \$50,000 in supplies of services to a federal contractor, your company must report on its efforts to attract and hire a diverse pool of applicants.

A simple listing of open positions online will not satisfy compliance officers.



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Similarly, routing incoming resumes from your career page to an email inbox is nothing less than **a recipe for disaster for companies with OFCCP reporting responsibilities**. Rather, these companies should be funneling their applicants into a management system that stores, tracks, and archives all documentation leading up to the hire.

Lastly, look beyond your website designer for consultation. While these folks will do an excellent job building the architecture, designing the look and potentially creating additional functionality, you need an experienced workforce and hiring expert to help you craft your company career page.

Many contractors use services like BirdDogJobs.com to build and manage their hosted company career page. This allows the contractor to list his open positions on his own page, as well as several niche job boards, while at the same time, giving jobseekers the strategic first-impression he wants.

How it works: A jobseeker clicks on a job listing from inside a niche job board and is directed to a Web page hosted by an applicant tracking system (or ATS). The page mirrors those found inside the hiring contractor's website. All the colors, the fonts - even the navigation - are identical.

From this page, the jobseeker can do a number of things. He can read more about the job, including its description and the minimum qualifications. He can click on navigation that takes him to pages within the contractor's website to learn more about the company. He can share the job via social media tools like Facebook and Twitter. Most importantly, he can apply for the job.

Because the career page he's applying from is actually linked to an ATS, his application isn't going to some general email inbox that might be checked once a week (or once an hour if the contractor is in "panic hire" mode).

Rather, it's entering a fully functional back-end tracking system. The system not only allows sorting and scoring of applicants based on



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qualifications, it enters them into a system that can – at the touch of a button – generate a report detailing where the applicant originated. This is the ideal for OFCCP and other agency reporting requirements.

The simple fact of the matter is that our company career page wears a lot of hats. It not only advertises open positions, it provides that all-important first impression that attracts the right (or the wrong) kind of employee.

By taking the time to research existing perceptions and becoming strategic about how you address them, you'll have a much better chance of hiring the quality workers you need to remain successful.

The screenshot shows the BirdDog EMPLOYER DASHBOARD. At the top left is the BirdDog JOBS.COM logo. The main title is "EMPLOYER DASHBOARD". Below this are five navigation buttons: "My Job Postings" (green), "My Applicants" (blue), "My Resumes" (olive), "My Account Info" (red), and "My Resources" (green). On the right, there is a video player showing a man and a dog, with a list of video titles: "Dream Job: Paving Daytona Speedway" and "Engage the Job Seeker At All Levels of Interest". Below the video is a "Fetch More Help" button. At the bottom left is a photo of a dog named Ranger with the text "Ranger - Your BirdDog". In the center, there is a "Connect with us:" section with icons for RSS, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. On the bottom right, there is a "Tell Us How We're Doing!" section with a "SPEAK!" button and another photo of Ranger.



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## Part 3 – Workforce Compliance at the Push of a Button

If you're a federal contractor, you've got a lot on your mind these days.

**Grumbings about workforce compliance are growing louder** by the minute. Aside from running their businesses, contractors governed by OFCCP regulations are spending even more time ensuring they're running it to the letter of the law.

And that's no easy task.

Compliance officers will argue that the regulations are clear. And while it's true that they are written in black and white and quite simple to find, **it's how to execute and document these regulations that creates the biggest question mark for contractors.**

It's not uncommon for a busy contractor to sign on the dotted line of a contract, saying he understands his compliance responsibilities, without fully comprehending the requirements or the impact they will have on the day-to-day operation of his business.

Many contractors new to the regulations **have no idea what compliance looks like** or how it will change the way they advertise open positions, vet their candidates or hire their employees. Nor do they understand the hours it will take to not only perform these tasks to the government's satisfaction, but to document and report on the activity, as well.



And that's why more federal contractors are getting snagged. Although they may be following the spirit of the law in their recruitment practice, **they're unaware of how to track, and more importantly, prove it.**

The reason this is so important today is because compliance agencies are stepping up their game. More resource devoted to U.S. infrastructure means more resources for checking up on the recipients of federal dollars. Fortunately for federal contractors, as compliance enforcement has grown, so too has technology.

Of course, a hand-written note detailing the reasons for a given applicant's disqualification has the potential to satisfy a compliance officer, but the liability of only paper files is pretty daunting. Contractors wary of an audit rightly feel safer with digital proof of their compliance.

A qualifying affirmative action plan (AAP) has many components, some more easy to execute than others. Most typically, it's applicant sourcing – **and the tracking of those applicants as they flow through the qualifying, interviewing and hiring process** – that catches law-abiding construction firms off guard.

Federal contracting firms are required to prove that they have made and are continuing to make a "good faith effort" to attract and hire a diverse workforce. Often a contractor will be handed a list of diversity resources and told to notify each of these resources every time he has an open position. Sounds easy enough.

But what if this list is 10 agencies long? What if a contractor has 30 openings in a six-month period? **A simple form letter copied 10 times is not enough to satisfy a compliance officer** – of that you can be sure.

Rather, these regulation enforcers want to see real effort to connect with a diverse applicant pool. This means not only notifying female, minority, veteran and disabled jobseekers of an opening, but actively



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seeking their engagement with the hiring firm. This means actually applying for the job and coming in for an interview.

Compliance officers will want to know:

- Exactly how many of a contractor's applicants came from a diversity resource,
- How they were deemed qualified or unqualified,
- How they were hired or passed over
- And even how they and their fellow employees are made aware of this process and the firm's overall AAP throughout their tenure with the company

During an OFCCP audit, **a contractor will be expected to produce archived documentation detailing each of these activities.** And that is where technology designed to track and store every applicant search, communication and report can be a godsend.

Not only does it save hours of transferring chicken-scratches from the margins of a resume; technology like that offered by BirdDog Jobs, mitigates a contractor's risk by archiving files, making them available for compliance review literally at the push of a button.

But couldn't a contractor achieve the same with a good spreadsheet and commitment to diligent documentation? Possibly.

But using one system to post a job, notify workforce diversity resources, track where applicants came from and end up (and why), reduces the chances for gaps in documentation. And **to an auditor, gaps are red flags.** Even the most ruthless contractor can appear dishonest with gaps on the books.

Another advantage of using recruitment sourcing and tracking technology is that it helps to **build a bench of qualified applicants from which a contractor can pull pre-screened candidates at any time** – especially helpful when a crane operator walks off a job.



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With less than 24 hours to find a replacement, making (and proving that you made) a “good faith effort to attract and hire a diverse workforce” can be next to impossible.

Already meeting workforce compliance regulations, a diverse bench of qualified candidates helps contractors hire quickly – and lawfully. The work already has been done.

Not complying – or rather, not being able to prove that compliance – with OFCCP and other workforce regulations can have drastic consequences for today’s federal contractors. **Time-consuming audits, nerve-wracking conciliation agreements, fines and even the end of a business are what they’re up against.**

Fortunately, technology can mitigate much of the risk while at the same time reducing the amount of effort contractors must devote to workforce compliance – getting them back out there to do what they do best.



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# Always On Recruiting:

## Part 4 – Conduct a Foolproof Interview

Hiring the right employee – the first time – is probably one of the hardest parts of running a business. And nothing is more costly than getting it wrong.

Over the past three weeks, we've looked at some key methods for avoiding this mistake, including filling your candidate pipeline, giving your company's career webpage a makeover and complying with workforce regulations.

Today, we're going to talk about how to spot the best person among the qualified candidates yielded by your stepped-up recruitment efforts.

If a company does not have a clear recruiting roadmap, its hiring managers are more likely to bring on the wrong person – even when the candidate seemed like the perfect fit. Fundamental to this roadmap is a solid interview process.

### Ask the Right Questions

To spot a great worker, hiring managers must be as prepared for an interview as they expect the job prospect to be. This is a critical time for you to get to know the applicant – not a time to review a candidate's basic qualifications. That step is completed during a review of the resume and a brief telephone call to verify the details.

By the time you get to a face-to-face meeting, **your focus must be on determining the type of employee the applicant has the potential to become** and whether or not he will be a good fit for the job responsibilities and company culture.

To do this, you will want to prepare a list of questions ahead of time. Draft them in a way that will reveal a candidate's personality and



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traits, like work ethic and dedication. Can you, and the other members of the team, see this person as a member of the crew?

When developing your questions, take the time to make a list of the key traits that would create a match with your company and its culture. Traits may include motivation, drive, creativity; someone who is a self-starter or can lead – as well as follow – instructions.



In doing this, you will have developed a clear picture of the candidate you're looking for, as well as an idea of what the right answers will sound like when you hear them.

In addition, include questions that directly relate to the specific needs of the job and whether or not the applicant is capable of (and willing to) complete them. For example, does the candidate have the flexibility to relocate to new construction sites as

needed?

Be sure to remain consistent, asking the same questions of all candidates. This not only ensures a quality comparison, it can satisfy many of the workforce compliance regulations to which your company may be held.

### **Two Must-Ask Questions**

These two simple questions continue to elicit excellent information for BirdDogJobs.com employer clients. They give hiring managers a taste of the candidate's past experience, and they open the door for the interviewee to share stories. This breaks the ice, allowing for the conversation to flow more easily.

1. Describe your best and your worst employer.
2. Why did you leave your last job?

One of the most important aspects of a successful interview comes from the interviewer's ability to listen. If by the end of the interview, your applicant knows more about you than you do about them, you've failed to truly qualify the candidate.

### **Take 'Em for a Test Drive**

The proof is in the pudding. A valuable, but little-used assessment tool is called "scenario evaluation." What this entails is providing the candidate – verbally or in writing – with a couple of relevant workplace scenarios and asking them how they would handle the situation.

This practice doesn't have to take a lot of time, and it will provide insights into the candidate's thought process, growth potential and ability to solve problems. It can even help validate the accuracy of the information that has already been given to you.

### **Watch for the Flashing Red Lights**

Identifying what makes a good employee is only half of the battle. It's just as important to identify traits that signal a bad employee. These are the workers who can cause problems within your company because combative personalities, laziness or a lack of professionalism.

To avoid hiring these kinds of employees, be on the lookout for these warning signs:

- The candidate has been fired or laid off, but can't articulate a reason for the dismissal.
- He is unable to substantiate training with a certificate, letter of reference or other form of proof.
- He takes an exceedingly long time to respond to your questions.
- He breaks eye contact frequently.
- The candidate avoids discussion of past employers or jobs.



### **Get a Second Opinion**

When acquiring references, request them from a variety of sources representing both professional and personal contacts. Do not skimp on this part of the qualifying process. A couple of minutes on the telephone to verify if the information you've received from the prospect checks out will help confirm if you're making the right hiring decision – not to mention save time and dollars if you're not.

Developing an interviewing strategy is a great start. Of course, it's the implementation of that strategy that will make the difference. Be sure to communicate your vision for a successful interview among all people responsible for hiring in our company. The consistency will achieve several goals. Most notably, it will ensure that you have a solid basis for comparing the brightest stars in your applicant pool.



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# Always On Recruiting: Conclusions

The Always On Recruiting methodology will take some time to sink in especially if your firm has always been reactionary with hires and replacements. Proactive bench building will force your hand too. When you're confronted with an amazing talent that has raised his hand to say, "I'm interested in working for you," you need to make a move. Will you hire ahead of need? Will you replace someone who has been underperforming and needs to get off the bus?

You'll begin to see the power of Always On Recruiting in your business within a few months. I suggest embracing it now.

If you have any questions or need clarification on anything in this document, just let me know. Good luck with your plans, and to stay in the loop with Always On Recruiting, I'd highly recommend you subscribe to our newsletter to stay on top of trends...and ahead of the curve.

Thank you.

Doug Mitchell & the BirdDog Marketing Team



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