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5 Essential Steps to Recruiting the People You Want In Specialized Industries

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Ranger
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Strategy is Key

Sometimes, it feels like hiring the right person is more a matter of luck than the end result of a structured process. Throw some darts up there, and maybe one of them will stick, right? Perhaps the right person will walk in, or one of your current employees will have a highly skilled friend—or that ad you ran once just happens to fall into the right hands.

A random, haphazard approach to recruiting might work—occasionally. But most hiring managers or business owners in specialized industries can't afford to rely on a process that only delivers results randomly. What they want is a recruiting process that provides a steady stream of the best people for the work required.



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The good news is that an effective recruiting process in specialized industries is not that hard to create and implement. In fact, it's similar to many other successful practices that lead to business profitability and growth. So pull out your notepad and let's get started!

Step 1: What's your budget? What's your timeline?

Like everything else in the business world, recruiting is defined by *need* and *available resources*.

Let's talk about *need* first. In other words, how badly do you need that new person? For example, if a service truck is sitting idle, what does that represent in lost revenue? Ten or fifteen thousands dollars a month? Have you turned away new business because you lacked the skilled personnel?

Then consider your *available resources*. Put a number on your need for this new person—maybe you would be willing to spend two or three thousands dollars just to get the right person in the door in the next 30 days. Perhaps you can wait for three or four months and don't want to spend more than a few hundred dollars. Again, put this in perspective of your business revenue opportunities and growth.

Step 2: What skills do you need?

Once you've completed Step 1, you know how badly you need your new person, and how much time and money you're willing to spend to find him or her. The next step—and this is extremely important—is to determine what specific skills you need. Specific certifications? Years of experience? Supervisory experiences? Particular systems or



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equipment? The more detailed you are at this point, the better. For example:

Qualifications

- Self motivator
- Good people skills, team player
- Task-oriented
- Revit, Auto-CAD, Auto-CAD 3D, and/or Auto-CAD MEP experience
- Microsoft Word and Excel a plus
- Allen Bradley Flexlogix controller experience is a plus
- Able to take an HVAC project from concept to commissioning
- Knowledge of heat load analysis, CFM flow rates, load calculations, etc.

Once you've got your list, rank each item as A (must have), B (would really like) and C (optional). Now you have everything you need to build your job ad. Regardless of whether you decided to post to an online job board, advertise in a newspaper, utilize a recruiter, or some other technique, your job ad will provide the acid test for finding the *right* person.

Next, build your job ad. In addition to the key qualifications you've identified above, include information about:

- health and dental benefits
- other benefits, such as special bonuses, trips, training, etc.
- company culture
- company history and growth

Sell your company. Help the candidate understand why he or she might want to work for you. Be sure to include complete contact



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information, including address, phone and email. Most importantly, your job ad should have a call to action – tell the candidate to apply today, and tell them why they should not wait.

Step 3: Find your candidates

This is often where employers *start*. But as you've seen, to make the right decision regarding which techniques you'll use to locate your candidates, you must complete steps 1 and 2 first. In fact, let's do a quick review.

First, look at your timeline and budget. If you're in desperate need of someone and you're losing revenue because of this missing person, you may want to consider methods that can give quick results, such as online job boards (you can search resumes to find people right away). If you have more time, you may want to consider recruiters or print advertising. Again, choose the technique based on its fit to your timeline and budget, as well as its effectiveness in reaching candidates with the skills you identified that you need.

Don't forget to answer inquiries from candidates promptly. Many employers fail to do so, and lose great hires as a result. Again, be systematic and focused: respond to candidates, set interviews as quickly as possible and follow up on what you say you'll do.

Step 4: Interview your candidates

You probably know the standard questions: *Tell me a little about yourself. What did you do in your last job?* These are the basics, and they're important. Every candidate should be prepared to



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answer them; if they're not, then you've just learned something useful.

But try some non-standard questions that only the kind of candidate you *really* want would know. Perhaps it's a bit of technical knowledge about a particular system, or how a service tech might handle a tricky customer situation, or even a description of the types of people the candidates likes to work with. The key here is to move away from generalities to specifics, just as you did in Step 2. Your candidate may look good on paper, but if he's never *specifically* done what you're asking him to do, you should know that *before* you make an offer.

One more word of advice: be consistent. Ask each candidate the same questions. Make yourself go through every question for every interview; don't cut it short. If you don't do this, you run the risk of being surprised when your new hire finally starts working.

Step 5: Make the offer

So you've found your candidate. He meets or exceeds your A list requirements and has quite a few B's and C's. Great! Now you have to convince him that your organization is where he wants to be.

This step actually points back to Steps 1 and 2. First, your offer should be competitive. Know what the average wage is for a position like the one you're trying to fill. Resources to determine this include your own employees, your network of other business associates, online services such as Salary.com, and research conducted by job boards and industry associations. If you're looking for an exceptional candidate, be prepared to offer above the going rate.



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Money isn't the only component of a competitive offer. Most job seekers in the specialized industries are also looking for good health benefits and a flexible work schedule. Make sure you factor *all* benefits into your offer, and make sure your candidate is aware of them.

The end result

Are you finished after your ideal candidate accepts your offer? Absolutely not.

The most successful businesses understand that *keeping* employees is just as critical as recruiting new ones. Consider the amount of time and money you've just invested in locating and hiring this person. Now you want to ensure that he stays with your organization for a long time. As you well know the current labor pool falls far short of the need.

How to retain your employees? Hundreds of books have been written on this subject, and there are as many approaches as there are companies. But one piece of advice: treat your employees well, and they will most likely return the favor. Use the same techniques shown above to *keep* your organization competitive in today's labor market. Finally, remember that a growing organization will always need more quality people. Build your bench. Keep the word out there about your organization and why it's a great place to work. Remember, just like a business plan, a well-executed recruitment plan will help your business grow and prosper, no matter what the competition is doing.



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APPENDIX: Recruiting checklist:

- When do you need your new person?
- How much is this empty position costing you daily? Weekly?
- Based on #2, how much are you willing to spend to recruit your new hire?
- What skills, certifications, years of experience and previous experience do you want?
- Rank each item in #4 as A, B, or C; A = must have; B = would really like to have; C = nice but not necessary
- Build your job ad based on the results of #4 and #5.
- Determine which method(s) best fit your timeline and budget:
 - online job board (niche) - newspaper
 - online job board (general) - trade show or career fair
 - employee referrals - recruiter/headhunter
 - trade association
- Interview candidates, based on specific questions that expose skills and behavior that match your needs; be sure to ask the same questions for ALL candidates.
- Prepare and deliver a competitive offer.
- Plan on *retaining* your new hire and continue to build your bench.



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