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## Recruiting Is Tougher in 2019

Fewer applicants, more jobs force recruiters to get creative

By Roy Maurer | February 22, 2019

**T**oday's jobs market is pushing talent acquisition professionals to rethink how they engage with and evaluate candidates.

The latest Recruiter Nation Survey from Jobvite (<https://www.jobvite.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-Recruiter-Nation-Study.pdf>), a recruiting technology company, reveals the difficulties of attracting and hiring talent in a candidate-driven job market, as well as the creative methods recruiters are deploying to get job seekers' attention. Experts weigh in below on how—and why—recruiters can put these methods to use.

Of the 800 recruiters responding to the survey, 74 percent of them believe hiring will become more competitive this year. A majority of respondents (67 percent) said their biggest challenge in hiring is the lack of skilled, high-quality candidates.

"While for years we've been hearing about a tough talent market, this year, we've reached a tipping point," said Matt Singer, vice president of marketing at Jobvite. "With more open jobs than people to fill them and the market at near full employment, recruiters are finding new ways to reach candidates where they are—whether that's on Instagram or via text. They're re-evaluating what success looks like, with quality hires and retention rates becoming higher priority than time- and cost-per-hire."

Here are some trends to keep an eye on in 2019.

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## Hone Your Marketing Skills

**P**romoting a company's values and culture—not just its open jobs—will be critical this year.

"Companies are making investments in this area," said Amy Warner, director of talent acquisition at recruitment software company iCIMS. "Employers are creating new roles dedicated to recruitment marketing in order to effectively promote their culture and values and attract well-fit candidates, because recruiting is harder than ever before."

Recruiters without recruitment marketing skills are not only less effective in their roles, but they may soon become obsolete, said Lori Sylvia, founder and CEO of Rally Recruitment Marketing, an online community of 14,000 HR and talent acquisition practitioners learning recruitment marketing best practices. "The candidate journey is influenced at every stage by marketing strategies—search engine optimization, landing page conversion optimization, digital marketing, content marketing, social media engagement, reputation management," she said. "Recruiters that fall behind in using digital and social strategies are going to get left behind, not to mention put their employers at a huge disadvantage in the competition for talent."

According to the Jobvite report, the top ways companies grow employer brand are through social media (47 percent) and their careers sites (21 percent). LinkedIn is the most-used channel for recruitment efforts, used by 77 percent of respondents, followed by Facebook (63 percent). However, recruiters' LinkedIn use declined from 92 percent in 2017.

"Recruiters are turning to social media platforms where they know potential candidates are more active," Singer said. "This might explain why more recruiters are turning to Facebook and Instagram. Instagram's popularity with job seekers is increasing its use with recruiters, especially Millennial recruiters and those working at technology companies."

## Take Care of Your Employer Reputation

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**M**arketing the brand is not enough. Job seekers are cruising anonymous employer review sites to see what life is like inside the company. Seventy-five percent of recruiters told Jobvite that Glassdoor reviews are at least somewhat important to the hiring process.

"While consumer brands quickly realized the power of reviews as either third-party endorsements or sound chambers for services and product features that needed fixing, employers have been a little slower to adopt this mindset," said Christopher Kurtz, the founder and CEO of PeerThru, an employment brand and Glassdoor management consultancy. "This can be especially true in companies that are run by executives who are not digital natives and have yet to fully realize the value of the insights and feedback being delivered for free."

Kurtz advised HR to:

- Follow the company's Glassdoor or Indeed profiles to receive notifications of reviews as they come in.
- Develop a plan for responding to reviews both internally and externally. "Having a plan helps take the guesswork out of which reviews need to be triaged immediately and by whom and which are OK to let simmer," Kurtz said. "And remember, if people outside of your company are reading reviews, your employees are likely reading them as well."
- Encourage more reviews by addressing and responding to them, not just by asking for them. "Blanketing the company with a request for reviews is not a good idea," he said. "People by nature are suspicious. Even if [the reviewer's name] says anonymous, employees still aren't trusting that a review left on a public forum won't come back to bite them. And asking for specifically positive reviews is fundamentally flawed."

Other traps include trying to respond to every review and engaging in shady practices for gathering reviews. "Don't offer bribes for positive reviews," Kurtz said. "Along those same lines, do not pay a third party to write positive reviews for you. These are all tactics that only mask bigger problems."

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## Try Texting

**R**ecruiters are searching for new ways to reach candidates more quickly. Texting is one way to do that. Forty-three percent of respondents to the Jobvite survey have texted candidates and applicants, and 88 percent report positive feedback from job seekers.

"Recruiters and job seekers both value their time, so the need for faster hiring has made text message and chat even more important than the traditional communication channels like e-mail or phone calls," Warner said.

Meghan McFee, a manager and recruiter for staffing firm WinterWyman's technology division in the Boston area, slowly began using text a few years ago, but the option has since become indispensable since her company implemented a texting platform that integrates with her business phone and applicant tracking system.

"It's been terrific for scheduling and quickly getting in touch with people," she said. "Especially for candidates who are working, it can be very effective in getting a faster response, and it's gotten great feedback from our recruiters."

Job seekers also benefit, she added, in improved communications and candidate experience.

She recommended that recruiters ask permission from candidates early on about their communication preferences before texting them. And remember that most conversations still need to take place over the phone.

"Texting is not a replacement for making phone calls," she said. "I would never ask complex or qualifying questions over text. A lot can be lost in translation versus a live conversation."

Warner added that having recruiters and hiring managers text candidates with their own devices in an ad hoc way can be risky.

"I think we will see more employers start to formalize processes and systems to use text messaging and chat capabilities in recruitment," she said. "They will turn to a dedicated solution to not only make it easier for recruiters and candidates to text, but to also ensure that they are staying compliant and properly protecting the candidates' information and data."

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## Be Flexible

**R**ecruiters are not as picky as they once were. "It is certainly a candidate-driven market right now, with candidates having more options and multiple offers to choose from," McFee said. "[Employers should] identify what [job requirements] they can be flexible on versus saying, 'Everything is required.' It can take a very long time to find a perfect candidate when you could hire somebody who can grow into the job."

McFee, who recruits for technology roles, said employers are more relaxed about candidates' years of experience and knowledge of specific systems. "Instead of requiring expertise with a certain system like Microsoft Dynamics, for example, the employer will open up the role to candidates with knowledge of any enterprise resource planning software."

Hiring candidates with nontraditional educational backgrounds has also become increasingly common, Warner said. "Recruiters are considering things like self-education, online schooling, certification programs and experience when identifying potential employees. Employers are also investing in more training programs to groom their employees to have the skill sets needed to tackle jobs of the future."

The Jobvite survey showed that even an insistence for soft skills like the ability to communicate well and enthusiasm decreased by more than 20 percent among recruiters compared with last year. Recruiters said they are also less likely to disqualify candidates for rude behavior, and only 35 percent said that culture fit was likely to influence hiring decisions.

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