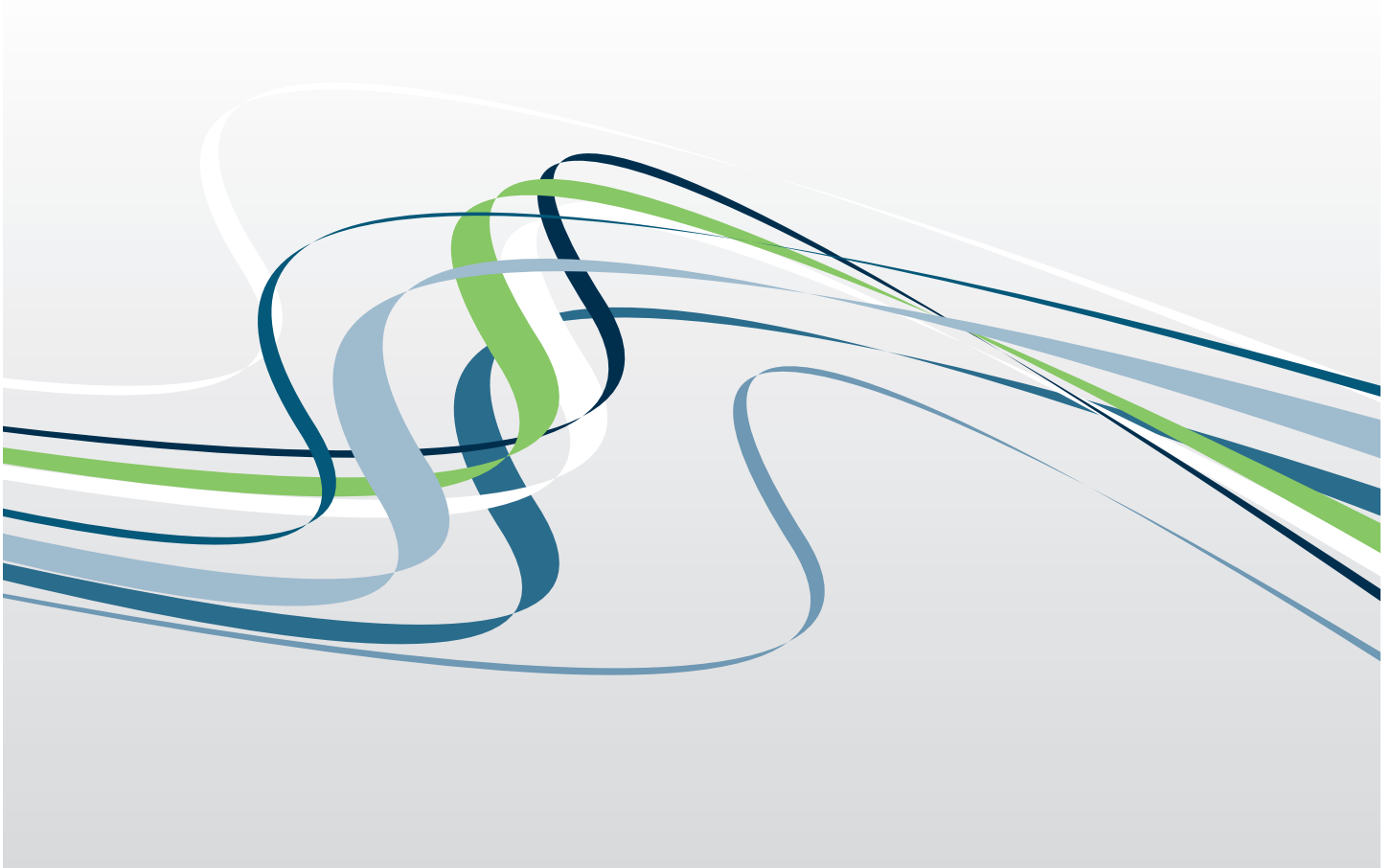


# Recruiting in a tight market

A Modis International guide



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It may be the last thing on your mind as your business takes on the challenges associated with turning around a company in a tight economy, but there may never be a better time to recruit talent into your organisation.

A tight economy can have many positive ramifications for companies looking to elevate their talent base or develop new areas within their business. With a wealth of candidates on the market, many of whom would not ordinarily be available or affordable, forward-thinking managers are using this as an opportunity to prepare for the inevitable upturn; ensuring they have the talent in place to make the most of it when it does happen.

Easier said than done I hear you say.

- How do I unearth the right talent?
- How do I position my organisation to make us attractive to potential new hires?
- What support is available to make me successful?

In this guide we provide some practical pointers on how to develop your talent for the immediate and long term and highlight what you need to consider when building for the future.

## Avoid compromise

Although there are many capable candidates in the market right now, in a tight market it is even more important to look for the right people rather than available people. Don't feel compelled to recruit just anyone; focus on making sure they have both the technical skills and cultural fit you are looking for.

According to the Harvard Business School, making the wrong hire can cost between 3 and 5 times an employee's annual salary, while for specialist functions the cost can be up to 10 times this figure, when taking into account the impact on existing colleagues of having the wrong person in post, the potential decrease in productivity and the damage to your reputation as a hiring manager.

On the plus side, the fact that a person is willing to leave their current job to join you when times are tough, suggests they're a lot more likely to stay with you when times are good – as long as you treat them well.

## Look for genuine enthusiasm

Make sure you can spot the difference between enthusiasm and someone whose long-held aspirations fit with your organisation. In a tight market there are plenty of people who need a job, any job, and who will fight hard to get one; you need to be sure they have a genuine desire and passion to work for your organisation.

With research showing that almost one in five applicants (19%) apply for a job without researching the company they are applying to, or even their own suitability for the role, it is crucial you see beyond the slick CV and polished interview technique.

Hiring someone with genuine enthusiasm and a real desire to work for you will hold you in good stead for the future. If the candidate has singled out your organisation as their next ideal career step, they are likely to have a higher level of engagement, higher productivity levels and will probably stay with you in the upturn.

As Alan Leaman, CEO at Management Consultancies Association says: "Look for genuine enthusiasm. If a candidate doesn't bring that to a role, you've lost a big opportunity from the outset."

## Position well

It's no good battening down the hatches and waiting for the right person to turn up on your doorstep. The principles of the War for Talent are still as prevalent in a downturn as they are during the more prosperous times. You still need to position your company carefully and make sure it stands out as an interesting and attractive proposition.

Think carefully about where your target audience goes; make sure you know where you need to be seen and who you want to be seen by and work with your recruitment team to define what truly sets you apart in the market.

Once you know what differentiates you, invest in promoting that differentiation and using it to drive your employer brand. A recent study by Modis International found that over 40% of candidates

use social networking as a key part of their bigger job search, so it's well worth considering this as a low cost part of your attraction strategy.

Although you want to promote your company positively, make sure you are genuine and your messages are backed by action. Research by Badenoch and Clark reveals that over a third (34%) of people say they view their current employer in a more negative light than they did prior to starting work with them. This is down to perception and expectation management – get it right in the first place and you will have a happier workforce.

## Be proactive

Get in front of the right people and make sure they know what your organisation has to offer. Go out and tell people about your business – your vision, your strategy and what you're doing to get there. Most importantly tell them about the kind of people you need to achieve your goals. This will enable you to plan ahead and reach out to those that may not immediately be needed or available.

A Modis International roundtable recently revealed that some companies are planting the seeds early in the recruitment process by networking with candidates and “parking” them for 3/6/9 months. They are working to make sure their target audience is a warm one, so that when the timing is right they have already begun to make headway.

What's more, focus on demonstrating how your organisation remains in good shape despite the downturn, which in turn will enable you to attract good people. People will always want to know that the move they are making is the right one for them, and a stable and financially secure organisation will be a much more attractive proposition.

As Andrew Pullman of HR Consultancy, People Risk Solutions says: “If your business is in good shape make sure people know about it.” Do this well and you will attract the right talent.

## Look beyond the tried and tested

During a downturn many people will take the time to consider their future and potential career options, and many may consider careers in sectors they might previously have glossed over.

This increases the talent pool available and can potentially provide your company with a wealth of new skills, breadth of experience and ideas that will be of benefit both now and in the future.

Tried and tested approaches are therefore not always the best way to go. If you get the cultural fit right and make the most of the skills and experiences available from other industries, then this can only benefit your business. Using unconventional

methods alongside your tried and trusted ones will inevitably offer dividends.

Tracy Robbins HR Director at Intercontinental Hotels Group recognises that by “becoming a magnet for talent, you'll attract strong performers from other organisations that are either not doing so well, or at least not looking after their employees quite as well. [Although] some will be patently unsuitable, some [will be] the right cultural fit and bring new skills and experiences that will really benefit your business.”

## Make your agencies work harder

With more candidates on the market, it's easy for your in-house recruitment team to get bogged down sifting through unsuitable applications. So take advantage of your recruitment partners; make full use of their services and ensure you are getting value for money.

By spending time up front to help them understand your business you will invariably be able to produce a more targeted attraction campaign, better adverts and will spend less time managing the recruitment process. Remember where their expertise lies – don't inundate yourself with mountains of CVs when a recruitment agency can screen them for you.

Likewise, a trusted recruitment partner that really understands your business will make sure you only see candidates that are truly up to the job and genuinely interested in working for your organisation.

In fact, you should be able to outsource much of the activity to a good and trusted recruitment partner since they should be adept at promoting the unique merits of your employer brand and dispelling false assumptions. An agency that truly understands you will help you identify and deliver the right talent, both now and in the future.

## Look to the future

It's reasonably straightforward to plug the immediate gaps in your organisation, as you know what skills and experience you need immediately.

But what of the future? Have you considered what opportunities will exist in your business next year, in three years' time? Consider your company's vision. Where do you want to be and have you already got the skills and latent talent onboard to get you there?

Leadership expert Judith Leary-Joyce summed it up for us, saying: “Don't simply focus on developing the round peg for today's round hole. Understand what your business needs to overcome the downturn, and then decide what the future opportunities will be and the kind of talent you'll need to challenge

your rivals. Look at people's core talent – their innate expertise – and recruit those who can both accomplish the present role and have the potential to enhance your organisation, perhaps in a number of different roles, going forward.”

Having the right talent on board is key. The challenge then is to keep your best people in the organisation. It's all about creating and maintaining a culture that they want to be a part of.

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**For more information:**

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