

Hiring for the 21st Century

By Milt Cotter

Workforce productivity is the driving force for success in the 21st century, yet many employers are not realizing the levels of productivity from the Human Resources function they could be. The challenge for HR functions within organizations is to implement hiring processes that enhance the productivity of an organization's workforce. Implementing hiring processes that enhance productivity means hiring more qualified people who are a good fit for the jobs they will be performing, and who become productive more quickly and achieve higher levels of performance. The issue today is how HR accomplishes this task in the most modern, legally compliant, objective, nondiscriminatory and cost efficient manner possible.

Many organizations have eliminated HR departments and increased the HR functions that operating supervisors and managers must handle. More organizations are outsourcing payroll, benefits and other HR functions in cost reduction moves than ever before. With management placing increasing pressure on HR departments through cost containment initiatives, it is imperative that those who manage the HR function in organizations understand the urgent need to adopt technology to increase the productivity of the HR function.

Additionally, federal and state employment reporting requirements further emphasize the need for HR to adopt new technology. For example, the EEOC and other agencies recently established five criteria for distinguishing an applicant from a job seeker. The five criteria are:

- ◆ An employer must have a job opening
- ◆ The employer makes people aware of the openings
- ◆ The job seeker must express interest in a specific job a specific employer has open
- ◆ The job seeker becomes an applicant if the job seeker meets the minimum requirements for the job
- ◆ The job seeker must follow the employer's procedures for applying for a job

In addition to the pressures to increase productivity of the HR function, HR departments now must differentiate a job seeker from an applicant in order to accurately compile reports for affirmative action and other reporting requirements. More optimal utilization of the internet enhanced with advanced software can address these two needs.

Whereas HR departments have traditionally screened and qualified applicants by manually reviewing applications and resumes, available software solutions, when deployed through the web, can differentiate qualified applicants by using an automated process to qualify applicants from job seekers through the use of pre-screening questions. A process of this type tends to be more objective and avoids subjective issues with regard to race, age, sex, national origin and other factors that human bias sometimes can't

overlook. Further, since it is an automated process, it enhances the productivity of the HR function.

Following is a case study involving a web based applicant screening system:

The online Employment Center system utilized pre-screen questions about minimum job requirements to differentiate job seekers from applicants. The system then ranked the applicants based upon their answers to the pre-screen questions. Job seekers who meet the minimum qualifications were asked to complete the employer's application, attach a resume and provide other information the employer required, all online.

In analyzing the use of this system by one nationwide employer for a ten-month period of time, some very interesting facts were derived:

During this period of time:

Approximately 34,500 job seekers were processed by the employer's web-based applicant screening system.

Of the 34,500 job seekers, 24,182 were screened out effectively and efficiently by the pre-screen questions to determine minimum qualifications (and the records maintained and housed in the event of future potential need).

Approximately 10,000+ qualified job applicants remained, and the system ranked these based on their answers to the pre-screen questions yielding approximately 50% that were chosen for further consideration.

In summary, 34,500 job seekers were screened. Approximately 5,000 of the 34,500 were the most qualified applicants and their data files were collected automatically, requiring no screening by HR personnel. The employer saved almost 2,000 hours of HR department time by utilizing the Employment Center to automatically screen 34,500 job seekers to obtain 5,000 qualified applicants.

With such systems currently available, there is no longer a need for paper applications, or the need to sort and file them. With the right software linked to the employer's web site, a job seeker, after completing the prescreening questions online, can complete the employer's application online as well and attach a resume. But that's not all. Remember those application blanks that candidates leave blank? Those omissions can now be eliminated requiring that critical blanks in the application be completed before the candidate is allowed to proceed with the application process. Then, since the application has been completed electronically and filed and available online, the HR department no longer needs to keep paper files on applicants (and employees too for that matter.)

Such a system also simplifies the tracking and reporting of affirmative action data. Such data can be collected voluntarily from applicants online, yet shielded from recruiters or managers who are interviewing to eliminate bias from entering the screening process. The data can then be retrieved to produce the EEO-1 reports and for other affirmative action purposes.

Even aptitude and behavioral testing to assist in selecting applicants who are better suited for a particular job can be included in such a system to eliminate labor and reduce the time it takes to hire a qualified applicant.

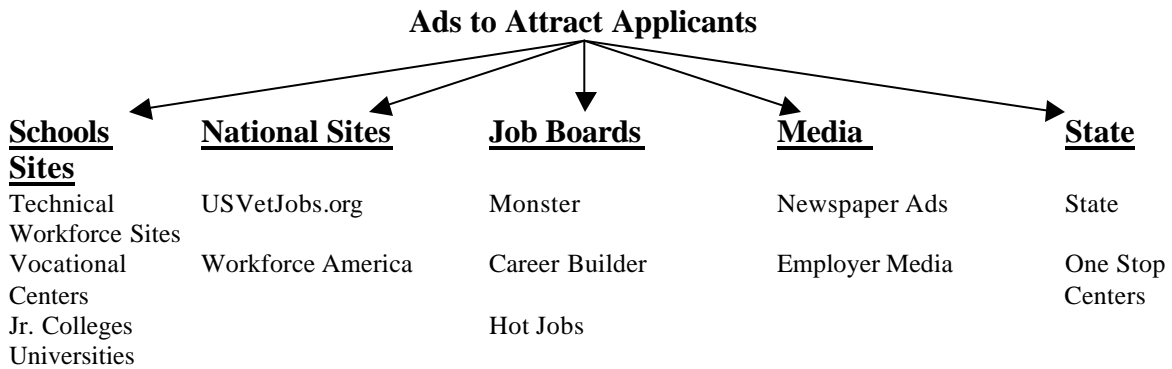
One creative and innovative organization, Candidate Resources, Inc. (CRI), www.criw.com, produced and debuted such a system in October of 2002. With a patent pending, this system, called the Online Employment Center, appears to be one directed specifically toward the employer with 100 to 2000 employees that wishes to enhance the productivity of the HR function by allowing HR staff to spend far less time and money on the applicant recruiting and qualification process and more time on more critical tasks. The system mentioned allows organizations to accomplish integration of a more nondiscriminatory hiring system that also provides features of increased applicant flow through utilization of free applicant flow resources, all while eliminating the paper crush that accompanies manual applicant attraction and screening systems. Attached is a diagram showing the process utilized by the Employment Center to increase applicant flow and HR productivity.

Most employers, particularly those in the retail, distribution, hospitality, and manufacturing industries, have been reluctant to increase applicant flow since doing so proportionately increased the need for labor to differentiate the qualified applicants from job seekers. HR managers now can advise operational management that such reluctance is no longer necessary since software is available to perform the differentiation process. An additional advantage of such a system is that it provides a standardized application and screening process that is non-discriminatory, an additional comfort to upper management in our increasing litigious society. Many users of such software are commenting that in addition to the increased efficiency provided by the system, the process is yielding superior employees who turnover less and become productive faster than those hired through typical applicant screening systems. Such technology is a boon to HR managers, allowing them to assist their organizations in reaching their goals through the selection of better, more productive employees, while improving the productivity of the HR function and allowing HR to direct critical resources to other important functions needed by the organization.

About the Author:

Milt Cotter has spent over 40 years working in the HR arena, including positions in private industry and the U.S. government. He is the author of two books, Understanding Human Behavior and The EEOC and You, and is a former columnist for King Syndicate's "Job Forum." Mr. Cotter currently serves as the President of CRI, a leading provider of technology-based solutions for HR professionals.

Online Employment Center's Funnel of Applicants



Information about Information – Employer Locations with Openings

Job Seeker Applies for Employer Jobs at Locations

Job Seeker Answers Prescreening Qualifying Questions

Job Seeker Completes Application – Attaches Resume

Completes Affirmative Action Data

Answers Certification Questions

Job Seeker is Tested to
Establish Job Fit
and Likelihood
of Successful
Job Performance

Database
of Ranked
Qualified
Applicants
by Location

Summarized
Data for
Reports