Make Global Recruiting a Winning Strategy
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Today’s global workforce is on the move like never before. Macro-economic forces, including globalization and technological revolutions, provide individuals even more choices of how, where and when they want to work. In fact, today there are more than one billion mobile workers worldwide1. And this doesn’t take into account the 214 million global migrants, many who migrate in order to work2. While this is great news for talented job seekers, it is an increasing pain point for many employers who are discovering that finding the right talent where and when they need it most is not an easy task.

What employers are discovering is that talent is becoming a scarce resource in the economic world. The war for talent means we are entering a new age, the Human Age, where the ability to optimize human potential will be every organization’s key competitive differentiator. This creates continued complexities and opportunities in the marketplace and makes access to the right talent at the right time the major agent of economic growth and key differentiator for business success.

As business needs evolve and companies are managing operations around the globe, more and more are realizing that their tactical, short-term workforce strategies need to change. In fact, according to ManpowerGroup’s most recent Talent Shortage Survey of 35,000 employers across 36 countries, 34 percent of companies are struggling to fill jobs they need in order to succeed3.

Mobilizing the right talent is critical to creating a long-term competitive advantage for any organization. Global programs require a long-term business strategy rather than a simple tactical approach, something many organizations struggle to develop across borders. One of the larger challenges many organizations face when implementing global workforce talent strategies is determining the best balance between local and global recruitment approaches.

Local recruiting provides many benefits to organizations with a strong local presence. It allows companies to be sensitive to culture nuances, have a stronger understanding of local laws and regulations, and in many instances have the ability to source candidates more efficiently because of their knowledge of the market.

With global recruiting, the benefits can vary. A cross-border recruiting strategy helps to strengthen a global brand, source top talent across a wider range of markets, standardize and streamline processes to generate efficiencies and reduce risk, and provide a more robust, standardized candidate experience. The question most organizations face is which model best meets their business needs.

For many organizations, an ideal end-state is having a “fixed and flexible” model. Here, certain elements of the recruitment process should be considered “fixed”
on a global level, including having a global applicant tracking system to ensure all candidates come into the recruitment pipeline through a single tool. Other elements of programs considered to be more “flexible” on a local level include recognizing and acting upon unique market, cultural and legal requirements.

A growing number of organizations understand they can’t be everywhere with the local labor knowledge of markets in which they want to enter, and many are turning to trusted advisors who understand their challenges first hand. And as companies turn to these trusted partners, it’s important that they understand critical components to any outsourced recruiting program.

As a consultant to organizations around the world in their talent strategy development programs, we believe four key elements should exist in any successful global recruiting program to ensure the programs objectives align with the overall business needs. This is true either for an internal, globally managed recruitment program, or for a recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) program through a trusted advisor. Consider these four elements as you look at your workforce needs.

Four Elements of a Successful Global Recruitment Program

1. Align
2. Design
3. Deploy
4. Refine

Align: Shared Alignment on Common Goals

Creating shared alignment means organizing a centralized project steering committee who will determine, in very clear terms, the project scope and objectives along with each region’s role in accomplishing the objective.

Gaining alignment is often the most difficult part of a global recruitment program. Many organizations have few mechanisms in place to foster consensus among their global teams. In this case, local hiring managers who are concerned about losing control of their respective domains might resist supporting new recruiting processes. Additionally, the concept of recruitment process outsourcing might take on different meanings in different regions. In some regions RPO might be an end-to-end solution that encompasses everything from sourcing to onboarding. For other regions, the RPO solution may consist of the selective outsourcing of specific elements of recruiting like background screening or sourcing for specific hard-to-fill positions. Understanding the complexity of what the solution means by region is critical to a true global program.
In order to achieve this alignment, it is important that all business users have a shared lexicon and common definitions. Often times when global programs are developed, regions may have a different understanding of terminology and expectations. From the outset, the faster a common lexicon can be established, the sooner the team can begin to work towards the same goals. This common terminology is also of the utmost importance when effectively communicating expectations to the team on appropriate resource requirements and process milestones.

Another critical component of program alignment is having executive sponsorship across the organization. This helps to align the business needs with the talent gap that is the driver behind the global recruitment strategy. Obtaining executive level sponsorship is paramount to the long-term success and impact of any program.

Achieving program alignment should involve input from stakeholders until all important areas of concern have been addressed. Acknowledge and consider all feedback, but keep in mind the goals and ultimate end result of a global recruitment strategy — maximizing your talent pool.

Design: A Global Blueprint with Local Execution

All global recruitment programs require some degree of flexibility within the project framework. Some program elements should be consistent horizontally across the company — including brand standards, technology platform and both compliance requirements and common definitions. But it is also critical that the team provide ample room to accommodate different regional requirements for their varying recruiting resources and techniques. Making an effort to accommodate to different cultural nuances is of the utmost importance.

For example, in many countries and regions, the size of the space that is used for interviews can vary drastically. If an organization did not consider these elements when exploring offices in regions for interviews, success could be difficult to achieve. Having levels of flexibility ensures that organizations can have an effective recruiting program on a local level while conforming to global standards.

Recruiting knowledge and requirements are also often at different stages in different regions. For example, in the United States, there is a great deal of industry information available to help Human Resource professionals understand the key elements of a best-practice approach. However, that same level of information may not exist in other regions of the world, particularly in emerging markets.

Another key element to consider during the design phase of any global recruiting strategy is the varying local system requirements for technology-based applicant tracking and...
government compliance regulations. For example, in some countries, the applicant tracking system (ATS) needs to be Safe Harbor Certified. The European Union’s (EU) Data Protection Directive sets restrictions on how elements of personal information can be collected, stored and shared, creating many challenges. It is illegal to share personal information between countries if proper procedures have not been followed. Data can be shared freely between countries that maintain compatible data privacy policies.

In addition to the EU, other countries permit the free sharing of data, including Switzerland, Canada, and Argentina. If data belonging to an employee from these countries is shared with managers located in other countries, the parent company must either secure permission from each individual employee following very specific procedures or demonstrate organization-wide permission by pursuing one of several options to bring the organization’s data privacy policies up to the standards required by the EU. A trusted recruiting advisor with in-depth understanding of these types of policies can provide the needed insights to ensure compliance is achieved in each country as you look to expand your talent pool.

By understanding the common goals of the program and what parts of the process can be customized for local implementation, organizations can design a concept that ensures the program is successful. Organizations looking to an outside trusted partner to help them down this path should turn to a partner with local expertise who can develop a program that fits the varying geographical needs of the organization.

Deploy: Ready, Set, Go — Learning Through Experience

You’ve done your planning and due diligence – now it’s time to deploy. Yet prior to the first step of global and local deployment, a best practice is for all stakeholders to provide one final review of the overall plan and provide any changes that need to be incorporated to meet the organization’s goals. Revisit the expertise needed, the appropriate mix of skills and what developmental experiences the project provides to those involved. By doing so, organizations can replicate the successes of the phase and transfer the knowledge learned to other parts of the process.

Deployment must be done in phases that are clearly communicated and measured: here’s where we are, here’s where we’re going, and here’s where we’ll be at the end of phase one, which will take this amount of time. The project manager and project sponsor should prepare for a kickoff meeting that reinforces a shared understanding of scope, rules and processes.

Rather than fully deploying at once, the recruitment process outsourcing continuum should be tested in a real-world scenario and implemented in several pilot locations. As each location goes live, the process and solution should be monitored closely to
see if changes are required before a broader roll out. Executive leadership should sign off on each phase as these deployments occur and be accountable for reporting back to the organization on a consistent basis.

Every global recruiting project, no matter how carefully planned, will require some adjustments as it’s rolled out in a real-world application. The team should consistently monitor progress and challenges with both the design and deployment plan that may need to be reviewed at a higher level. Executive leadership should have a clear understanding on how adjustments will be managed.

Refine: The Commitment to Continuous Improvements

After the global recruiting strategy has been rolled out, often the project team will be redirected to other roles. However, because circumstances and requirements change, organizations should commit to regular evaluation and continuous improvements. To ensure the business objectives behind the project remain viable and to ensure required resources continue to put focus and rigor around the processes, formal communication and recognition that highlights project milestones is strongly recommended.

The refinement phase is also the time to examine how well the project was executed against the original plan’s objectives and how similar initiatives can be improved in the future. When individuals outside the executive stakeholders understand the business value of the new global strategy, they are more likely to engage and want to develop similar programs using this roadmap.

Making Global Recruiting a Winning Strategy

The road to attaining global recruiting success is paved by creating alignment of key stakeholders on the business goals and objectives of the program. As organizations address the post-recession economic recovery, high-quality recruiting mandates standardized processes, compliance support and the commitment of resources to meet goals. For any program to be successful, it is critical that the foundational goals and objectives be established from the beginning, supported by executive sponsors with clearly defined metrics for success.

The rewards for transforming a decentralized recruiting process to a global recruiting strategy are immense. A structured global process enables multinational
talent sourcing and helps to improve the organization’s brand. Through systematic onboarding of right-fit candidates that global strategy provides, companies are able to streamline process, improve the candidate experience and achieve cost efficiencies.

No matter the size of your organization, finding the right talent on a global level will continue to be your greatest challenge moving forward. Yet with the right strategy, coupled with a trusted advisor that understand your business objectives and how talent can help solve these needs, you can get on the right path to win in the war for talent, on a global level.

About the Author
Kathleen M. Donovan is the managing director of ManpowerGroup™ Solutions, a part of ManpowerGroup (NYSE: MAN). ManpowerGroup Solutions is dedicated to the creation and delivery of integrated workforce management solutions worldwide. Donovan is responsible for the overall management of customized, scalable solutions for both Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) that fully leverage Manpower’s blend of global expertise and local knowledge. The business unit also offers the industry-leading Managed Service Provider (MSP) program through the TAPFIN brand on a global level to drive consistent process, performance and productivity improvements across organizations of all sizes.

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2 International Organization for Migration, Facts & Figures,
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