

A New Understanding of Candidate Behaviour

by Gabriel Bouchard

Traditionally, the recruitment industry has classified candidates as either being *active* or *passive*. But segmenting the market solely based on whether or not a person is engaged in a job search limits our understanding of where candidates actually are in the job-change decision-making process.

Based on our research, Workopolis has found that the terms 'active' and 'passive' completely miss the largest and most important pool of potential talent on the market: the **'window-shopper' candidates**. This essential group is currently-employed and in no hurry to switch jobs. However, because they are not 100% satisfied with their current jobs, they keep an eye on the job market and would be open to making a move if the right opportunity *at the right company* came along.

Here is a new way of looking at the candidate market, which more accurately accounts for candidates' receptiveness to job opportunities and level of urgency to act:

New school thinking		Old school thinking
AVID unemployed 14%	Satus: Out of work; actively looking Mindset: Anxious; nervous; urgency Instinct: Get a job FAST Call to action: Apply now, send resume	Active
AVID employed 14%	Satus: Employed, but actively looking Mindset: Needs a change, sense of urgency Instinct: Get out of current situation Call to action: Apply now, send resume	
Window Shopper employed 43%	Satus: Open to new opportunities Mindset: Happy, comfortable, slightly bored Instinct: Life could be better Call to action: Generate interest, stay in touch	Previously Overlooked
LOYAL 29%	Satus: Not looking Mindset: Busy, happy, engaged Instinct: Stay the course Call to action: Stay in touch	Passive

Source: NorthStar Research, Job Poster survey 2008

This new model shows how critical it is for companies to communicate a compelling employer brand. Your employer brand is your reputation in the minds of candidates who are currently forming a short list of companies they would consider joining when the time is right for them to avidly seek a new job.

While the current perception is that fewer people are actively looking to change jobs because of the economy, **research shows that 71% of the labour market is actually engaged in gathering information for future career decisions¹**. As the competition for

top talent heats up, it's becoming more important than ever for employers to effectively connect with these window-shopper candidates at the beginning of their decision-making process.

The key to turning window-shopper candidates into applicants is to focus on generating an interest in working for your company before they become *avid* job-seekers.

Converting the Window Shoppers into Applicants

Window shoppers represent the greatest segment of the candidate market, but they are much more difficult to attract than avid seekers. Their unique skills, experiences and employment status make them valuable, but also mean that they make career moves only on their own terms.

This is where your employer brand becomes critical. Working for a company with a strong employer brand actually increases the worth of the employee's own personal brand, making you even more valuable to them. So building your brand as an employer of choice will inspire top candidates to seek you out. It gives you access to the hard-to-convert pool of currently-employed talent.

Connecting with Window Shoppers = Casting a Wider Net

The days when employers could receive all the resumes they require by focusing their job ads merely on communicating their own needs are over. It has become vital to ensure that your employer brand message consistently speaks to both the avid and the window-shopper candidates through your job ads and all other recruitment touch points.

Show candidates - even those currently employed - why someone would choose to work for you over any other company. Promote the unique benefits and perks that you offer to attract and retain employees. An effective recruitment strategy integrates all of these features and has top talent seeing your company as an attractive workplace.

Conclusion

Expanding your reach by targeting both avid and window-shopper candidates can create a talent pipeline for your company and speed up your hiring cycle. Converting this reach into applicants requires showcasing all that you have to offer those great candidates who are taking their time, window shopping for their next employer.

1: NorthStar Research, Job Poster survey 2008

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