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Get a Recruiting Edge with the Virtual Job Tryout™

Help-wanted ads, job boards and even the career sections of most company websites just don't cut it anymore. Recruiters need a more powerful, precise and predictive tool that speaks to their audience of potential candidates deluged with more enticing media.

People everywhere are engaged in high-fidelity, interactive, graphical experiences on various technology platforms. Consider, for instance, the gaming industry. As of June 4, 2005, Sony had sold more than 190 million PlayStations. By 2000, gamers bought more than 100 million units of Nintendo. Retail sales of video and computer games exceed \$10 billion. And a recent survey in *USA Today* estimated that more than 70 percent of teenagers aged 14 to 17 have a personal computer at home.

We have become a computer-literate community. Stop and think about that when you review the careers section of your corporate webpage. The contrast between what you are offering and what the candidate expects should be a wakeup call.

The Online Candidate Experience Must Meet Candidate Expectations.

Today's candidates expect to find a Virtual Job Tryout™, an interactive experience with the same level of technical sophistication they've become accustomed to in other parts of their lives. Today, though, they are sorely disappointed with what they find. Nine times out of 10, instead of interaction it's "paste your resume here." Ho hum, and read this old school job description. Why bother? Since you really only get one chance to make a first impression, it's time for a candidate-experience upgrade – not a new game, a different game.

A job seeker checking out the careers section of Company A's site is faced with this scenario: Click to read about the company's mission and values, and then search on available jobs, where maybe there's something of interest. After reading a dry job description, there may be a few screening questions to answer before the predictable, "Paste your resume here." Then, you wait for a response. And wait. And wait. Maybe an e-mail arrives that says "We received your resume." Maybe not. Get the picture?

Now imagine exploring what Company B has to offer: A click on "mission and values" leads to a flash module of the CEO describing what it's like to be part of the company and where it is going. Before looking at jobs, you get to complete a career-interests questionnaire that morphs into a short list of jobs most relevant to you. Through an interactive process you're then invited to experience a typical "day in the life" as the job unfolds on the screen in front of you. After the overview, you're asked if you would like to continue.

If you do, up come 8 to 10 questions to answer. After the last one, instant feedback about your qualifications pops up. Another invitation then asks you to try your hand at dealing with some of the challenges faced on the job. Experience a series of potential interactions with co-workers and choose how you would respond. Get feedback on how well you did. Explore a variety of common interactions with customers and choose how you would respond. Get feedback on how well you did. Examine samples of typical paperwork you may have to handle, and work through a series of decision-making and problem-solving scenarios. Get feedback on how well you did – and get invited to schedule an interview. Get an e-mail that acknowledges your interest and completion of the Virtual Job Tryout™, then asks you to refer a friend and thanks you for taking the time to apply to Company B. Get the picture?

Virtual Job Tryout™: Win-Win for Candidates and the Companies.

Company B gave the candidate a Virtual Job Tryout™, a form of simulation that enables a candidate and a company to get to know each other and assess whether there may be a good fit.

While still new in recruiting, only about 11 percent of companies use on-line simulations for candidate evaluation, according to a 2005 SHRM survey. However, simulations to develop skills and predict performance have been used for quite some time in other applications. Pilots, nuclear reactor operators, astronauts, sophisticated weapons technicians and operators of complex machinery all have had simulations as part of their training. Simulations are reliable and extremely cost-effective, especially considering the serious and substantial cost of errors. The US Air Force, for example, has found that pilots who spend a great deal of time in simulators are less likely to make mistakes in high-stress situations and therefore are better pilots.

Now, for what is generally less than the cost of turnover of a few employees, companies are increasingly staging the Virtual Job Tryout™ thanks to the marvelously interactive environment of the Internet. The economics of these simulations make it easy to justify the investment.

Case Study: Job Simulation Saves \$1 Million in Year One.

To maximize your ROI, use simulations for those open positions that eat up most of your recruiting resources. A staffing audit of your organization may reveal, for example that 80 percent of the candidates fill 20 percent of the openings. Twenty percent of the recruiting assignments consume 80 percent of the recruiting resources. Twenty percent of the new hires consume 80 percent of the on-boarding and training resources. Target those few jobs in your company where the 80:20 imbalance is most evident.

One early adopter of the Virtual Job Tryout™ was having trouble hiring candidates who could pass a required exam. The company had invested significant resources in process improvement to hire high-potential candidates but still experienced an 18 percent involuntary separation rate. In short, the methods the company used to evaluate and train candidates weren't working. Moreover, each termination represented a lost investment of \$15,000 in hiring, training and salary costs.

To eliminate that waste, a Virtual Job Tryout™ was developed, and a thorough analysis was conducted to document how a candidate's results forecast job performance. In the first year, the involuntary separation rate dropped from 18 percent to 2 percent. This dramatic change showed that recruiters were not able to assess success factors as effectively as an online job tryout.

In the first year, the company documented a savings in excess of \$1 million by making better hiring decisions with online job tryouts. This approach is a stronger and more accurate predictor of job performance than structured interviewing. Candidates hired through this process have made a major contribution to the company's growth and profitability.

Job Tryouts Will Be a Necessary Part of a Recruiting Toolkit.

Virtual Job Tryouts™ are not suited for all positions within a company. This form of recruiting technology delivers the greatest ROI when the following conditions exist:

- There are traditionally high levels of turnover.
- A significant investment in training is necessary to achieve proficiency.
- Behaviors that deliver the brand promise are critical to success.
- Large variation exists at the level of individual performance.

In such a recruiting environment and with so much being written about the anticipated wave of boomers retiring and other labor shortages that may surface, the need to attract and engage candidates will be especially acute. Your career site can have a dramatic impact on your ability to attract candidates, create word-of-mouth buzz and deliver applicant satisfaction. Deploying a webpage that speaks the virtual language of the candidates entering the workforce will generate a pool of applicants who will meet your hiring needs.

Again, look through the candidates' eyes, and ask yourself, "Does our online experience really hum, or is it just ho-hum?" Try a Virtual Job Tryout™.

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