



Recruiting with Intention: How to Attract Top Talent in a Changing World

The relationship between employers and employees has fundamentally changed. Candidates, looking for their next career move, have a new set of priorities, preferences, and expectations from employers. Ian Brenner outlines four ways organizations can start recruiting with intention and adjust to this new candidate-centric landscape.

When you trace it back, the recent mass exodus of employees and resulting talent shortages across many industries—otherwise known as *The Great Resignation*—can be seen as a by-product of the long-broken employer-employee contract. This metaphorical contract, which defines the relationship between an organization and its employees, has been falling into disrepair for the last two decades—but it took the pandemic to expose the issue to the light of day.

According to a recent survey by [Mercer](#), it was around 20 years ago that the then prevailing *loyalty contract*—which was built on a promise that employers would provide good pay and benefits in exchange for employee loyalty and commitment—was replaced with the *engagement contract*, which supplemented the loyalty contract by recognizing the psychological benefits of providing fulfilling work, where employees began to connect with the *why* of their employers.

When the pandemic arrived and employees got a taste of remote work, more flexible hours and—in some cases—much-needed time to upgrade their skills, the engagement contract fractured. Today, employees are looking for a *lifestyle contract*—one that will allow them to achieve a better work-life balance. The thing is, it's taking time for many employers to come to terms with this new reality.

By the numbers

This lag is costing them. In March 2022, [Statistics Canada](#) reported that Canadian job vacancies hit an all-time high of 1,012,900—a 22.6% increase from February and a 60.5% increase year-over-year. A [Bank of Canada](#) survey, meanwhile, indicated 19.3% of Canadians plan to quit their job at some point in 2022. Although it must be recognized that the onset of inflation and the increasing talk about recession, at time of writing, may well impact these statistics.

These numbers aren't limited to lower and minimum wage-earners either. Many tenured executives and higher-paid workers are also joining the Great Resignation. In the United States, more than 50% of the 4.5 million resignations in March 2022 were people from [higher-paid and professional segments](#)—and older age group profiles. The resignation rates in the United States between Q1 2021 and Q1 2022 increased by 34% for those aged 40 to 45; 37% for those aged 45 to 50; and 34% for those aged 50 to 60.

Despite a recognition that the likely onset of inflation and the increasing talk about recession, at time of writing, may well impact these statistics, employers need to consider that there has been a fundamental shift in the employer-employee contract. This is creating a huge gap in the workforce, primarily in the areas of knowledge and experience.

To fill it, companies need to determine how to fulfill their end of the new employer-employee contract and adjust their employment practices accordingly. In this article, we outline four ways to do that:

1. Rethink your employer brand

What do your employees want? Are they searching for increased flexibility, a sense of purpose, or a more respectful organizational culture? Whatever it is, now is the time to identify the benefits that mean the most to your people—both those currently employed and to be employed in the future—and find a way to deliver on them.

This will likely involve looking beyond your corporate brand and customer promise, and really digging deep to explore your [employer brand](#) and employee promise. Companies that do this will likely find that, today, competitive compensation is table stakes and is no longer good enough—it's essential to have a more balanced package, considering the needs and lifestyle preferences of your employee base.

To figure out what that package should look like, start with your existing high impact employees. Conduct surveys to determine how they feel about your organization and its culture. Find out what they need to feel appreciated in today's workforce and build that information into your company's employment value proposition and benefits package.

With these tools as your starting point, it will be easier to differentiate your job postings and promote a workplace that resonates with top candidates through channels like career sites, social media, and video.

2. Strengthen your HR practices

Given all that's changed in the employment market in recent years, the hiring process of yesterday is no longer sufficient. That's why it's so important to revisit and refine your human resource philosophies, policies, and procedures. To keep pace with altered expectations, this will likely involve revisiting your approach to job postings, interviews, candidate assessments, and onboarding.

When promoting job openings, for instance, consider how to make the position as enticing as possible to potential

candidates. This involves sharing a thorough job description and clear skills criteria, as well as your organization's value proposition.

Additionally, while it may be tempting to halt the interviewing process after you've found your dream candidate, in today's job market it's essential to keep the process going for several reasons. In some instances, candidates who are interviewing with various companies could be using their interview with you to gather salary information or gain leverage on another offer. The last thing you want is to extend an offer only to see the candidate disappear—forcing you to restart the interview process.

3. Fast-track your hiring process

Prior to the pandemic, most candidates took issue with potential employers' hiring practices. According to a survey from [PR Newswire](#), back then:

- 57 % of workers were frustrated when there was a long wait between the final interview and a follow-up phone call
- 23 % lost interest in an organization when they didn't hear back within one week after an initial interview—and 46% lost interest if there wasn't a status update within one-to-two weeks
- 39 % pursued other roles when faced with a lengthy hiring process
- 32 % said a long hiring process makes them question an organization's ability to make important decisions

Since then, candidates' tolerance for drawn-out hiring processes has likely decreased dramatically. To land your most highly coveted candidates, it's critical to act fast, increase the efficiency of your interview process, and extend that offer. To do so, think through every stage of your process, and do what you can to make it seamless, easy, and enjoyable for your future employees.

4. Show respect through over-communication

Transparency and over-communication—with your hiring committee, team, recruiter, and candidate—can also go a long way. Make sure expectations are aligned from the beginning and be clear about the role and what it entails. Additionally, in today's market, it's important to adjust your expectations and assume candidates are interviewing for multiple positions at different companies.

To protect yourself through the process, it's wise to ask some tough questions to gauge a candidate's intentions and interests—such as whether they're considering other opportunities, or what their motivations are for sticking through the interview process. When possible, conduct face-to-face meetings to build rapport and connection. And, lastly, once you find

a candidate that excites you and checks the boxes both for their soft skills and technical capabilities, make them a compelling offer, while being prepared for a counter (as well as potential competing offers!)

A new era

As we emerge from the pandemic, senior-level employees expect a lot more from their employers—and this isn't a trend likely to subside.

To thrive in this new era, organizations must find ways to give employees what they want—by redefining the employer brand, updating their HR practices, eliminating inefficiencies from the hiring process and keeping actively interviewing candidates in the loop with constant communication and updates.

Doing your part to repair the employee-employer contract can help you improve employee well-being, create more candidate-centric hiring practices, and win the war for talent.

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