

# Is the War for Talent a Red Herring?

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I have often heard it asserted by people within the recruitment industry that we are all involved in a war for talent. The mantra asserts that in our role as corporate recruiters, we are in aggressive competition with other organisations for the same individuals. As a result, and despite the best efforts of media like ERE, there tends to be suspicious relations between the recruitment faculties of different companies.

As we enter a new and more challenging phase for the global economy, we've all seen a sharp increase in the numbers of capable candidates who are available. With a market like this, which should dispel any competitive fears talent acquisition teams feel, I think we have a great opportunity to re-assess how we relate to each other.

## Our Problems

From my recent conversations with recruiters in other companies (admittedly all IT firms), it has become clear to me that the main challenges that we face on a day-to-day basis are not related to our ability to source appropriate candidates. Nor are we often faced with a race to hire a particular individual before the 'competition'.

More often, the issues that demand our urgent attention relate to internal processes and systems. As our CEO recently said of Red Hat as a whole: "We are succeeding *despite* our processes". I would suggest that this is something many of us can relate to.

The most vocal and audible advocates of solutions to our problems are often those third parties who are keen to sell us something, be it an applicant tracking system, or managed resourcing solution, or something else entirely. Where such a vested interest is held, we cannot rely on any sort of objective assessment of the situation.

## Where are our solutions?

So if we shouldn't turn to the vendors for insight into best practice, where do we look? It is clear that the key to understanding how to improve our own systems is to look at what other recruitment teams are doing, and to learn from their experiences. In order to do that, we need to clearly define our own priorities. Is it more important for us to keep hiring managers happy, or to foster enthusiasm in our candidate community? Maybe there is a more tactical goal, such as a reduction in the usage of staffing agencies.

Either way, there is bound to be another organisation who has confronted the same issues before. We all have valuable experience from our own time in recruitment, but we should also never pretend to know everything.

## Knowledge Shared is a Problem Halved

Our company has a cultural bias towards transparency, and I think the Open Source Software model is something that our industry can draw upon. We are all striving towards similar goals, and we can really evolve Talent Acquisition as a commercial discipline if we pull in the same direction. The US has a head-start in this regard, in other parts of the world dedicated internal recruiters are not yet a common feature of the corporate landscape.

Through groups on LinkedIn and ERE, in-house recruiters are starting to connect with each other. If we are all going to evolve, we also need to contribute. Tell the industry what you've tried, or what you're thinking of trying. Share what worked and what didn't, and see how it compares with the experiences of other teams.

If we as corporate recruiters want to adopt best practices in our own areas, we need to identify what best practice is. We should not assume that the most painless procedures that we have used ourselves in the past are actually the best systems in the industry as a whole... but they might be.

Open yourself up to scrutiny. Sure, it might be a little embarrassing at first to hold your hand up and say "I'm a recruiter, and my processes don't work", but you'll feel a whole lot better for it afterwards. And who knows, you could just learn something in the process.