



How to Create a Strong Recruiting Program

(Regardless of Your Organization Size!)



Table of Contents

- 02 Recruiting at Scale for High-Growth Companies
- 06 Recruiting at Scale for Small and Mid-Size Businesses
- 10 Recruiting at Scale for Large and Enterprise Organizations
- 14 Recruiting at Scale: The Essentials

Recruiting at Scale for High-Growth Companies

Spend enough time reading about talent acquisition, and you start to recognize common patterns and themes.

One that stands out almost immediately is the over-generalization of recruiting as if practically all hiring organizations were of the same size and scope. Sure, you might run into a specialized topic now and again, digging into the challenges of engaging tech talent or launching a diversity recruiting initiative. But by and large, most content looks at talent acquisition from a similar vantage point... One that can't possibly apply to every company!

Implementing a successful recruiting strategy takes more than following a few best practices. It requires a custom approach developed expressly for the organization it supports—and those of us in the space ought to acknowledge that collectively.

So, let's look at the unique challenges recruiting teams face as they seek to source, attract, and hire candidates at scale—starting with high-growth companies.

Why High Growth?

You're probably wondering why we're kicking off with high-growth companies, and the answer is simple: the world is beginning to emerge from a period of forced slowdown and sheltering, and we're examining our previous way of thinking. As Deloitte¹ puts it, "uncertainty calls for innovation," explaining that, "Faced with unexpected events, organizations need to innovate. Just as important, they need to be able to innovate quickly, now and in the future."

Though that future is still around the corner, preparations are already underway, and recent economic indicators point to the beginning of a hiring surge², one where growing organizations, both the nascent and the more established, will be looking to recruit top talent—and quickly!

Of course, there are variables to account for in this scenario, with the balance between filling short-term needs against long-term workforce development being chief among them. Innovation in certain sectors breeds fierce competition between organizations, particularly tech, where a talent shortage and skills gap abounds³, and in-demand candidates sometimes receive multiple outreach messages a day.

Periods of rapid growth are often unpredictable, tied to the whims of the markets, funding rounds, M&A activity, and the like. Though many recruiters offer specializations, few build careers around high-growth experience, making these circumstances feel circuitous.

1. Schatsky, D. 'Uncertainty and innovation at speed: How digital maturity can boost the ability to innovate'. Deloitte. [Available online.](#)

2. Domm, P. (Apr 2021). 'March jobs report is expected to be strong and show the beginning of a hiring surge'. CNBC. [Available online.](#)

3. Starner, T. (Apr 2021). 'Shortage in tech talent pushing HR to creative recruiting strategies'. HR Executive. [Available online.](#)

Building the Foundation

The anticipation, anxiety, and excitement of rapidly scaling companies illustrates why it's nearly impossible to lump recruiting into one big bucket that also includes slow and steady enterprise environments. The distinction is palpable and recruiting should reflect that across the talent lifecycle. Here are three key considerations to help guide your strategy:

1. State of the State

Before doing anything else, you need to know where you are today and where the organization is going, at least in the near term. This isn't limited to recruiting either, but the company as a whole.

What's the plan? Are you in the lead-up to a funding round? IPO? Are you in the early stages of building out a new product line? These are important questions to ask and answer, as identifying current and future state is a surefire way to uncover the gaps—in people, process, and product. An essential first step.

2. Set Your Base

Once you know where the gaps are, it becomes possible to find solutions. That might mean deciding exactly how many hires to make in a given timeframe or what technologies to implement to support the journey. Given the nature of high-growth companies, it's likely you'll be hiring as you go, so look to shore up your critical infrastructure first. If you need to add recruiters to the team, find them first. If there's tech already in place, make sure it's fully optimized and ready for primetime.



3. Stay Flexible

While recruiting might be your current focus, you'll eventually need to develop and maintain these hires as employees. Ventana Research analyst Steve Goldberg reminds us that “Configurability in HR tech is more than adapting a tool to support desired HR processes⁴. It’s also about adapting it to support HCM business goals.”

Never take your eye off what’s to come. While an ATS might be your top priority, reskilling and upskilling, learning and development, and performance management all factor in at some point—so choose accordingly.

To navigate change, you need to be ready for anything, a lesson many of us learned first-hand over the last year, so it comes as no surprise that we’re poised for additional disruption. If high- or hyper-growth appears on the horizon, look for strategies and solutions that will be configurable and easy to unpack amidst the ensuing chaos, enabling your organization to move quickly and stay nimble as you scale.

4. Goldberg, S. (Apr 2021). Twitter account. [Available online.](#)

Recruiting at Scale for Small and Mid-Size Businesses

Now, we're going to switch gears and look at small and mid-size businesses (SMB), the organizations that exist primarily out of the spotlight.

But before we get into what it takes to recruit within these businesses, let's characterize the SMB. For that, we're going to use Gartner's definition, which looks at the number of employees and annual revenue⁵. Small businesses are organizations with fewer than 100 employees and less than \$50 million in annual revenue.

Mid-size businesses are those with 100 to 999 employees that make more than \$50 million but less than \$1 billion in annual revenue. Given that scope, it's clear that we're talking about a massive number of companies. And candidates, to the extent that companies characterized as "small," employ more than 47% of the private workforce in the US⁶.

5. Gartner Glossary. [Available online.](#)

6. U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy. (Jun 2020). 'Advocacy Releases 2020 Small Business Profiles for the States and Territories'. [Available online.](#)

A Unique Set of Challenges

Hiring within the SMB ranges dramatically, with those on the small end recruiting for just a handful of positions at a time, while those on the medium end might have to fill 100 or more requisitions.

Business needs vary wildly, as do their organizational structures. A company with only 25 employees might not have much of a talent acquisition presence, with HR accounting for all aspects of the talent lifecycle, whereas one with 999 employers is more likely to have a dedicated team. Regardless of the difference in size, small and mid-sized businesses deal with similar recruiting challenges, from brand to resources.

We're going to start by saying the thing that no one wants to admit: we live in a world obsessed with labels. You see it in conversations about who we're wearing, what we're driving, and where we work. So, it's no surprise that SMBs face an uphill battle in terms of brand recognition. Sometimes it feels like there's the Fortune 500, and then there's everyone else.

Research from LinkedIn shows 73% of SMBs are challenged by competition from better-known companies⁷, and in turn, 84% of SMBs struggle to find enough people to interview and hire.

Underlying this is the issue of resources, or as mentioned earlier, the lack thereof. Establishing an effective process in today's hiring landscape requires finding the right blend of strategies and solutions to give talent acquisition professionals and teams the support they need.

But even that takes time, budget, and energy that SMBs don't necessarily have an excess of while trying to keep up with business demands. Compound this with a lack of market research and minimal resources, and companies can spend 25 hours a week just trying to search, outreach, vet, and interview candidates⁸.

7-8. LinkedIn. 'How Small Businesses Attract and Hire Top Talent'. [Available online.](#)

An Opportunity for Improvement

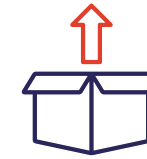
Despite the odds, the SMB persists, continuing to make up 99.9% of all businesses in the US⁹. There's real value in this sector, and we're past due on addressing what it takes to recruit in these environments. Here are three ways to enhance your strategy:



1. Know Your Brand

Though we can't all be the FAANG¹⁰, those hiring within the SMB can supplement their recruiting efforts by optimizing their employer brand. To do this, you need to understand who you are and what you have to offer candidates—from your initial interaction until their last day as an employee.

You want to exceed candidate expectations and give them a reason to work for your company. You have to tell your story clearly, understanding that where the SMB shines is in its ability to stay agile, adaptive, and highly personal.



2. Out-of-the-Box Recruiting

To connect with candidates on that level, you're going to want to spend less time on administrative work and more time in conversation with them. That means finding technologies to streamline everyday tasks.

Remember the 25 hours referenced earlier? That breaks down to six hours searching for candidates, another six reaching out, six more vetting them, and seven for interviews—every week! Shorten your hiring cycle with a self-service solution that automates messaging, scheduling, and screening and go from there.

9. U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy (2019). 'United States Small Business Profile for 2019'. [Available online](#).

10. Hobbs, B. (Nov 2020). 'What is FAANG? The 5 Big Tech Stocks and Their Importance'. Business Insider. [Available online](#)



3. Follow the Golden Rule

It sounds simple, but you were a candidate once too. Always remember how you got this job—and why you stay!

From job descriptions to interviews, onboarding to career development, the SMB has the opportunity to differentiate the experience it provides at every stage of the talent journey. Seek to create experiences that are easy to navigate and configured to the needs of candidates and the company.

Ultimately, when it comes to SMB hiring, there will always be someone else gunning for the same candidate, and as is often the case, that other company might even be bigger or better known. But rather than fret about everyone else, focus on what you can control.

Recruiting at Scale for Large and Enterprise Organizations

After exploring recruiting needs at high-growth and small to mid-sized businesses, let's move on to large and enterprise organizations. Now, on the surface, you might think that these companies have it made: resources, budget, technology, brand recognition... But nothing is ever quite as it seems, is it? That's because the bigger the organization, the more there is to account for, with layers building up over time.

The more factors in play, the more challenging talent acquisition becomes for everyone. That's one of many reasons economists predict hiring bottlenecks in the coming months, with the Wall Street Journal pointing out that, "Even after an employer posts a job opening, the hiring process can take weeks or months. Meanwhile, the labor pool changed and shrank during the pandemic."

What worked in the past might not work today—or in the future—which is why large and enterprise organizations need to take a closer look at how they recruit sooner rather than later.

Peeling Back the Layers

While these companies have a lot working in their favor, there are precluding factors too—and size can be one of them. Or rather, organizational structure.

The higher the headcount, the more stakeholders are involved in even the most straightforward decisions, while disparate departments complicate budgeting and approvals. Infrequent communication and inconsistent documentation don't help either.

And then there's technology... a boon in most instances, a burden in others, with Aptitude Research reporting that 30% of companies say integrations remains a top frustration and only one in two companies measuring the ROI of these investments¹¹.

The underlying issue with all of this being, it's not enough to have the resources, budget, technology, and brand recognition. You have to use them too, and that requires understanding the entire talent ecosystem.

The 2020 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey¹² found that “organizations are least likely to collect workforce metrics in areas critical to the future of work.” That means, instead of taking a predictive approach to talent, companies are relying primarily on descriptive information, which in practice equates to more of the same rather than scaling to meet changing needs. Deloitte further identified the areas where the majority of companies collect data:

- headcount, hiring, and turnover
- salary costs
- and workforce composition—all of which relate directly to talent acquisition (and talent management).

11. Laurano, M. (Oct 2020). 'The Foundation of Talent Acquisition: Back to the Basics With Integration, Data Management, and Automation'. Aptitude Research. [Available online.](#)

12. Deloitte. (2020). '2020 Global Human Capital Trends Report'. [Available online.](#)

Staying One Step Ahead

We spend a lot of time talking about using recruiting to carve out a competitive advantage, and there's inherent opportunity to do this in large and enterprise organizations—provided you're willing to do the work. Here's how:



1. Improve Your Intel

Taking the Deloitte findings to heart, most large organizations benefit from technology stacks with intelligence built-in. This intelligence can (and should!) serve as the basis for the understanding you're looking to achieve. This Four Agreements-style of thinking¹³ says “Without action upon an idea, there will be no manifestation, no results, and no reward.” The more you look at the data, the more informed you become. The more informed you are, the more leverage to operationalize information and turn it into strategy.



2. Increase Your Flexibility

Of course, flexibility continues to elude the enterprise. It requires being able to cut through the noise and get from problem to solution faster. But that doesn't necessarily mean ripping out your ERP, ATS, or CRM and starting over. It means looking for ways to enhance talent acquisition and talent management using the intel already mentioned. The more your technology and tools map to improving outcomes, the more fluid your process. The more fluid your process, the more agile recruiting becomes.

13. For more on Don Miguel Ruiz's Four Agreements, [click here](#).



3. Extend the Experience

You'll notice we mentioned talent management throughout this piece. That's because for large and enterprise organizations to improve intel and increase flexibility, they need to think about talent longer-term. The Aptitude Research report referenced above indicates that only 22% of companies have gone through a digital transformation of their tech stack, but 58% are using or planning to use internal mobility capabilities this year¹⁴.

The recruiting lifecycle doesn't end with the offer letter—consider where learning and development, performance management, retention, engagement, and the like fit your approach. Change is hard for all businesses but especially in large and enterprise organizations. It causes friction and disrupts a well-orchestrated status quo, which is how we created the cringe-worthy “that's the way we've always done it” mentality. Moving away from this is how we recruit at scale, in the moment, rounding out the modern talent journey instead of reinventing it.

14. Laurano, M. (Oct 2020). 'The Foundation of Talent Acquisition: Back to the Basics With Integration, Data Management, and Automation'. Aptitude Research. [Available online.](#)

Recruiting at Scale: The Essentials

So far, we've been looking at the recruiting needs of different organizations—high-growth, small and mid-size businesses, and the enterprise. This leads us to our final installment: the essentials. Because while every employer operates under a unique set of conditions, accented by distinct challenges and opportunities, the goal for recruiting remains the same: to find the best possible person for the job as efficiently and effectively as possible.

And underpinning these initiatives is a set of fundamental principles that promote positive outcomes and experiences, no matter the organization or hiring landscape. Here's what you need to consider in theory and practice.

Set Your Foundation

Taking high-growth environments as an example, what's the first thing that goes out the window when the pressure is on? Process, structure, and consistency. Because when we're up against the clock, we start scrambling to get to talent faster, to get our job done. Strategy, expectations, and potential get put on the backburner to fill roles and beat out the competition.

Cliff Stevenson, Principal Analyst, Talent Acquisition and Workforce Management for Brandon Hall Group, [recently wrote](#), "Post-pandemic recruitment will involve no new processes, but will involve a completely different way of how

those processes play out. Successful organizations will prepare for the future by investing in tools and creating systems that allow for maximum flexibility, regardless of the candidate's type, location, or any specialized needs¹⁵."

So, how do we stay consistent amid uncertain circumstances? We set a strong foundation. Recruiting works best when there's a framework to follow, one that sets measurable guideposts. To achieve this, you need to define the process, create structure around each step, establish critical metrics and configure technology to meet evolving needs.

15. Stevenson, C. (Apr 2021). 'Recruitment After the Pandemic: A Major Opportunity for Improvement'. [Available online](#).

Candidate Care

Stevenson raises an important point as it relates to processes. Hiring practices remain largely the same from the “before times”—source, engage, apply, interview, offer, hire, and then onboard. But how we interact with candidates continues to change. For years, the candidate experience seemed abstract, something we talked about improving without knowing how. Today, we have a clearer understanding of what this looks like, starting from the first interaction.

For SMB teams, candidate care can seem overwhelming, another task on an already long list. However, as we’ve come to learn, this one takes priority. Companies can take several actions, including:

- Communication about where candidates are in the process
- Giving feedback on why they weren’t selected
- Keeping candidates interested and informed about the company

Automation is the key to achieving this, sending notifications and sharing updates with candidates, reducing the administrative burden on recruiters, and giving them the time and energy to foster relationships.

Lauren Smith, Vice President in the Gartner HR practice, commented, “Recruiters and hiring managers must be prepared to have authentic conversations with candidates and answer their questions about all aspects of the job and employee experience. Those that fail to have transparent, honest conversations will create challenges when candidates join the organization and realize that there is a mismatch between what they were told and what they experience on the job¹⁶.”

16. Kidwai, A. (Jan 2021). ‘2021 may signal a new recruiting era’. HR Dive. [Available online.](#)

Take a Holistic Approach

Smith's larger point, which leads us into our third and final one, is that recruiting doesn't end with the offer letter. That's why, at PeopleFluent, you'll see us use the term "talent journey." In modern parlance, the journey includes recruiting and everything after, which is why it needs to be part of your overall talent acquisition strategy.

For large and enterprise organizations, the modern talent journey is complex, with multiple initiatives and opportunities to account for at any given time. Having a fully integrated, end-to-end tech stack will streamline and support these, offering insight into diversity and inclusion as well as learning and performance, making it possible for recruiting teams to both see and communicate what comes after onboarding.

The talent journey needs to be front and center throughout the recruiting process. It benefits both the organization as it navigates the labor market and candidates keen to advance their careers. It's a simple fact that has grown in importance for all organizations and is no longer a "nice to do." Questions deserve answers, and like candidates being interviewed, employers need to come prepared.

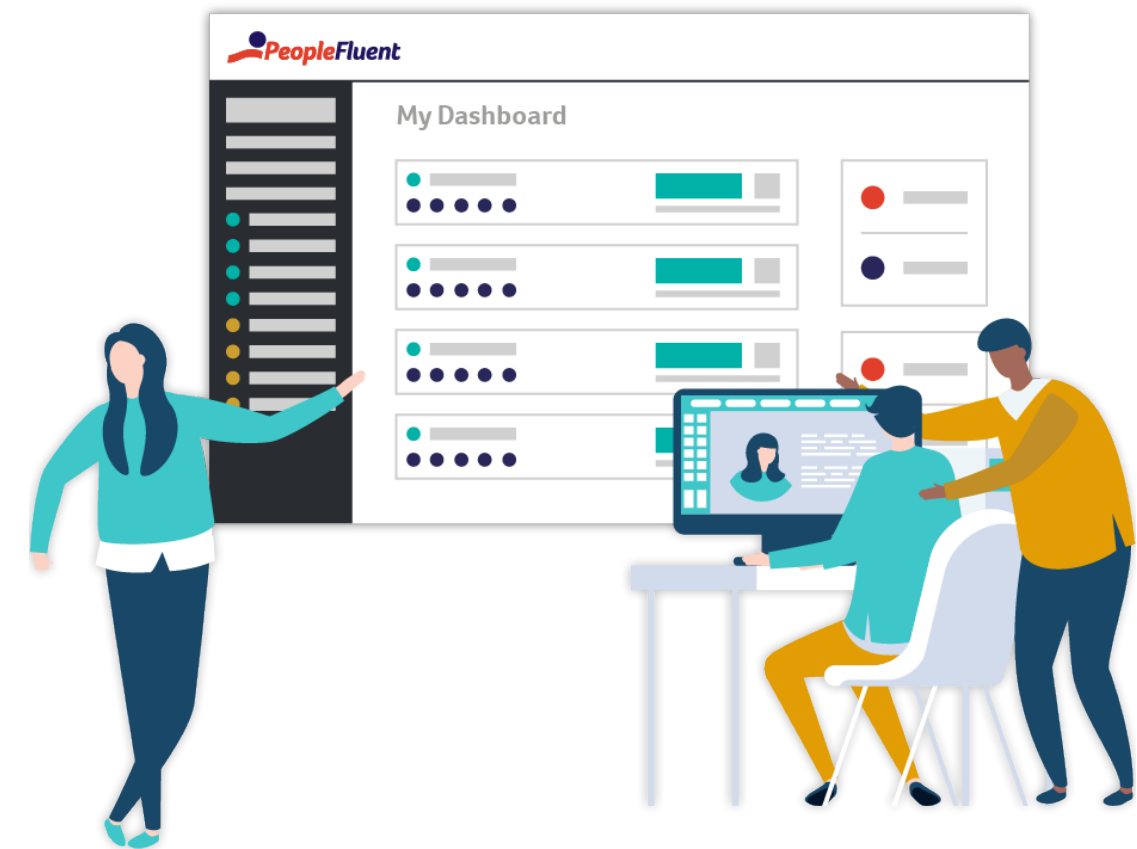
Whether scaling up your recruiting operations or maintaining the status quo, hiring requires a blend of nuance and context—and it all comes down to having the right essentials in place.

Originally published on [Recruiting Daily](#), the insights here have been repurposed into this helpful ebook to inform HR and business leaders on the importance of recruiting at scale.

Considering a new ATS to support your recruiting efforts?

PeopleFluent is built to support you in today's changing landscape, allowing any size company to hire at scale, manage your brand, and engage with candidates as individuals.

[Click here](#) for a quick peek at PeopleFluent Recruiting.



About PeopleFluent

As a market leader in integrated talent management and learning solutions, PeopleFluent helps companies hire, develop, reward, and advance a skilled and motivated workforce. Deployed separately or as a suite, our software spans [recruitment](#), [talent mobility](#), [performance](#), [compensation](#), [succession](#), [org charting](#), and [learning](#)—tailored for either large or mid-enterprise organizations. We deliver unmatched functionality and flexibility, recognized by leading analysts, to develop people, drive performance and deliver results.

Our talent solutions unify talent processes within a collaborative experience that enables HR and L&D teams to guide managers and employees with contextual learning—right in the flow of work.

A part of [Learning Technologies Group plc \(LTG\)](#), PeopleFluent provides world-class service and an unparalleled ecosystem of partners to optimize employee experience, employer brand, and business results.

For more, visit peoplefluent.com

