

Nuclear Winter or No Clear Winner?

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Apparently, technology is dragging the recruitment industry to a slow death and quickly changing the role of in-house recruitment teams and recruitment process outsourcing. That is the point central to the ongoing debate about the impact of the increasing number of internet-based resources available to corporations. However, most industry observers have overlooked a critical factor at play: an internal corporate desire for change, even when that change flies in the face of reason, is often the result of an individual's need to make a mark and nothing to do with technology or even results.

More often than not, new hires are made upon a significant change in policy – either by an incumbent HR Director driving strategy or a brand new HRD ready to scratch the itch to shake things up. It is very unusual for a new HRD to accept the status quo, even when the current recruitment strategy is highly successful. I've seen those scenarios over and over throughout my 20-year career – a new HRD replaces an RPO with an internal resource, and if an internal team is in place, the new HRD considers an RPO instead; or, new technologies are considered in search of the most cutting edge “fix.” These mood swings keep recruitment companies in a state of flux, developing leads and working relationships only to have the playing field dramatically shift over night. Whilst it may be infuriating, there are ways both the HRDs and the recruitment firms can successfully navigate these fluctuation points.

First, for the internal hiring lead:

- Balance the needs of internal politics against evidenced results when debating hiring strategies.
- Don't work with the agencies that do not assess the candidate *fit* for every role – they must also gain the individual's permission to send the CV.
- Ensure your managers work through and with you for the duration of the hiring process.
- Drive down cost in return for access to opportunity at the multiple hiring level. This approach saved Betfair roughly £1.5m in the first year alone.
- Work with a few search firms on exclusive mandates.
- Utilise all forms of social media to drive internal hiring.
- *Own* the careers pages of the corporate website. The process for updating the Yahoo! Corporate site was so inefficient, we simply built another site and drove traffic to it instead.

Additionally, smart recruitment firms can maintain relevancy despite the changing winds swirling around them.

- Focus on searches that are likely to be too time consuming to be handled in-house by the client. These tend to be positions at or above the £70k base salary level. Fees for such roles are often between 25-33% first year salary, and as the former EMEA Head of Recruitment at both Betfair and Yahoo!, I had no truck with paying those fees.
- Develop a clear job spec. For a replacement hire, make sure the spec addresses the need for a stronger candidate than the departed one. With new hires, present stalking horse candidates to help evolve the spec (on a few happy occasions, one such candidate

may prove to be the hire).

- Such mandates should always be exclusive and require your client refrains from advertising the role themselves.

These suggestions offer a framework that can shield recruiters – internal and external – from the so-called nuclear winter. Technologies will come and go and methodologies will evolve. Regardless, mutual trust and respect will always matter because the adage *people buy people* still remains true.