



Optimising Your Professional and Technical Workforce



Contents



Introduction / 3

01 Maximise staff flexibility by being proactive / 4

02 Control quality and cost by being objective and thorough / 6

03 Determine which skills you need and establish hiring priorities / 8

04 Enlist a partner to help locate and hire top-quality professional and technical talent / 10

Conclusion / 13



Introduction

Asia Pacific is home to seven of the world's most populous countries with 4.1 billion people – more than 60 per cent of the world's population. As the markets in Asia Pacific increasingly transition to highly industrialised and service-facing economies, this transformation creates unprecedented demand for talent who are highly skilled. Workforce analysts project that job growth over the next decade will be particularly evident among professional and technical positions, which include accountants, business managers, engineers, medical doctors, scientists and information technology specialists.

Yet there is a shortage of qualified professional and technical talent in the workforce. As a result of fierce global competition for skills, technological innovation and a steady decline in barriers to immigration, organisations and employers are facing more intense competition to find the best candidates to interview and hire, and managers no longer have the luxury of time in selecting from a pool of candidates.

In addition, professional and technical talent are benefiting from these developments encompassing technology, demographics and geography as industrialised countries look offshore for highly qualified talent and welcome those who possess the relevant skills. Although talent mobility is not new to Asia Pacific, the shortfall in skills it is creating for many markets in the region adds a more critical and pressing dimension to this trend.

While one organisation is deciding which applicants to interview and hire, another may move more quickly and snap up the best available candidates. Professional and technical workforce solutions in such a highly competitive job market must be not only well-planned and responsive, but also cost-effective and focused on high-quality results.

Business projects and activities are increasingly planned and implemented across borders and such projects often involve a dynamic workload with changing requirements for different specialty skill sets and experience. As a result, the optimal approach to building a team of professional and technical talent often involves hiring a mix of full-time and contract employees, and may include outsourcing certain tasks or entire projects. To ensure the development of a strong work team, leaders and managers should communicate with their team members to get a complete picture of the skills they need in potential job candidates, and then create a strategy for attracting and hiring the best talent. Developing an efficient, effective professional and technical workforce begins with a sound talent management strategy.

01

Maximise staff flexibility by being proactive

Organisations that are proactive in planning for workforce flexibility are better able to adjust to unexpected changes in their business demands.



01 Maximise staff flexibility by being proactive



Throughout history, many organisations have approached recruitment decisions by reacting to changing business needs as they arise, rather than adopting proactive strategies to plan for inevitable business peaks and valleys. When business is booming in a robust economy, it may seem plausible to build your workforce steadily as you build your business. But if the economy turns sour, there may be hard lessons to learn if you have over-hired, and then are forced to right-size. Recent economic challenges have proven that companies that are proactive in planning for workforce flexibility are better able to adjust to unexpected changes in their business demands.

Instead of adjusting your recruitment levels in reaction to economic ups and downs, a better approach is to build your workforce purposefully, with a carefully chosen combination of full-time and contract professionals.

Several key considerations can affect how you maximise the return on your recruitment investment:

- ▮ Budgetary constraints may impact your number and quality of full-time or contract hires.
- ▮ Project peaks and valleys may cause downtimes and affect workflow. You can acquire valuable flexibility in your project work team by maintaining a minimal core of professional and technical staff and bringing in contract specialists for certain projects, or when the overall workload increases.
- ▮ Learning curves can affect your bottom line. Contract professionals may be preferable for projects requiring specific skill sets or experience, in order to shorten the associated learning curve and thereby lower your costs.
- ▮ Be aware of the risks of placing arbitrary term limits on the length of time a contract employee is permitted to remain engaged on an assignment. When a vital professional or technical role is to be filled with a contract employee, be sure to obtain the required internal exception approvals ahead of time, to prevent counter-productive turnover at a critical point on your project timeline.
- ▮ Apply Lean principles to your recruitment decisions. Carefully evaluate project requirements and consider whether it is best to simply augment your full-time staff with contract professionals, outsource an entire project to a company that specialises in project services, or in-source individual parts of a project, key project personnel, or an entire project team.

Carefully cultivating an appropriate mix of full-time and contract employees can provide you with flexibility in skills and experience on the job, as well as in managing human resources costs. By including variable recruitment costs in your overall personnel budget, you can pay for staff only when you need them, lower expenses required to hire and train full-time professionals, reduce the need for continual lay-offs and re-hires due to fluctuations in business—and perhaps have additional personnel engaged at critical points in your project life cycle.

CAREFULLY CULTIVATING

an appropriate mix of full-time and contract employees provides you with flexibility in skills and experience on the job, as well as in managing human resources costs.

02

Control quality and cost by being objective and thorough

Recruitment decisions must carefully balance the need for quality professional and technical talent with budgetary concerns.



02 Control quality and cost by being objective and thorough



Once you have determined the most appropriate combination of professionals for a project, don't delay getting started. Promptly staffing a work team eliminates costly waste in getting projects started. As a side benefit, reducing the time interval between interviewing and making an offer greatly increases the chance of attracting and hiring the best professional or technical talent in a highly competitive job market. Additionally, delays in interviewing and selecting candidates can result in the most talented individuals being hired by other organisations—maybe even your competitors.

Your workforce is your most important asset, but it is also your greatest expense. Therefore, recruitment decisions must carefully balance the need for high quality professional and technical talent with budgetary concerns.

Do your due diligence in assessing skills and experience, and then objectively compare the bill rates of equally qualified candidates. Don't immediately agree to pay a requested hourly rate solely based on a "gut feeling" or first impression. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article claims that 70 percent of all hiring decisions are based on personal chemistry and first impressions.

Hiring without objectively assessing key competencies is a recipe for disaster if your first impression of quality does not carry through to quality job performance. By the same token, selecting a candidate based solely on affordability may prove to be more costly in the long run. Replacing an incorrect hire and then bringing the replacement up to speed in the middle of a project is often more expensive than paying for a top-quality professional at the onset.

TIMELY AND REGULAR COMMUNICATION

about the contractor's performance, whether good or bad, helps to keep all parties on track with the depth and scope of the overall assignment.

03

Determine which skills you need and establish hiring priorities

Effective hiring begins with a clearly defined, performance-based job description that highlights the most important qualifications and responsibilities for the position you are seeking to fill.



03 Determine which skills you need and establish hiring priorities



Effective hiring begins with a clearly defined, performance-based job description that highlights the most important qualifications and responsibilities for the position you are seeking to fill. A common hiring mistake is to create a list of job requirements that is too long and fails to focus on the most important competencies required for a successful hire. Identify the current and future requirements for the position, and envision how the candidate's qualifications will help further the business goals of your organisation.

Establish hiring priorities to use for comparing equally qualified candidates, identifying which key competencies are your most important. Develop and implement the recruitment action plans needed to close talent gaps and eliminate surplus positions. For contract professional and technical talent, candidates with specific skill sets and experience will decrease the learning curve required for projects that involve specific technologies. For full-time staff, candidates with a broad range of skills and experience will be equipped to adapt to a variety of projects quickly.

Make job postings work for you in finding the best candidates to interview, and then streamline the interview process:

- | Listings should provide a detailed description of job responsibilities, and identify five or six key competencies that you are seeking.
- | The list of competencies should include not only technical skill sets, but also important personal and interpersonal traits such as good communication skills, the ability to meet project milestones and deadlines, or being a team player.
- | Be specific and informative, so that the most qualified professionals will respond, and you will not waste your time with unqualified candidates.
- | Focus on planning and acting, not paperwork. Don't spend an inordinate amount of time creating reports, or detailing staff movement such as recording openings and detailing how they have been filled. Such paperwork does not significantly affect decision-making, yet it can quickly bog down HR recruitment activities.
- | Set aside blocks of time for interviewing applicants before you ever begin receiving applications. This advanced planning will allow you to schedule an interview quickly when you come across a qualified applicant.
- | Establish goals for reducing time-to-interview and time-to-offer decision-making windows. Respond to submitted resumes within 24 hours, and once you interview a qualified candidate, accelerate hiring decisions to make a job offer promptly.

Adhering to a solid hiring strategy will eliminate many of the problems often associated with recruitment—such as hiring on first impressions, inappropriate selection criteria, rejected job offers, and a host of other issues.

04

Enlist a partner to help locate and hire top-quality professional and technical talent

Working with an executive search or recruitment company can allow your organisation to focus on your business goals, while leaving the hiring process to an experienced and objective outside partner.



04 Enlist a partner to help locate and hire top-quality professional and technical talent



Because hiring the wrong person can be costly in terms of time and money, many organisations have realised the numerous benefits of working with recruitment experts. Using a reputable executive search or recruitment company to assist you with filling full-time and contract positions can help control costs, help manage risk, and improve your chances of getting the right candidates. Executive search or recruitment companies also have access to a wider pool of job candidates, and possess professional expertise in identifying, attracting, and screening applicants.

Working with a executive search or recruitment company can allow your organisation to focus on your business goals, while leaving the hiring process to an experienced and objective outside partner.

- | Recruitment companies use many recruiting resources to locate the best candidates from a wide pool of applicants, and then streamline the screening and interviewing process.
- | Working with a recruitment company can allow Human Resources to focus on other obligations such as advocating for employees, consulting with management, carrying out payroll and benefits administration responsibilities, and addressing governmental compliance mandates.
- | Executive search or recruitment companies can identify appropriate candidates more quickly and accurately because recruiting is their core competency. They possess the technical skills and knowledge needed to identify the most qualified candidates, and know exactly which positive qualities and red flags to look for in applications or interviews.
- | Recruitment companies pre-screen candidates rigorously, contain contract employment costs versus hiring directly to your staff, and manage disability and unemployment claims.
- | When working with an executive search or recruitment company, be sure to get explicit terms about converting a contract employee to full-time staff, including placement fees, timelines, and other details pertinent to the conversion.

04 Enlist a partner to help locate and hire top-quality professional and technical talent



One way to reduce costs is by choosing a single recruitment partner as a preferred vendor, or managed service provider (MSP). Partnering with an MSP offers you a single point of contact for filling both permanent and contract positions, consolidates billing and invoicing, and helps ensure consistency in recruiting and hiring practices. For many organisations, having all of their recruitment managed by an outside partner is invaluable to helping them control the costs associated with their most significant company expense.

The MSP relationship is a two-way street, and a true cost-effective recruitment plan cannot be realised unless all parties buy into the arrangement. Familiarity with a recruitment company is an important consideration for maintaining consistency and affordability, and going off-contract to hire staff from another company can put a company at a disadvantage. If a hiring manager disregards an MSP agreement, thinking that better talent can be obtained elsewhere, the organisation may end up paying more as a result—particularly if they decide to convert the contract employee to full-time staff. A reduction in recruitment expenses is usually difficult or impossible to achieve by going off-contract to work with other recruitment companies.

On the other hand, an MSP agreement can be counter-productive if your recruitment partner is not fulfilling its duties by supplying the top-quality professional and technical talent you need. In such a situation, it may be advisable to keep an open mind about comparing candidates from different companies, so you don't end up missing a highly skilled professional offered by a different company.

Your goal is to secure the best talent available in the market, while keeping an eye on the bottom line, and your recruitment partner should help you attain that goal.

YOUR GOAL is to secure the best talent available in the market, while keeping an eye on the bottom line, and your recruitment partner should help you attain that goal.

Conclusion

Is your organisation prepared?

The complexity and fast-paced change in the APAC employment market put new demands on employers and employees, especially the highly talented professional and technical workforce.

The professional and technical workforce represents a group that is more informed, connected and demanding than at any other time in history. Midway through their careers, these individuals are well educated and they are in roles requiring significant specialised knowledge or skill, whether at the management or supervisory level, or in professional, technical or other individual contributor positions.

Each year organisations spend money, time, and energy on recovering from poor hiring decisions that drain budgets with hidden costs such as training, unproductive work hours, and lengthy learning curves. Professional and technical talent who are highly skilled are individuals few organisations can afford to lose or alienate. Replacing them is costly — and losing them to competitors even more so.

These losses can be avoided by developing a proactive, progressive recruitment and talent management strategy that helps you and your organisation optimise your professional and technical workforce to maximise profitability as well as achieve and maintain a competitive advantage in the global marketplace. An effective solution should include a mix of strategies specifically geared toward attracting, hiring, and retaining the best of the best.

Resources

1. Bechet, Thomas P. "Developing Staffing Strategies That Work: Implementing Pragmatic, Nontraditional Approaches." *Public Personnel Management*, December 22, 2000.
2. "The Jobs of Tomorrow." Kelly Services, October 15, 2009.
3. Kleiner, Rolf E. "The New Science of Staffing." *Chemical Innovation*, November 2000
4. Park, Donghyun "Asia's Skills Crisis – Asian Development Outlook 2008." Economics and Research Department, ADB, Manila.
5. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), www.unescap.org/esid/psis/population, 2010
6. Winter 2009-2010 Information Technology Job Market Report. Monster.com
7. Whitaker, Mary Kay. "Recruiting and Hiring." Xcelogic, 2009.



About Kelly Services®

Kelly Services, Inc. (NASDAQ: KELYA, KELYB) is a leader in providing workforce solutions. Kelly offers a comprehensive array of outsourcing and consulting services as well as world-class staffing on a temporary, temporary-to-hire, and direct-hire basis. Serving clients around the globe, Kelly provides employment to 480,000 employees annually. Visit kellyservices.com.au.

About Kelly Professional and Technical

Kelly Professional and Technical offers search and selection expertise in placing mid to senior level professionals in functional and technical specialisations.

KellyExecutive

Kelly Executive discovers and unites individuals and companies with equal ambition through skill, experience and agility. Our focus is executive and management placements in either a full-time, contract or part-time capacity in the areas of IT&T, Accounting, Banking & Finance, Sales & Marketing, Human Resources, Logistics & Supply Chain, Property, Construction and Engineering.

kellyexecutive.com.au

 **Kelly Scientific**
RESOURCES®

Kelly Scientific Resources provides scientific staffing to a broad spectrum of industries including Chemical, Cosmetics, Food Science, Pharmaceutical, Biomedical, Consumer Products, Medical Device, Clinical, Petrochemical and Clinical Research.

kellyscientific.com.au