



Answer the “So What” Question to Attract Top Talent

Why should an “A Player” who is head down, working hard and doing a great job for your #1 competitor consider coming to work for you? If your words don't yet paint a picture that reflects a very compelling *Why*, you've got work to do. Short of being just plain lucky, if you're not able to clearly articulate *why* your next impact player should put down what he or she is working on, and listen carefully, you are destined to select from the ranks of the unemployed, underemployed and disgruntled.

In 2017, we examined a dozen research studies on attraction and retention, as we strive to keep our processes, designed to deliver the most effective talent and leadership solutions, current and relevant. Coca-Cola published one of the earliest such studies during the late 1980s, and it was full of surprises for that time. LinkedIn released a report in 2016 detailing the discoveries from analyzing the behavior of 7 million LinkedIn users and 10,000 people who changed jobs. Workopolis conducted research in 2016 around why people changed employers. Cordant, a global human resources and payroll services firm conducted a study of job seekers in 2016. Gallup published an extensive study in 2016 around employment trends including how millennials are affecting the workforce. Right Management, who calls itself the world's leading provider of human capital services, conducted its own 2016 survey on the subject. As someone who has studied leadership and workforce engagement over four decades; the research from various sources varies somewhat and is certainly subject to interpretation. What is clear is that the workforce has changed in fundamental ways, as have the key attributes you need to attract the talent required to successfully grow your enterprise.

Consistent Themes that Emerge from the Research combined with Key Findings:

- 1. Culture Matters:** To attract the best talent for your organization, you've got to clearly articulate what makes your culture attractive and what kind of culture you're trying to build. “A” Players want to know who you are, not just what you do. They want to be a part of an organizational culture, to enjoy and contribute to it. Cultural imperatives include leadership, teamwork, customer focus, communications and continuous improvement.

The LinkedIn study said that 36% of workers left their employer because of work environment and culture. The Coca-Cola employee engagement study sited lack of recognition for a job well done as #1 and work environment/culture as the #2 reasons employees changed jobs. The Workopolis study sited work environment/culture as the #2 reason people left their jobs, the #2 reason



employees began a job search and the #1 reason for new job acceptance. Work/Life balance was cited as the #3 reason for new job acceptance in the same study. The LinkedIn study said that 39% joined new employers because of alignment with the organization's overall mission or direction and 32% left because of a lack of recognition for a job well done. 18% of the Cordant respondents cited flexible work hours as a reason for joining new employers. Right Management cites seeking work/life balance as the #4 reason for changing jobs, and better alignment of personal and organizational values as reason #7.

- 1. Meaningful and Challenging Work, Purpose and Making a Difference:** We all want to be excited and feel great about our work; and yet most of the world's workforce is disengaged. Talk about why the work at your company matters and why your employees feel challenged and connected. A clue here: It can't be just about making money.

The LinkedIn study said that 41% joined new organizations to make a difference and do meaningful work, 47% joined for more challenging work and 36% left due of the lack of it. The Coca-Cola study cited lack of challenge, meaningful work and making a difference as reasons #2, 3 and 5 for changing jobs. Right Management cites new challenges as the #1 reason for changing. The Gallup study says the combination of purpose, meaningful work and making a difference is the #1 reasons millennials join organizations. Jim Clifton, Gallup's Chairman and CEO says that in the past, the focus among younger workers was #1 My Future, #2 My Paycheck, #3 My Satisfaction, #4 My Boss, #5 My Annual Review and #6 My Weaknesses. Millennials, workers who either are or will shortly control the global workforce are now focused on #1 My Purpose, #2 My Development, #3 My Coach, #4 My Ongoing Conversations, #5 My Strengths and #6 My Life. Cordant said that 50% of its respondents joined their new employer for interesting work.

- 2. Senior Management Leadership is Key:** People rarely join companies. They join leaders and people with whom they are well aligned, and with whom they can make a difference and enjoy themselves. Many organizations are overmanaged and under led. Articulate what great looks like in your organization. Great leadership can be felt and appreciated from the board room to the front lines and the customer base.

The Coca-Cola employee engagement study cited lack of senior management leadership as the #2 reason employees changed jobs. The LinkedIn study said that 41% left because of the senior management. Right Management cites ineffective leadership as the #2 reason for changing jobs, a poor relationship with



supervision as the #3 reason and lack of recognition as the #4 reason for changing jobs. The Workopolis study cited difficult boss relationship as the #1 reason people left their job. 30% of Cordant's respondents joined new organizations for better management, and 27% left for better training and development opportunities. The emerging workforce is looking for different leadership than the workforce of the past. Organizations that will win the hearts and minds of the new workforce will be able to articulate how they develop and coach their emerging leaders by having on-going conversations to help them capitalize on their strengths and enhance their overall lives. Quite a challenge for baby-boomers that grew up in the command and control era.

- 3. Career Path, Advancement, and Development:** The best companies in the world place major emphasis on providing opportunities for employees to grow personally and professionally. Talk about growth opportunities for those who are willing to work hard. Opportunities also for continuing education and development go a long way.

The LinkedIn study said that 45% of respondents left their current employer because they didn't see an attractive career path, 59% joined their new organization because they saw more opportunity and a more attractive career path, and that 47% joined because of better fit for their skills and interests. The Workopolis study cited lack of advancement opportunities as the #4 reason people left their job, the #3 reason for beginning a job search and the #2 reason for new job acceptance. Cordant said that 59% of their respondents left their employers for better advancement opportunity.

- 4. Compensation and Benefits:** Compensation and benefits are below the top spot in virtually all studies but in the top five in most. Make certain your salaries, incentives, total cash compensation and other perks are competitive for your sector. Remember that benefits can include flexible schedules, creative personal time off and other methods that provide autonomy and balance.

The LinkedIn study said that 54% joined for better compensation and/or benefits and 34% left because of dissatisfaction with same. The Coca-Cola study cited compensation/benefits as the #7 reason employees changed jobs. The Workopolis study cited compensation/benefits as the #5 reason people left their job and the #5 reason for new job acceptance. Cordant indicated that 56% of its respondents changed jobs for better compensation. Right Management cites better compensation and benefits as the #6 reason for changing jobs.

Another Key finding from the LinkedIn Study:



A candidate's biggest challenge is the uncertainty of what it would be like to work for a company.

49 % of job-changers said that the biggest obstacle they faced when considering a new job was the uncertainty of what it'd be like to work for the company. This means that recruiters and HR professionals alike have some work to do concerning employer branding.

What does this mean for recruiting top talent?

Communicating your company culture to potential candidates is absolutely crucial. How can you accomplish this? Consider allocating space in your budget to make a [recruiting video](#). According to [LinkedIn Talent Solutions](#) blog, not only do videos do a better job of engaging candidates, but they also make a company seem "more human and personable". Bring your company to life with a recruiting video.

Answering the "So What" question can be a game changer for your organization. Having a compelling reason the best talent available should consider your organization will allow you to sell the opportunity, and not the candidate. Once the candidate is sold on the opportunity, the two of you can determine if a real match exists. 90% of hiring failures occur because of lack of alignment around cultural nuances or the ability to deliver on specific performance expectations. 90% of the interview process should be spent where the rubber meets the road: culture and performance. A compelling opportunity positioning gets the selling out of the way early in the process so you can remain in the role of facilitator and out of the role of salesperson.