

What You Need to Know About Tapping Passive Talent: Engaging the Elusive Candidates Who Aren't Looking

These days, passive talent has become the cream of the talent crop. Research shows that compared to active talent, passive talent is:

- 120% more likely to want to make an impact,
- 33% more likely to want more challenging work,
- and 21% less likely to need recognition for their contributions.[i]



There is no silver bullet for hiring strategic roles

The right fit can come from active or passive talent pools, so we try to encourage our clients not to get caught up in labels. That being said, adding passive talent to the candidate mix in the right way—and working with the right partner to do so—can add diversity and quality to a search.

Attracting and engaging passive talent

In order to find the best candidate for the role, it's important to understand what kind of information is needed to appeal to passive talent. Based on decades of experience, below are key elements of the process we undergo on behalf of each client.

Conduct a needs assessment – It is critically important that we understand the “why” behind a company’s decision to hire. Executive and strategic roles in particular are expected to perform at a high level, so it’s more than just understanding what others believe will make this person truly successful. We need to fully grasp what this person’s role will be in driving the organization forward.

In order to learn the “why,” we interview the hiring manager and all key stakeholders who are impacted in some important way by this role. Stakeholders may range from members of the C-Suite to future direct reports to Board members. We ask questions like, “What would the candidate need to accomplish to be considered successful?” and “What are the key challenges associated with this position?”

Having extensive knowledge of the industries we operate in is critically important context to add to this assessment as well.

We are often told by candidates that we really know our clients' business, and if you ask us, anything less than that means we're not doing our job. This is critical to making sure both sides are happy in the end.

Identify and engage top candidates – Social media has been a game changer for the executive search industry. Tools like LinkedIn combined with our extensive database provide us with an excellent starting point. LinkedIn is a public-facing tool, though, so while it can be helpful, it doesn't tell the whole story. Anything we find needs to be discussed 1:1 with candidates to ensure accuracy. Our database, on the other hand, is comprised of the most thoroughly vetted and researched talent. Having the right tools is just the beginning, though.

Once we've find candidates, we need to engage them. We've all received, "We've got the perfect job for you" solicitations from recruiters we've never met. Top-level executive candidates are tapped by recruiters like these on a regular basis.

With that in mind, we utilize our networks for referrals whenever we can. If that's not an option, we craft personalized, compelling messages that drive home what makes this position different. To the executive audience, this often has to do with investors, product, and what the long-term vision is for the company.

Determine if there's a fit – During the learning conversation with candidates, we are starting to understand whether there is a match. We come to understand how we can help them achieve success in their careers – whatever that looks like for them. If there's a match, we want to make sure the candidate understands the company, the role, and the hiring process thoroughly, so we provide a thorough background before we move candidates forward in the process. If we don't nail this step, one party may feel like they didn't understand the other before they committed, and that doesn't end well.

When it's time to find a strategic partner

Here are typical indicators that indicate it may be time to engage a partner on your next search.

You need an objective perspective – Creating a 360° view of need is difficult from an internal perspective. Objectivity is important for ensuring that internal politics or other biases haven't affected the search process.

Your team doesn't have the skill set – While passive talent gets a lot of buzz now, it's not a new concept. In our decades recruiting passive candidates, we've learned how to steer conversations, appeal to what motivates people, and get buy-in from stakeholders. These nuances are often what makes or breaks the success of a search.

Your resources are tapped – Exhaustively vetting candidates takes time, particularly for an executive or strategic role. If your team is lacking in resources or if you can't dedicate time to do this well, it may be time to look elsewhere. When you do, remember that contingency firms are focused on speed over quality, so hiring a retained search partner like Bowdoin can help ensure that you get the quality and service you need.

Finding and recruiting stellar candidates is both an art and a science. It all comes down to making sure a candidate is the right fit—and understanding what will make the candidate want to make the leap. Rest assured that we'll help you hire a “wow” candidate, regardless of their active or passive status.

**Call us at 781.263.5200 to schedule a consultation with our team today,
and get access to your next great hire.**

[i] <http://theundercoverrecruiter.com/infographic-how-to-recruit-passive-candidates-online/>