

Automatic Processing

BY KATHLEEN HICKEY

For some it's a numbers game. Do you have enough warm bodies on the floor to do what you need to do? Maybe you need to fill several hundred positions simultaneously. Or perhaps you're tired of weeding through candidates who don't fit the bill, spending hours interviewing candidates when you have other work to do.

Enter PeopleScout, a candidate processing service. PeopleScout, formerly Adlab, screens hiring candidates for companies that have large-volume hiring needs — 500 positions or more, said President Denise Foy. Customers include companies such as 7-Eleven and Wells Fargo Bank NA. Many of the positions these companies are trying to fill are hourly, she said.

PeopleScout will help customers craft appropriate interview questions and prequalify candidates over the phone on hours, wages and flexibility, said Foy. If the candidate passes the preinterview, he or she is then passed on to an interviewer at the company, she said. "We take 44,000 phone calls every week and we get thousands of web hits" from job applicants, said Foy. Much of what the company does is consulting with clients to determine their needs and helping them with their recruitment strategy, especially with advertising, she said.

Because the preinterviewing process occurs over the phone, PeopleScout reduces the selection process time from four to six weeks to four days, said Foy. And since it is telephone-based rather than paper-based, it is easier to connect applicants and employer. Truckers can call an 800 number or go to the Internet and fill out an application on the road. If they are qualified, they can be scheduled immediately for an interview or even immediately sent to an interview, she said.

Today recruiters from trucking companies are spending a lot of their time weeding through unqualified drivers, said Foy. "We did a whole lot of work with Burlington Motors before they went out of business," she said. Many transportation companies such as Burlington may spend substantial amounts of money on advertising positions, but once they generate call-backs, "they can't funnel it. By the time they get to the folks with credentials, those people are on to another company. Whoever can process the people the fastest gets the good hires," she said. Positions in the transportation industry that PeopleScout helps fill include drivers and warehouse and distribution workers, she said.

A system such as PeopleScout reduces administrative burden and increases fill rate, said Foy. "Why take the best recruiters who can convince someone to work for your company and have them answer really ridiculous kinds of questions? You are wasting your senior-level people," she said. "And if you have 100 trucks and you let 10 go without a driver, how much is a driver worth to you?" she asked. Inade-

quate candidate screening also can lead to high turnover, said Foy.

Sister company Staff Management uses PeopleScout for all its hires, both for clients and internally, said Joan Davison, vice president of operations. Staff Management is a contract staffing organization in 27 states and a separate business from PeopleScout. PeopleScout is a spin-off from Staff Management's need to prequalify candidates, she said.

"We view ourselves as a client of PeopleScout. We use it at all our sites," said Davison. By using PeopleScout, Staff Management does not need to rely on foot traffic and the company knows within hours if an advertisement for a position has been successful, she said. If an advertising campaign isn't working, the company can adjust it immediately, she said.

Several Fortune 500 companies use Staff Management to staff their distribution and warehouse centers, said Davison. Positions filled include forklift operator, picking and packing and inspector, she said. The company also staffs call centers, other customer service positions and accounts-payable departments, she said. The company fills both part-time and full-time positions using PeopleScout, said Davison.

For its clients, Staff Management uses PeopleScout to fill mostly entry-level and hourly positions, said Davison. But inside the company it uses PeopleScout for its managerial candidates, from vice presidents to midlevel management, she said. Many of the managerial hires manage customers' warehouse and distribution centers, she said.

The hiring process begins with Staff Management letting PeopleScout know how many people it needs to hire along with information about the positions. PeopleScout helps Staff Management with its advertising campaign and interview questions, which Staff Management reviews for approval. The preinterview questions and number of open positions are uploaded into PeopleScout's system.

Candidates call an 800 number listed in the advertisement and answer 10 to 12 questions on the phone with a live interviewer. The questions are caught by a reporting system, as are the names and addresses of the applicants, said Davison. If a similar position comes up, a company can rerun the database and retrieve names that fit the new criteria, she said.

PeopleScout receives interview schedules of recruiters and if a candidate passes his or her initial screening, he or she is automatically scheduled for an interview, said Davison. "At the end of every day I can log on to the PeopleScout system and print out my interviews for the next day. I know who I am seeing, what time slots are booked and what were their answers to various questions," she said. Davison then meets potential applicants face to face, she said. Afterwards, Davison lets PeopleScout know whether the candidate has been approved for the next phase or not. "In three and a half to six minutes, you either have an interview or you don't," said Foy. ●



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