

New challenges for H.R. departments as companies resume hiring

RE-BUILDING



Marcus Tgettis, director of talent acquisition at Constant Contact in Waltham, plans a hiring spree that will, among other things, fill plenty of empty cubicals.

W. MARC BERNAL | BUSINESS JOURNAL



PRIMED TO ACT

Elaine Varelas says HR departments face a lot of post-recession work. **26**

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By Mary K. Pratt | Special to the Journal

Marcus Tgettis needs to fill about 230 positions this year, a move that will increase the size of his company's employee base by nearly a third.

Tgettis, director of talent acquisition at **Constant Contact**, a Waltham email marketing company, admitted he's aggressively looking for people but at the same time said he's not willing to compromise on candidates.

"We are keeping positions open longer to find the right person," he said.

He said he's looking for applicants with the expertise needed to fill open tech positions, sales jobs and customer support roles but who also fit with the company's culture.

"For us, hiring is a science, it's a balancing act. We hire based on extensive planning," he said. "There's a recruiting and hiring strategy for every job."

Tgettis — who was brought onboard just three months ago in the newly created position — exemplifies the strategic approach companies are taking toward hiring as they climb out of the recession and build up their workforces in advance of better times.

Though activity isn't as robust as many would have hoped, companies are hiring again.

But they're doing so with an eye toward keeping things lean — identifying skills already in-house, what skills they need immediately and what they'll need in the future.

"People are taking their time to try to find the right person," said Robin Lucier, HR director at Piantadosi Baking Co. Inc. in Malden and a leader in the Northeast England Human Resources Association (NEHRA).

Indeed, the pressure's on. The 2010 High Performance Workforce Study by **Accenture** found that 39 percent of U.S. companies plan to expand their workforce within the year. It also found that 44 percent increased their workforce planning processes during the past year.

Maureen Brosnan, managing director of Accenture's Human Capital Management Practice, said the majority of companies that had downsized during the recession are expecting to return to pre-recession levels by the end of 2012. But they're continuing to look at lean operations — that is, ways to maximize the productivity of existing and new employees.

"Companies are still very much focused on cost control. They still have to be careful about their head count so they still have operational efficiency,"

she said.

To keep those lean operations as they hire, companies are putting in place analytics that help them determine what skills they have now and what they're going to need tomorrow and how to bridge that gap, Brosnan said, noting that companies' investments in HR-based information technology systems and other HR transformational projects has fueled this approach by giving companies the skills they needed to do so.

"We have a more challenging economy and those business challenges are forcing companies to be more thoughtful around human resources," she said.

Lucier said her company, which laid off eight people in 2008, has focused more on the whole talent management process since she joined nearly five years ago. She said she and her colleagues are identifying the competencies they have in their 185 permanent workers and what they'll need in new hires as they try to replace some of the 39 temporary workers they now have with permanent ones.

"You don't want to just hire a warm body. We need people who can help the process move forward," she said. "So it's about what do you need, what skills do you need not just today but tomorrow."

Dave Barbato, president of **Talent Retriever LLC** in Andover, said he's seeing companies add staff again but in more strategic manner. They're not just adding bodies to growing departments or bringing back the same job titles that were cut during layoffs over the past few years.

"Companies have reworked their service delivery models, they've reworked what they're delivering to market, and that requires different skills," he said. "They're asking strategically, what do they need."

"They want someone who can bring something to the table. They want proof," Barbato said. "The downturn really taught everyone how to do more with less. It's a reality that that happened, and so companies want to make sure that each new addition helps them drive to a new level. They want to ensure that each new hire brings value to the company."

That's the case with **Vistaprint N.V.** The company has 2,700 employees globally and expects to hire more this year, although it wouldn't disclose how many. Ai-Li Lim, the company's senior director of HR, said the company carefully reviews its numbers before it decides on how many new hires it needs.

"It goes back to budgeting forecasting and planning process," she said. "That's how we know we're not going to be over hiring."

'FOR US, HIRING IS A SCIENCE, IT'S A BALANCING ACT. WE HIRE BASED ON EXTENSIVE PLANNING. THERE'S A RECRUITING AND HIRING STRATEGY FOR EVERY JOB.'

MARCUS TGETTIS

Director of talent acquisition at Constant Contact



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