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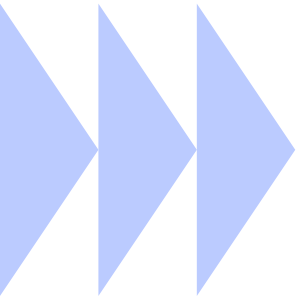# The essential guide to recruitment marketing in the manufacturing industry

A playbook for building a brand that draws talent to your organization

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Introduction

Job openings in the manufacturing industry are hovering near all-time highs at 800,000

74% of manufacturing executives say that finding the right talent is a top-5 challenge

According to the National Association of Manufacturers, the U.S. will have 2.1 unfilled manufacturing jobs by 2030

As the manufacturing industry grows and evolves, it faces a host of challenges—particularly when it comes to hiring talent. The digital transformation manufacturing is undergoing ("Industry 4.0") means companies need to hire for even *more* specialized, in-demand skills—and they're increasingly competing with sectors like retail, healthcare, and technology to do so. Recruiting teams also struggle with talent's negative perception of the industry: while the pandemic led to an awareness of the significance of manufacturing (its employees were deemed "essential workers"), recent surveys suggest that talent simply isn't aware of the industry's technological advancements—let alone the considerable cultures, salaries, and benefits that manufacturing companies offer.

Add to this outdated perception of the industry (manufacturing roles are monotonous and tedious as well as physically and environmentally harmful, their organizations are homogenous, etc.) the problem of filling roles in location-specific—and sometimes rural—factories that require a daily commute or a relocation. Job openings in the industry are hovering near all-time highs at 800,000; and 74% of manufacturing executives say that finding the right talent is a top-5 challenge. Indeed, the difficulty of attracting more workers to the sector has been one of the top issues in the National Association of Manufacturers' Outlook Survey every quarter *for the last ten years*—and NAM anticipates that the U.S. alone will have 2.1 unfilled manufacturing jobs by 2030.

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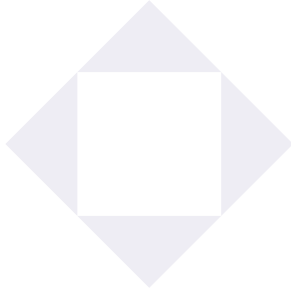
Recruitment marketing defines and communicates your organization's mission, purpose, and culture, and disseminates it through all the channels where your target talent is. This creates awareness for talent who not only meet the role's requirements, but who also share your company's vision and values—meaning they're not only more likely to apply to your org, they're also more likely to remain with you, as company ambassadors, for the long-term.

Below, we cover the elements a strong recruitment marketing strategy needs to consider.

We don't have to tell you that not having the talent you need to keep operations running is incredibly expensive. The manufacturing workforce shortage reduces operational efficiency, shrinks profit margins, and takes production off-schedule. But talent's disinterest in the industry is a problem that's accompanied by an opportunity: that your organization invest in a recruitment marketing (or inbound recruiting) strategy. After all, the issue is one of employer brand image and awareness, messaging, and ongoing engagement.

The traditional method of post-and-pray no longer works as it once did. Today's candidates discover and consider employers in the same way that consumers make major purchasing decisions. They lean on the resources at hand—*all* the online footprints that point back to your organization, as well as the messaging in your outreach campaigns—to learn everything they can about your company, its product, and its culture. Which should cause you to ask the question: what type of information is available to talent concerning your company?

Recruitment marketing creatively defines and clearly communicates your organization's mission, purpose, and culture—and delivers valuable content to job-seekers—through all the right channels, targeting and creating awareness for talent who not only meet the role's requirements, but who also share your company's vision and values. (In other words, it helps you qualify candidates before they even apply.) This means they're not only more likely to apply to your org, they're also more likely to remain with you—as brand advocates and company ambassadors—for the long-term.

Recruitment marketing is the combination of tools, strategies, and activities used to help *define*—and then *communicate*—your organization's employee value proposition (EVP) to attract, engage, hire, and retain great talent. It's rife with marketing principles and practices: creating candidate personas; building and amassing high-value content that revolves around your EVP; engaging in targeted, omni-channel distribution of that content; and measuring engagement with that content through data and analytics.

The Benefits of Recruitment Marketing:

• Increased awareness of, and interest in, employer brand

• Cohesive brand voice, along with a clear and consistent company story

• Transformed perceptions of the manufacturing industry

• Ready talent pipeline for when roles open

• More informed, and overall improved, candidate experiences

• Decreased time-to-hire and cost-of-hire

• Improved candidate quality

• More qualified, better-fit hires

One helpful way of distinguishing between *recruiting* and *recruitment marketing* is that the former attracts talent to *roles*, while the latter attracts them to *employers* (namely: yours). By communicating your company narrative, showcasing the value of working for your organization, and promoting your company as an employer of choice, inbound recruiting strategies drive awareness and interest, build a community of followers, encourage referrals, increase the number of qualified candidates in your pipeline, and convert passive talent into active candidates when those roles open. And because talent self-selects into your process based on how well they align with your brand, you decrease time-to-fill and cost-per-hire.

Luckily, you don't have to develop your strategic playbook alone. Below, we cover the elements a strong recruitment marketing strategy needs to consider—diving into each to give you insights and recommendations that will help you build your inbound muscle, and better (and more broadly) communicate a compelling company story to your newly-interested target talent.

The recruitment marketing funnel

Each stage of the recruitment marketing funnel will demand a different kind of content:

Talent in the "awareness" stage will discover your company through SEO or PPC efforts, as well as through university recruiting strategies for early-in-career talent, for example

Talent in the "interest" stage will have their attention held by your social feeds, newsletters, and nurture campaigns

Talent in the "consideration" phase will need to be sold less on company brand, and more on the role, its benefits, and its impact

... and so on

Marketing teams use a funnel model to track the customer journey from product awareness to purchase. They're more-or-less complex; but a basic conversion funnel for marketing is **Awareness → Interest → Consideration → Action**. This framework helps marketers reflect on the kinds of information prospective customers need at each stage of the buyer's journey.

The same goes for the candidate journey, onto which a similar funnel can be mapped. Of course, the map of *your* candidate journey will be as complex as you want to make it: awareness, interest, active search, application, interview, hire, etc. The point is to map the journey *first* so you can strategically plan content and campaigns. When you can recognize and appreciate how candidates feel at each stage of the journey, and what information they'll need (including what concerns they'll need assuaged) in order to move on to the next stage, you can craft your messaging around those decision points:

Awareness
This stage describes prospective candidates' first contact with your company. *Here*, you're garnering name recognition—talent is discovering that you exist and learning what you do. The key word for the awareness stage is "discoverability." This discoverability happens in two primary ways: talent will either uncover you through active search (which is why SEO and PPC are big components of recruitment marketing) or discover you because you put yourself in front of them (think university recruiting, social media campaigns, and passive talent sourcing: actively approaching candidates to draw their attention to your org).
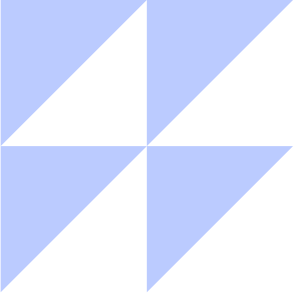
Making a great first impression in these channels will move talent from "I don't know much about the manufacturing industry and I've never heard of your company" to "your company sounds compelling—and I'm beginning to see manufacturing in a new light." From *here*, you want them to engage in active research: visiting your careers page or seeking out employee reviews, for example.

Interest
By the "interest" phase, you've captured talent's attention. *Now* they want to learn more about you—and not just about your company and its brand identity broadly speaking, but about what it's like to be an employee there.

This is a stage that demands richer content and more intimate engagement. Interested talent may be following you on social by now, for example; and they'll be expecting more targeted, personalized messaging. Components of this stage include invitations to talent pools, newsletter opt-ins, nurture
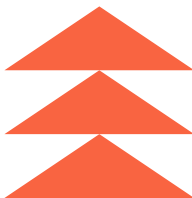
campaigns that *follow* from those opt-ins and include company news, employee stories, and event invitations. Ultimately, you're moving them from "this company sounds interesting" to "maybe it's interesting enough to *work* for."

Consideration

At the end of this stage of the funnel, prospects are applying and officially becoming candidates. In the meantime, they're researching you, diving deeper into your career content. They're comparing you to your competitors in the manufacturing space (and in other industries). They're asking not just what it's like to work for your *company*, but what it's like to work on a certain manager's *team*. Maybe they want to have conversations with their future coworkers. Maybe they're reaching out to talent in their networks to ask what their connections know about you.

At this point, they should be organized into talent pools and receiving targeted, personalized content. Maybe you're having one-on-one conversations with the most interested of them, getting to know them personally. *Here*, good recruitment marketing means providing ready answers to their questions (why are *you* a better fit for them than your competitor is?) and digging into the nitty-gritty: details about the open role, perks, compensation. You're not "selling" them on a brand at this point; you're providing authentic information on a role, its tasks and expected impact, and the benefits that would accompany it were they to sign an offer letter with you.

Action

If your recruitment marketing efforts have been successful, this is where the candidate applies (and is interviewed, turns out to be a great fit because your persona was spot-on, and accepts your offer). Recruitment marketing doesn't stop at hire, however. Indeed, for your strategy to succeed in the long run, you need employee ambassadors and alumni promoters, as well as referral programs to generate new leads. It's all about leveraging the voices and experiences of your employees—and former employees—from here.

The elements of a strong inbound recruitment strategy

Below, we'll lead you step-by-step through goal-setting, locking down your employee value proposition (EVP), and creating your target personas.

From there, we'll discuss content and channels, as well as what data to keep track of to ensure your recruitment marketing efforts are getting the ROI you want them to.

Now that you've done some thinking about the candidate journey at your company, it's time to dig into some strategy. In the following, we'll lead you through some initial recruitment marketing decisions: goal-setting, locking down your employee value proposition (EVP) and your employer brand, and creating your target personas. From there we'll discuss content and channels, as well as what data to keep track of to ensure your recruitment marketing efforts are getting the ROI you want them to.
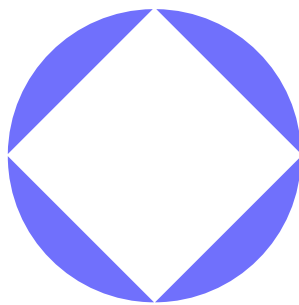
Define your goals

Of course, your goals will shift as your focus shifts: you'll have objectives for each new campaign or for each new quarter. And of course your *overall* goal in recruitment marketing is to attract stellar, best-fit candidates to apply to your open roles because they've heard and seen great things about your employer brand. But if you're just starting out, there are only a few things you can focus on at a time. So begin by defining what those things are. Do you want to:

• Increase overall brand awareness?

• Get more career site visitors?

• Get more applicants—or increase the quality or *diversity* of those applicants?

• See more applicants from social?

• Shorten your hiring process?

• Increase your employee referral or offer-acceptance rates?

• ... and so on

Your goals should be both *specific* and *measurable* (otherwise, you won't know what's working and what's not). So once you've decided what your focus is, set yourself some realistic goals: "Increase the amount of direct traffic to our careers site by 8% in Q2"; "Increase the number of social media followers by 2,000 in the next 90 days"; "Increase the number of underrepresented applicants by 30% in the next 6 months," and so on. Make sure you have the software in place to track those goals before you get started—we'll talk more about the importance of data and analytics later.

Define your employee value proposition (EVP)

The EVP is a foundational element of recruitment marketing, or of an inbound strategy: it articulates what makes working for your organization so great. This is perhaps especially important in an industry like manufacturing, since the general perception of the industry requires some revision. Consider these things:

Your EVP answers these questions:

- Why should prospective candidates come work for your company?

- What are the unique set of contributions you could make to their lives—beyond compensation—for a complete, and fulfilling, employee experience?

- Why would they not only want to *join* your organization, but also perform their best work for you every day?

- Does your company offer more holiday time or more parental leave than your competitors do?

- Do you shoulder any of new hires' student loan debt?

- Do you hold family events, sponsor camps for employees' children, or otherwise show appreciation for employees' families and chosen families?

- Do you provide on-site health and well-being support?

- Do your factories allow shift flexibility (such as shift-swapping) for better work-life balance?

- Do you have a CSR (corporate social responsibility) or ESG (environmental, social, and governance) program? A career development program?

- What state-of-the-art and exciting technologies do employees get to work with on a day-to-day basis?

The answers to these questions—and others—will help form the basis of your employee value proposition. Your EVP will be at the heart of *every* communication you have with prospects and candidates.

Your employer brand is how people outside your organization perceive what it's like to work there. It's the sum of your company mission and vision, its culture, and the benefits you can offer employees. Your *employee value proposition*, on the other hand, focuses specifically on those benefits. It answers the questions: Why should prospective candidates come work for *your* company? What are the unique set of contributions you could make to their lives—*beyond* compensation—for a complete, and fulfilling, employee experience? Why would they not only want to *join* your organization, but also perform their best work for you every day?

Your EVP demonstrates your company's commitment to employees' growth and development, and to meeting their needs in exchange for their day-to-day efforts. Companies who prioritize employer branding and EVP-definition see a 50% increase in qualified candidates, 1-2x faster time-to-hire, a 43% decrease in cost-per-hire, and a 28% decrease in employee turnover.

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Gartner has broken the EVP down into five elements. They are:

1. **Opportunity** (career advancement, challenge and self-improvement, formal training, on-the-job learning, evaluations and feedback, personal development, company growth rate)

2. **People** (company culture, relationships and camaraderie, reputation of senior leadership, quality of management and coworkers, trust, collaboration, team spirit, team-building activities and events)

3. **Organization** (market position, company reputation, quality of product/service, company mission/vision/values, diversity, social responsibility)

4. **Work** (job-interest alignment, challenging/fulfilling tasks and responsibilities, work-life balance, quality of projects, innovation, intellectual stimulation, impact the role plays in fulfilling the company vision)

5. **Rewards** (salary, bonuses, health and retirement benefits, disability, holidays and vacation time, paid leave, remote work, gym memberships, tuition benefits, share ownership, and the timeliness and fairness of compensation)

The above is a fairly exhaustive list; but if your EVP can touch briefly on each of these elements, you'll engage a wider range of talent. After all, every prospect has their own "sweet spot."

Because your EVP needs to be a true reflection of your organization, EVP-creation is a bottom-up exercise. (It's actually *okay* that your company's EVP doesn't resonate for everyone; it's not supposed to.) An inaccurate EVP born of a perception gap makes for reduced employee morale and a revolving door for new hires. The most effective EVPs are shaped by direct feedback from current, past, and prospective employees—*including* those who don't accept your offer. Guesswork from upper management simply isn't going to cut it. And of course, on the recruitment side, you want to sell prospects the whole story—and the *correct* one—in your messaging. The simplest way to do this? *Ask* talent about their perceptions.

If your organization is doing its due diligence, it already has feedback structures in place: anonymous surveys, onboarding surveys, performance reviews, exit interviews, and focus groups. Ideally it uses these occasions to ask about the five elements we mentioned above. Ask for that data. Many of these questions you can pose yourself:

Prospective employees: What made them respond to your outreach? How do they perceive your organization? What does it offer that their current organization does not? Which *tangible* benefits (salary, health benefits, PTO) and *intangible* benefits (recognition, challenging work, flexible environment) that you offer are most important to them?

Current employees: What ultimately made them decide to come work for you? Have their expectations of the company been met (or exceeded)? How? What makes your organization unique? What tangible benefits offered by the company are most attractive to them (and why)? What *int*angible benefits are most attractive to them (and why)? What's been the most fulfilling thing about working for your organization? What would they change if they were in charge?
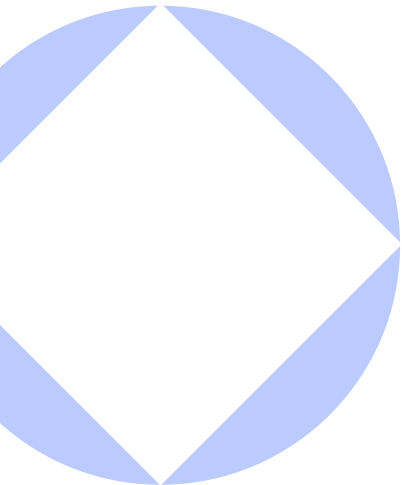
Former employees: What initially drew them to the organization? Were their expectations met? Why did they ultimately leave? What did the employee experience lack that would've made them stay? What did they appreciate most about working for your organization? What would their advice be to a job-seeker who wanted to know about the company?
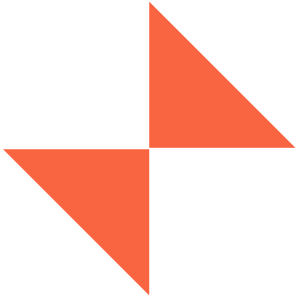
Use these answers to write a comprehensive story about what you offer, and include elements of that story in all of your recruitment marketing content (more on that shortly). These conversations can even form the basis of employee stories, which we'll cover in greater depth below.

Perform competitive analysis

Competitive analysis will be crucial for your employee value proposition. After all, you can't say what makes your organization unique if you don't know what your competitors are offering to attract talent; and the intelligence you uncover by scanning the landscape will help you understand which benefits are table stakes and where you have clear competitive advantages in terms of what you can offer.

But you *also* want to look at how your competitors are positioning their companies, and what their recruitment marketing materials highlight. Make a list of your primary competitors, and then start researching.

Because your EVP needs to be a true reflection of your organization, EVP-creation is a bottom-up exercise. The most effective EVPs are shaped by direct feedback from current, past, and prospective employees—including those who don't accept your offer.

So ask talent about their perceptions, using the questions on this page as a template.

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As you're performing competitive analysis, do some digging into your company's own messaging as well. Ultimately you'll want to ensure that your organization is speaking with "one voice," no matter *who* in the organization is doing the talking.

When recruitment marketing messaging is cohesive with the rest of the company and its messaging, that builds trust.

Make a list of your primary competitors, and then start researching:

- How does the messaging on their careers page read? What does it emphasize?

- What are they promising that you're *not*?

- What does their imagery look like?

- How do they present employee stories?

- How easy it is to find open roles on their sites—what does the search functionality look like?

- How do their job descriptions read?

- Go through their application process. Is it personalized? Is it streamlined? Can you apply on your phone?

- Is there an easy-to-access FAQ or contact information?

- Are details about next steps provided?

- What do their social media profiles look like?

- How much engagement do they get across social channels; and do they maintain a strong, consistent presence?

- What kind of content do they post? What hashtags are they using?

- What keywords are they ranking for? (Search the keywords you'd *like* to rank for and see what comes up.)

- What are employees saying about your competitors on review sites?

The two questions you should have in mind at all times as you read through your competitors' messaging are: *How can I do it differently*? and *How can I do it better*? What are your competitors failing to say about their EVP that you *can*? What strategies or best practices are they overlooking that you can employ? And is there a way to position your employer brand messaging such that it "speaks back" to your competitors' promises, offering something that you know talent wants *more*?
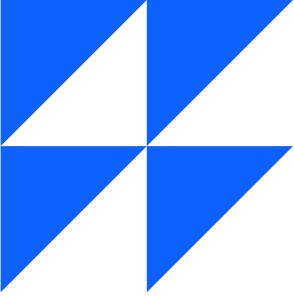
Remember that different elements of your EVP will appeal to different candidate personas. Production supervisors, forklift drivers, control engineers, and college interns may have different expectations about work; managerial hires will demand a different approach than early-in-career hires do; and so on.

Avoid a "one size fits all" approach when it comes to your content strategy.

Create candidate personas

In marketing, a customer persona is a semi-fictional representation of a company's actual and/or ideal prospects and customers. Marketers create personas based on market research and insights gathered from current customers. While the persona is hypothetical, the intelligence it's built on is *not*: the persona shares customers' most common traits, in terms of both demographic information (age, education, income, location, relationship status, career experience, etc.) and psychographic information (interests, beliefs, values, concerns, etc.). The persona also includes where they "hang out"—LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, and so on. After all, messages simply won't connect if you're speaking the wrong language to the wrong people in the wrong place.

Of course, in recruitment, a persona represents your ideal *candidate* for a given position. And "ideal" doesn't just mean they fit the job requirements. It means you'll be the right fit *for each other*, across the board. They're motivated by what you can offer; they share your goals and vision; they won't just harmonize with the team but add something to its culture that isn't already there. You're thinking about values, motivations, career pain points and goals. In doing so, you'll better understand your target candidates' attitudes, what drives them in work and life, what they hope to accomplish in their careers, and more. You'll craft your messaging for them as such.

Personas also allow you to segment target talent more easily. Production supervisors, forklift drivers, control engineers, and college interns may have different expectations about work; managerial hires will demand a different approach than early-in-career hires do; diversity hires may require attention to different elements of the job in your outreach. They'll each be differently-motivated, and you'll have different needs they need to meet. All of this ultimately means different messaging.

If you've been in the recruiting space for any amount of time, you're probably used to creating candidate personas. But if this process is new to you, don't worry—there's plenty of data out there to support your profile-creation.

Interview current team members who are thriving in the same (or similar) roles you have open:

- What's their background? What was their previous role?

- What motivates them in their work?

- What challenges them, stresses them out, makes them laugh?

- Which of your company values do they most resonate with?

The two best resources you've got for creating candidate personas are:

1. Current team members who are thriving in roles similar to the ones you're trying to fill (interview them!), and

2. Your CRM and/or your ATS. Your recruitment tech will reveal patterns about who passes through funnels for specific roles, why certain candidates are rejected by hiring managers, and most effective candidate sources.

Use these to build a detailed target persona.

- What do they prioritize in their job searches? Flexibility? Autonomy? Diversity?

- How do they spend their free time?

- How would they describe their personality?

- Where do they access news and where do they go when they're looking for jobs?

- What do they want to see fixed in the manufacturing industry in 2023?

- Who in the company would they want to talk to if they weren't already working here?

- What are they hoping to accomplish in their career?

Other data you can leverage is already in your CRM and/or your ATS. Look for patterns. What type of person tends to pass through your funnels for specific roles? What are the reasons hiring managers give for rejecting certain candidates? (Of course, make sure the answers to these questions aren't linked to interviewer or hiring manager bias!)

Leverage the analytics on your careers pages as well. Who's visiting? Where are they coming from (this is called referral traffic: are they finding you through Google search, coming from your Facebook ads, etc.)? Where do they go next? How are they interacting with your content once they arrive?

Leverage all this data to understand and define your target personas with as much detail and accuracy as you can. Once you have your personas, you know your audience. You can now create targeted, personalized content—and strategies for what to do with that content—that you can tailor toward each of those profiles. Which brings us to...

Create, collect, and compile content

Now that you're clear on both your EVP and your candidate persona/s, you've got a solid foundation to build on. It's time to create—or collect—an archive of content that you can draw from for all your recruitment marketing efforts. Content is how you'll communicate your employer brand and build connections with talent. We'll dive into some of these things a bit more below; but meaningful content can include:

- Blog posts

- Webinars

- Ebooks and whitepapers

- Case studies

- Infographics

- Checklists

- Recruitment videos

- Virtual tours

- Photos of company events

- Press releases highlighting team successes

- Social media posts showing a-day-in-the-life or celebrating employee milestones

- Podcasts
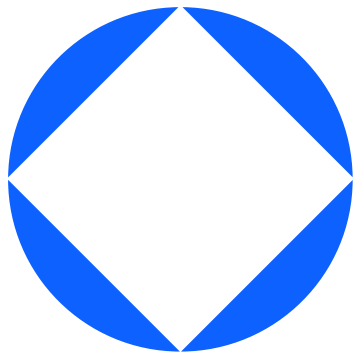
- Recruitment marketing ads
- Job descriptions
- Candidate FAQ pages
- Email newsletters
- ... and more

Interested talent will always look to current employees for the most trustworthy opinions about what it's like to work for your organization. They want to hear what the folks on the ground have to say—*sincerely*—about your company, and they want to see themselves reflected in your workplace through photographs of your team.

So create video testimonials of your employees, have your marketing team interview them for "employee spotlights" on the company blog, and allow them to "take over" your social accounts and post about what brings them joy at work.

Regardless of the mediums you choose, these assets should consistently highlight the themes your EVP entails—whether that's values and mission, career development opportunities, exciting projects the team is working on, employee perks, team-building, diversity, charitable initiatives, and so on. For example, content could cover:

- General topics of interest within the manufacturing industry (e.g. automotive manufacturing)
- More specific topics of interest to people in targeted roles (e.g. industrial maintenance professionals)
- Content of value to job seekers (e.g. tips for conducting a job search in your industry, or a guide to frequently-asked interview questions for a specific role)
- Day-in-the-life articles focused on specific roles or departments
- Information on career paths within departments (e.g. management tracks within engineering, or the path from hourly exempt to salaried)

The key is to *show*—more so than *tell*—what your EVP is. Thanks to your recruitment marketing content, talent should be able to imagine in detail what it's like to work for you, bringing them one step closer to applying. Seeing visuals and hearing stories are critical here. We can't stress enough the importance—and the effectiveness—of employee stories. Interested talent will always look to current employees for the most trustworthy opinions about what it's like to work for your organization. They want to hear what the folks on the ground have to say—*sincerely*—about your company, and they want to see themselves reflected in your workplace through photographs of your team.

So create video testimonials, have employees write blog posts or ask the marketing team to interview them for "employee spotlights," and allow employees to "take over" your social accounts or ask that they tag you on social when they post work-related content so you can repost it to your company account.

While we're at it, remember that not all content needs to be created from scratch. You've already got an archive of content thanks to your marketing team (blog posts, case studies, social posts, and more); you can leverage that content to do double-duty. Sit down with the content creators on your marketing team and discuss which content could also work for recruitment purposes. Would marketing be willing to create a few recruitment-specific assets (or assets that can do double-duty) each quarter?

Finally, repurpose where you can. An employee story, for example, can start as a video on your careers page, be transcribed as a blog post, and be linked to from a nurture email.

List out the channels your target personas are on and the places they're most likely to connect with your brand. Choose the top three (e.g. job boards, TikTok, your website) to start. Then create a content calendar using the assets in your content archive. Remember what we said above about the recruitment marketing funnel: your content should take into account the *entire* candidate journey. Needs, questions, and concerns change as candidates move from the top of the funnel down through to offer-extended. Have content and messaging prepared for each of those stages.

Master your website

Your website is the hub of your recruitment marketing efforts. That's because *regardless* of where talent first hears about you (a Google search, a PPC campaign, a recruiting event you threw at a local plant in their town, cold outreach from a recruiter), they're going to end up on your careers page if they want to learn more.

As *your* site, it should be the most comprehensive source of information for prospective candidates, containing everything they'd need to help them determine whether or not they'd want to work for your company. It should also be filled-to-the-brim with exciting, relevant content—preferably multimedia:

- Who is your company and what do you do? What does your customer base look like?
- Who are your employees and what do they have to say about working for you?
- What's your mission; what are your values; what's your culture like?
- What benefits and growth opportunities do your employees have?
- Why is yours an environment in which talent will succeed—and furthermore, *thrive*?
- And of course: what positions are available *now*?

As a primary resource, your careers page can't be an afterthought. Here are some best practices to implement:

- **Include real images and videos of your team—not stock photos.** Talent wants (and deserves) an authentic depiction of your people, so give them that. You may not be as diverse as you'd like to be, and you may not have professional images of your team right now. But talent knows a stock image when they see one—so show them the real thing.

- **Make it easy for prospective candidates to find and browse your open positions—and just as easy to apply.** A whopping 69% of candidates will give up on an application that takes more than 20 minutes to complete; and conversion rates increase by 365% when an application process is reduced to 5 minutes or less. So test your process, and have your colleagues do some user testing for you. Is applying intuitive? Is it fast?

Average job application completetion rates across all industries based on the length of time it takes to complete an application (in minutes).
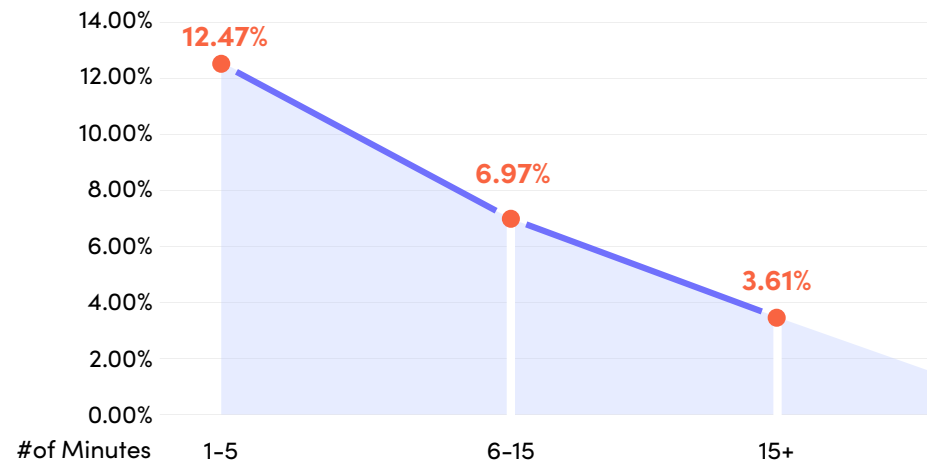
Source: Appcast
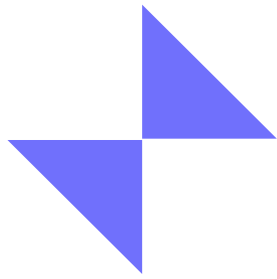
- **Optimize for mobile.** When it comes to ease of searching for open positions and applying, we're not just talking about desktop processes. Your careers site also needs to be mobile-optimized and mobile-friendly. Depending on whom you ask, somewhere between 45% and 52% of job-seekers search for opportunities on their phones, and 89% of talent say mobile devices play a critical role in the job-search process. Make sure your careers pages load quickly, are easily accessible from your homepage, are optimized for small screens, and provide a smooth application experience on mobile. The platform you use should allow applicants to upload resumes from Dropbox or Google Drive.

- **Provide a clear call to action.** Not every career site visitor will be ready to apply. So while your site should provide ready applicants with clear next steps, it should also offer those who are "just browsing" the opportunity to join a talent network. This way you can nurture them over time with recruitment marketing content, company updates, and open roles. (We'll have more to say about nurture below.).

- **Consider microsites.** Branded microsites let you offer relevant, targeted content to each of your candidate personas (warehouse workers, corporate roles, international, and so on). Not only are microsites ways of further "personalizing" your careers pages; they're also great for SEO—which means you're more likely to appear in search results when talent types in the career-related keywords you're ranking for.

- **Link directly to your blog, your social media profiles, and your Glassdoor profile.** Your blog is yet another source of information talent can subscribe to; it allows you to establish authority through thought leadership, share company news and events, offer best practices for the talent you're hoping to win over, and shout out your remarkable employees and the projects they're working on. Social media is another way for interested talent to stay up-to-date; and linking to your Glassdoor profile shows talent that you have nothing to hide when it comes to employee reviews. (Indeed, hopefully you're proud of them.)

If you already have a careers site in place, evaluate the analytics for those pages to uncover what's important to your site visitors—and, by extension, job-seekers. Use that data to optimize. If talent is clicking in from elsewhere (paid ads, for example) and immediately bouncing, it may be that you're not offering a coherent or consistent journey. If no one is visiting your candidate FAQ page, it may be time to cut it, re-evaluate your questions, or put that information elsewhere on your site. If visitors are "dead-clicking" on employee photos, consider that they might want more information about their potential future coworkers, and give them that. And so on.

Get your SEO game on

More than 70% of job searches start on Google. The question recruiting should be asking, then, is: *Is Google serving up our company as a search result when manufacturing talent enters the keywords we want to be found for?* Search engine optimization (SEO) is an organic way of increasing your online visibility. It's a long-term and time-consuming investment, for sure; but it's also a virtuous circle: the higher you rank for keywords ("plant supervisor jobs in Michigan"; "shipping receiving jobs near Toronto"; "production worker roles in Delaware," etc.), the more visitors you'll get to your job ads—and Google rewards pages with high visitor counts with even more discoverability.

Of course, if you're utilizing job boards like Indeed (more on job boards in a moment), there's already inherently an SEO component to your recruitment marketing strategy. But your company's recruiting blog is also a great place to build in an SEO strategy. There's a lot to learn about SEO; but in short, you'll research and identify the keywords talent uses to find job opportunities in your industry or your location— or to learn more about their craft—using tools like Ahrefs or Google Keyword Planner. Choose the keywords you're most likely to rank for based on factors like cost-per-click, and sprinkle those keywords throughout your careers page, microsites, job ads, and blog, in ways that make sense.

For example, an inbound approach to attracting metal forming talent might include content in the form of a blog post on "The 6 Skills You Need to Succeed as a Metal Former." Early-in-career talent that's learning more about the industry and researching the roles they may want to hold will come across your article based on its relevance to their keyword research; they might read it and decide to visit your careers page from there. If it's only available as a download, talent may be willing to exchange their email for it—putting them into your database for future nurture campaigns, in which you send them follow-up content on related topics.

Aside from on-page content, Google also takes into account things like metadata, page load speed, mobile friendliness, and offsite SEO practices (i.e. linking to your job ads, careers page, or blog from reputable sites) in its algorithm; so optimize for those things as well.

An inbound approach to attracting metal-forming talent might include a blog post on "The 6 Skills You Need to Succeed as a Metal Former." Early-in-career talent that's learning more about the industry and researching the roles they may want to hold will come across your article based on its relevance to their keyword research; they might visit your careers page from there.

If it's only available as a download, talent may even be willing to exchange their email for it—putting them into your database for future nurture campaigns, in which you send follow-up content on related topics.

Gem

"I think in the hourly space there's a reason why Indeed is the number one job site, mainly because they control those SEO spaces. When somebody types in a keyword for an hourly job, you're going to see Indeed on that first page. LinkedIn also continues to be a good powerful tool for us, though a lot of other players are now in the space."

Daniel Pugh
Recruiting & Talent Sourcing Leader

WestRock

Leverage job boards

While Google can be a goldmine, job boards—LinkedIn, Handshake, Indeed, ZipRecruiter, FactoryFix, ManufacturingJobs.com, etc.—aggregate openings in one place. (Of course, Google also aggregates job postings from across the web, pulling from sites like ZipRecruiter and LinkedIn... which means that when you post your open roles on these sites, you get additional placement in its search results.) Rather than endlessly browsing the web, active talent can use filtering options within a single platform to discover open roles by title, location, skill set, company, and more. So register on the job boards that are most relevant to you, and upload your job postings to increase visibility.

A few of these job boards are free, most are paid. Most allow you the option of sponsoring your listings to get in front of more visitors' eyes. Sponsored listings are similar to PPC campaigns (more on these below) in that they show up above the free listings for only the most relevant users.

While we're at it, the job descriptions you post on these sites need to do more than summarize the qualifications and skills required for the role. Basic SEO principles still hold, of course—don't discount the possibility that active talent might land on your listings through search—but just because your job title matches what a job-seeker is looking for doesn't mean you've got yourself a ready applicant. In fact, skip the bullet-pointed laundry list of requirements and focus instead on the more exciting responsibilities a successful hire will be expected to take on and the impact they'll be expected to have. Highlight your company values and communicate your culture (remember that EVP?). Focus more on what you have to offer talent than on what skills you're seeking from *them*. This way they can determine not only if the *role* is right for them, but also if your company and its culture is.

Gem

Turn employees into advocates with a referral program

We're sure you know the stats about referrals. Candidates are three times more likely to trust employees' opinions about what it's like to work for a company than they are "official" company messages. And no one knows better than your own employees how fit someone is for an open role—in terms of both qualifications and values-fit. That's why referrals are 5x more effective than all other sources of hire—not to mention 55% faster to hire than talent hired through career sites. Of course, speedier hires mean lower cost-per-hire. Add to that faster onboarding, lower turnover rates, and greater job satisfaction, and it turns out that referrals are remarkably powerful. Don't underestimate your employees' networks.

For recruitment marketing, this means two things: giving your referral program some love, and training employees on your employer brand and your overall recruitment plan so they can become your brand ambassadors. When it comes to the program itself, don't be stingy with incentives. Good employees are worth their weight in gold, and your own employees know this. A bonus is going to incentivize them much more than a $100 gift card will.

What's more, make the process of submitting a referral simple for them—no lengthy forms, no hoops to jump through. Provide them with outreach sequence templates so their recipients get both the personal touch of hearing from someone in their network *and* the most important details about the role and the company. Finally, increase the quality of your referrals by tracking the effectiveness of your sources. Perhaps you even motivate other employees by internally celebrating the ones who refer successful candidates to your company.

Provide referring employees with outreach sequence templates so the talent they're referring get both the personal touch of hearing from someone in their network *and* the most important details about the role and the company.

Gem's send-on-behalf-of feature allows recruiters to reach out as other employees in the organization—making recipients all the more likely to respond.

"I can certainly point to referrals as a great source of hire; they're nearly always effective. And we've now automated that process so there are unique links that can be sent. I always encourage our TA partners and leaders to make folks aware of that, because when I look at retention data, referrals are always stronger."

Recruiting Leader @ a Fortune-500 packaging company

◆ Gem

While we're at it, you'll also want to amplify your employee ambassadors. Even if they can't provide you with specific referrals, employees can still promote your organization. They can attend your recruiting events to mingle with prospective candidates. They can write posts for your blog about their role at your company or their career trajectory with you. They can write reviews on Glassdoor. And if they're not creating content, they can engage with ("like") and re-share your content on their social feeds, ultimately broadening your audience. (We'll have more to say about social strategies shortly.)

Build and nurture talent communities

The term "talent community" is new enough that it's still being defined. For us at Gem, a talent community is made up of talent who arrive on your careers page, don't see a position for them or aren't ready to apply, but decide they'd like to keep hearing from your company until the timing is right. (An estimated 10% of career site traffic completes applications; without a talent community option, you're losing that other 90%.) With Gem's help, those prospective candidates fill out a customized form directly on your careers site; and you can use the information you collect—contact information, LinkedIn URL, department or location of interest, etc.—to nurture and engage with them over time. In time, sourcers and recruiters can also add candidates they've sourced who weren't yet ready to make a career change into their talent community. As such, the community becomes a repository of interested talent that you capture, rather than lose to bad timing.

Of course, there are plenty of other ways to capture candidate leads and build your talent community:

- Including a call to action in every post published on your career blog
- Collecting information at recruitment events (open houses, plant tours, job fairs, etc.)

With Gem, you can easily create a form to collect information—email, LinkedIn URL, department or location of interest, etc.—from prospects visiting your careers page. This form is fully customizable to collect the data that's important to your talent team—and, from an aesthetic perspective, to stay true to your company brand. Prospective talent can be moved into projects based on their information and answers. From there, they'll be sent automated campaigns to keep them in-the-know about what your organization is up to.

Capturing new leads and creating great content is all good and well, but it means nothing if you can't keep talent warm and engaged. With Gem, keep your brand top-of-mind by sending visually-appealing and targeted nurture campaigns in which you showcase your employer brand and share updates on your company and industry. You can customize the look and feel so your communication delivers a consistent brand identity.

Come to our hiring event

Hear from our VP of Sales
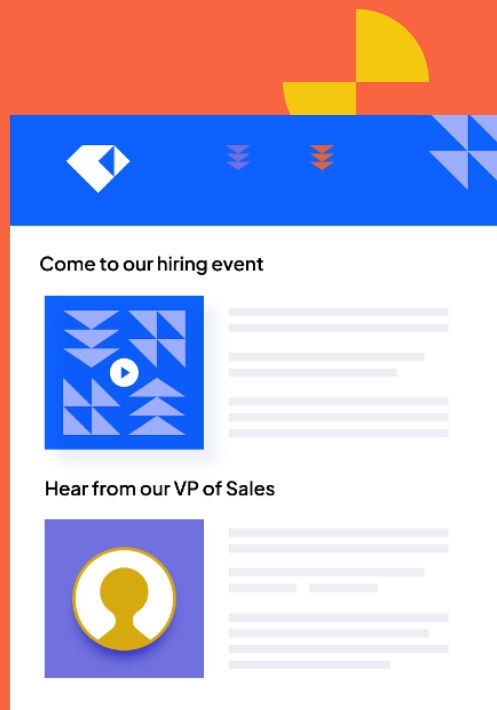
- Capturing data when prospective candidates download career guides you create for that purpose
- Linking to talent network sign-up forms from your social media posts
- Adding silver medalists who've already gone through process with you
- ... and so on

As talent comes into this community, it's important to actively manage it. This begins with segmentation, and extends into nurture campaigns.

The point of nurture is to build relationships with your talent community by offering consistent, authentic glimpses of your company through customized email campaigns. Talent may want to hear about job openings, sure. But they're also interested in company updates, details about the projects a certain team is working on, getting to know your employees as individuals, and how your organization is navigating culture. Maybe they'd love interview tips. Maybe they'd enjoy quizzes, ebooks, or company videos. You know your personas better than we do—and with automated outreach solutions that track open rates, click-through rates, and response rates, you can consistently iterate on your engagement strategies— and get hyper-personalized—based on talent's behavior.

Eventually, talent will have the "full view" of your org, its mission, its culture, and its values. Thanks to the content they've regularly consumed, you'll be top-of-mind when they're ready to make a career move. And you'll have a warm pipeline to search and source from when a position opens—which means minimizing the time spent searching through multiple databases, reviewing unqualified applicants, and moving candidates through the pipeline who may not have the same excitement about, and trust in, your company as your talent community does.

◆ Gem

Is an open role coming down the pipe within the next 6 or 9 months? Your ATS is a treasure trove of highly-qualified talent that—for whatever reason—didn't make it through the hiring process with you last time. With Gem's Candidate Rediscovery, talent teams can search across all candidates in their ATS, uncovering previously-engaged talent and kicking off a long-term nurture sequence to warm them up to your organization again.
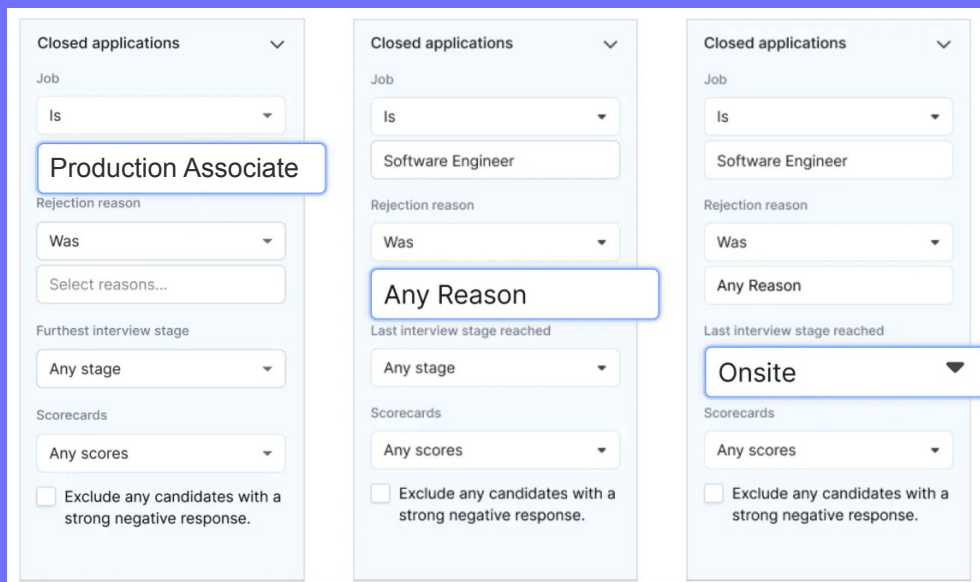
Our data shows that rediscovered candidates are 1.6x more likely to reply to sequences. So when you're thinking about your nurture strategy, don't forget the talent who've already stepped foot into your organization in some way.
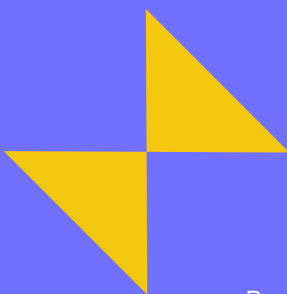
Rediscovered candidates are

1.6x more **likely to reply** to sequences
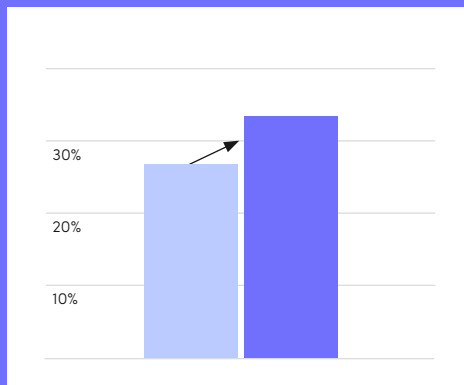
Source: August 2022 study of 5 Gem customers using candidate rediscovery to sequence 1,070 ATS candidates and 21,744 Non-ATS candidates.

"We have a massive database of incredible talent in our ATS. People are attracted to brand names, especially when there's market uncertainty. And there are a lot of ways we can leverage that applicant data down the road from a campaigns capability—ways that are much more interesting than sending you a message every time a job opens and saying 'I want to talk to you about this job.' Instead, I want you to connect with my brand; I want you to connect with my sourcing team; I want to build a relationship with you. You've already told me that you're potentially interested. And there's a lot of power in having that model in-house rather than going external."

Daniel Pugh
Recruiting & Talent Sourcing Leader @ WestRock

Gem
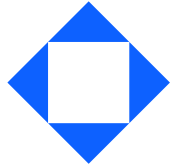
When mapping out your social strategy, don't exhaust your time on every channel. Connect with your prospective candidates where they're at. While a robust LinkedIn presence might be great for manager-and-above roles, Facebook posts and YouTube videos will draw frontline and manufacturing floor talent.

Get your social media game on

In a recruiting context, "social media game" means quite a few things. From a sourcing perspective, it means utilizing social as a channel (or an assortment of channels) in which to unearth top talent—whether through search features, filters, hashtags, or other research strategies. From a branding perspective, social is a great way to convey your employer brand and tell your company story. You've already created your personas, so you know which social channels your target talent hangs out on—whether that's LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, and so on. With 4.76 billion active social media users worldwide, there's a good chance that close to 100% of your target talent is on social—but don't exhaust your time on every channel. Connect with your prospective candidates where they're at. For example, while a strong LinkedIn presence might be great for manager-and-above roles, Facebook posts and YouTube videos will draw frontline and manufacturing floor talent.

Once you've nailed down your platforms of choice, focus on posting regularly (we highly recommend a social calendar) and engaging daily. Remember all that great content you created and/or collected? A solid social strategy for recruitment marketing is about much more than sharing jobs; it offers an honest series of glimpses into your company, its culture, its values, and its people. Post photos and videos; celebrate milestones; share employee stories; offer industry updates; shout out your internship programs or your employee resource groups. Livestream Q&A sessions; ask thought-provoking questions for your followers to answer; and engage and connect when followers leave comments. Ultimately, you're aiming to have an authentic public conversation that builds connection and trust with a broader audience of talent. Thank people when they post and share your content.

It's worth noting that 57% of job-seekers use social media in their searches, and 73% of millennials found their last position through a social media site. Those numbers explain why 84% of organizations currently use social for recruiting purposes. (This includes social media advertising, which we'll talk about shortly.)

A solid social strategy is about much more than sharing open roles; it offers an honest series of glimpses into your company, its culture, its values, and its people:

- Post photos and videos
- Celebrate milestones
- Share employee stories
- Promote company initiatives
- Showcase training opportunities
- Offer industry updates
- Shout out your intern program or your employee resource groups
- LIvestream Q&A sessions
- Ask thought-provoking questions for your followers to answer

Want to take your social recruiting strategy even further? Follow and interact with industry influencers—and their followers—to boost your profile. Is talent asking questions on these platforms about career advancement in manufacturing? Reply with a thoughtful response or with content you've already created on the topic. Use hashtags in your tweets and posts to maximize exposure, and/or create a company culture hashtag and ask employees to use it when they post about working at your company. Host employee takeovers in which individual employees "own" social for a week. Remember: employees are your best advocates; amplify their voices and showcase your culture.

Above all, track social media analytics. How many click-throughs are you getting to your careers site from each of your social platforms in a given month? How much engagement is happening on your feeds? How many qualified applicants is each channel producing? And so on. As with all things recruiting, analytics will allow you to both determine ROI and iterate on your strategy, ultimately connecting with and engaging more talent that fits your target profile.

Pipeline Analytics

Source	Review		Screen		Hiring Manager Screen		Assessment		Interview		Offer		Hired	Hire Rate
51 total	13,165	—30%→	3,930	—66%→	2,613	—71%→	1,857	—99%→	1,843	—48%→	885	—75%→	666	1 / 20
Facebook	369	—32%→	119	—48%→	57	—58%→	33	—97%→	32	—56%→	18	—72%→	13	1 / 28
Linkedin	3,985	—14%→	567	—72%→	409	—59%→	240	—98%→	234	—9%→	20	—50%→	10	1 / 398
Instagram	28	—39%→	11	—18%→	2	—50%→	1	—100%→	1	—100%→	1	—100%→	1	1 / 28
YouTube	10	—50%→	5	—20%→	1	—100%→	1	—100%→	1	—0%→	0		0	-

Host (or attend) great recruitment events

Open houses, plant tours, barbecues, info sessions, professional development events, AMA ("ask me anything") sessions... there are a wealth of event types out there to choose from. Events recruiting is a dedicated role in and of itself, and for good reason: while they take a great deal of time and energy, events increase awareness and improve the public perception of your company and of the manufacturing industry on the whole—as well as of the viable careers it offers. When candidates can tour your facility, talk to current employees, and have a "lived" experience of what it would be like to work for you, the public perception about manufacturing shifts in a positive direction. In other words, events pay dividends.

Perhaps you organize an open house during National Manufacturing Day (the first Friday in October) with food, music, and a plant tour, allowing frontline candidates to set up instant meetings with hiring managers, for example. This not only piques the interest of potential candidates; bringing your employees together in an informal setting promotes company culture. Capturing images and videos *during* the event adds to your recruitment marketing content archive.

These events are great opportunities for prospective candidates to meet potential colleagues, and for you to network with people who might ultimately offer you valuable referrals (not to mention apply themselves). Familiarity with your persona will help you determine which kind of recruitment event will be most compelling for them. Create attention-grabbing event pages, list your event on key directories, and promote your events widely on social. After all, you now have the lively channels to promote it on.

Of course, career fairs are another option if you're not hosting something at your own site. We don't have to tell you that job fairs and industry trade shows are especially great sources for hourly trade and frontline workers, for example. Maintain a presence at these events, make connections, and build your talent pools from there. With Gem, you can capitalize on recruiting events by digitally capturing and organizing leads, then automatically initiating messages to keep them warm and engaged.

"We're living and breathing Gem Forms at the moment, and the internship capabilities it offers us are so easeful. We take the QR codes onto campus or into virtual career fairs. Applicants click in and upload their information, attach their resumes, and suddenly we have this great source of candidates from an internship perspective.

We see several hundred candidates per career fair so it's safe to say we've saved ourselves 4–5 hours of follow-up and organization after each fair. The candidates are also in our database so we can stay in contact with them. It's no longer just a one-time meet-and-greet; we're able to build relationships with them for future roles. That's been incredibly impactful for us."

Jaime Schmitt
Talent Attraction Manager for North America

Celestica™

"We hosted a military virtual career fair in November and we shared Gem's QR code in our virtual welcome booth. People went in and joined our talent community. It was a hassle-free way to get data on interested talent that we wouldn't have captured otherwise."

Director, Global HR Operations & Talent Management @ a Global Automotive Parts Manufacturer

Create partnerships with trade schools, local colleges & universities, military organizations, etc.

Creating partnerships with trade schools, high schools, technical schools, local colleges, and so on is another way of getting in front of prospective candidates and committing to educational outreach. This not only educates students (and in some cases, their parents) about manufacturing career paths; it also builds a future workforce by making younger generations more aware of opportunities in the industry. These "community partnerships" can take many forms:

- Partnering with a fast-track training program at a local technical school to eventually hire their graduates

- Partnering with colleges and universities that offer degrees in the manufacturing space (i.e. Clemson and Michigan State for packaging degrees)

- Sponsoring student leadership programs in the local school system

"We're partnering with an organization in Detroit called Focus: HOPE. It's worth asking: what are the geographically-situated organizations that are upscaling talent in underserved communities, and how are you pipelining that talent into some of the manufacturing openings you have in that area? We've also partnered with correctional facilities as a way of accessing talent that's being released or is on parole for non-violent crimes. High schools, community colleges, trade schools: these organizations are all ripe for partnership. Reach out. See what's possible"

Director, Global HR Operations & Talent Management @ a Global Automotive Parts Manufacturer

- Funding student projects at a nearby college, or sponsoring school teams for academic competition

- Funding upskilling programs at a local high school

- Participating in a state-run apprenticeship program that rotates early-career talent through departments and exposes them to jobs they may not have known existed

- Partnering with a non-profit group to create an in-house paid apprenticeship program

- Working with the local Chamber of Commerce to establish an apprenticeship or a certification program

- Networking with local military organizations or correctional facilities

- Organizing a company-wide program in which employees invest time into local non-profit organizations, creating touchpoints between your company and potential future employees

... and more. A Director of Global HR Operations at an auto parts manufacturer recently described this process as "not really candidate relationship management; it's more like organization or university relationship management. What's going on in our organization; what are some key opportunities right now? And how can we automate talent updates to key representatives at some of these local organizations so they can share them with their student populations?"

Run paid ads campaigns

A website and a social media presence are only as strong as the number of people who see them. If your organization doesn't have many followers on social yet, that beautiful piece of thought leadership you post won't have an ROI. Enter paid ads to increase your visibility. "Paid ads" encompasses:

- PPC (search advertising)

- display advertising (those classical banner ads you see when browsing the internet)

- social advertising, and

- retargeting (showing ads to people who've already visited your site)

"When it comes to best source of hire, a hybrid approach of outreach plan, branding plan, and advertising plan is essential. We've had a lot of success doing geofencing ads through Facebook: we pick a certain area and run ads that are directly mapped to either our application or an event. They typically run for 15 or 30 days, and they're relatively low cost to us. So that continues to drive traffic while there's outbound activity going on."

**Recruiting Leader
@ a Fortune-500 packaging company**

They're a great way to hyper-target talent and put relevant content right in front of them—whether they're actively searching for jobs on Google, or passively browsing the internet or social media. (Of course, we know a lot of manufacturing companies who still find some of the "old-school" routes—radio ads, billboards—just as valuable. So don't discount these either.)

PPC (pay-per-click) is a great supplement to your SEO strategy, and it's exactly what it sounds like: you bid to place ads in search engine results for specific keywords ("assembly operator jobs in Fort Worth," "supply chain jobs in Chicago"), and your ad gets displayed on the first page of the search results when users search for those keywords. You pay your bid amount only if users click your ad and visit your careers page. PPC gives you control over whom you target—which means you're seen by more qualified talent than the random assortment of job-seekers that job boards can sometimes bring in. It's also particularly great for hard-to-fill or time-sensitive roles. With Google AdWords, you set your own budget so you don't overspend; and you have access to analytics so you can measure your results, and optimize from there.

To target more passive audiences, look into social advertising. Facebook and Instagram have enormous reach; and they allow you to target your ads by location, education, job title, and specific areas of expertise. What's more, they show up unobtrusively as users interact with the interface of both feeds— so your target audience is more likely to engage because they don't feel spammed. Facebook and Instagram offer a PPC model, which is useful for starting small and experimenting as you grow—though there's also a cost-per-thousand-impressions model if your goal is to build brand awareness quickly.

LinkedIn offers a number of solutions for attracting and engaging both active and passive talent. Choose your objectives (awareness, consideration, or conversion), select your targeting criteria, choose your format type (sponsored content, dynamic ads, message ads, and more), set your budget, and you're on your way. As with Facebook and Instagram, use analytics to optimize—and as a happy side effect, watch your community of followers grow. Remember, *which* social platforms you run ads on will depend on the roles you're trying to fill. Engineers, accountants, and operations managers will likely be easier to reach on LinkedIn; while metalworkers and machine operators might be easier to reach on Facebook, for example.

Finally, experiment with retargeting. Have visitors bounced from your career site, or started filling out job applications but left without submitting them? There's a good chance that these folks are still interested— they just got distracted and/or ran out of time. Reignite their interest and keep your org top-of-mind by virtually "following people around" with gentle reminders about your company.
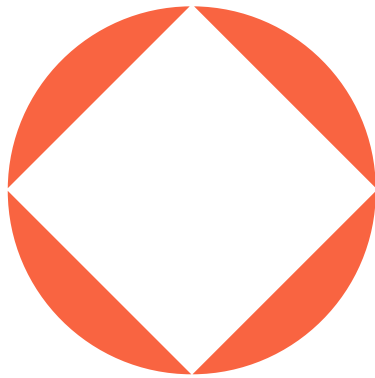
Get on review sites, and actively manage your reputation there

Of course, the first step here is to offer a candidate experience (CX) that you'd actually want candidates to publicly share. CX is the collective result of all the interactions talent has with your brand during the hiring process; and employee review sites like Glassdoor, Comparably, and Indeed provide platforms for candidates and employees to share out their experiences with your organization. This form of social proof—"word of mouth" marketing—is an important element of your employer brand; and it provides prospective candidates with the objective data they need to decide whether to make the next move with your org.

So get active on those sites. Claim your company profile, add photos that demonstrate your culture, outline your benefits, build your profile out. Then regularly ask current employees for reviews and actively monitor your profiles on those sites. Show job-seekers that employee feedback matters to you by responding to each review thoughtfully. How you show up, participate, and respond here—perhaps *especially* when it comes to negative reviews—helps solidify your employer brand.

(Even better, collaborate with HR to seek out, and act on, employee feedback *long* before employees post their reviews. This way job-seekers will see that you've created an entire feedback culture, in which executives and managers prioritize employee happiness, well-being, and belonging.)

"When was the last time you wrote a review on your own company? Doing so increases your brand awareness. And it really impacts people's decisions more than you think it does—especially from a candidate experience perspective."

Recruiting Leader @ a Fortune-500 packaging company

Gem

"We're starting to look at populations we haven't approached. Our plants in Mexico, for example, created a program for people who are hearing-impaired to come work for us. They taught sign language to their supervisors. The program supported our ability to reach out to a demographic that maybe wouldn't have thought they had an opportunity to work at a plant—when now they can.

We also recently discovered that many manufacturing companies tend not to hire people over a certain age, despite the fact that that demographic wants to work. So we're doing all this advertising in Mexico to show that we hire people who are 55 and older; you're welcome to come here and apply. I'm constantly asking: what's hindering us from being an employer of choice for certain groups that might just assume they can't work for us? Nontraditional labor sources is a big focus; we're always looking for new sources beyond what we get when we post on Indeed, for example."

VP of Talent Acquisition
@ a Fortune-500 beverage company in North America
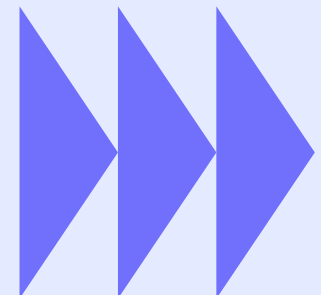
Consider non-traditional labor sources

We touched on this briefly above; but with the labor shortage in the manufacturing industry it's worth emphasizing. One of the best ways to expand your candidate pool is by looking beyond your company's traditional talent profile: veterans, formerly-incarcerated persons ("second-chance hires"), the long-term unemployed, folks coming out of retirement, workers with disabilities, and so on. Consider how you might partner with organizations that serve these demographics—but also consider what you might do in-house to let those groups know there are opportunities for them in your company.

Use a candidate relationship management (CRM) platform to house all your talent data in one place

A CRM is the pillar of a sophisticated talent strategy. It allows talent acquisition teams to build relationships with prospective candidates and nurture them over time, creating pools of warm leads that accelerate time-to-hire when roles open up in the future. With a good CRM, talent teams can automate outreach campaigns to prospective candidates using a multi-channel approach (email, InMail, text message, etc). They can build "talent communities" that receive regular engagement from your brand. They can engage in "silver medalist campaigns." (Your database is a treasure trove of candidates who've applied to your company over the years; so why look for candidates externally every time you have an open role? Instead, go into your CRM and identify talent who've applied in the past and got to a certain stage in the interview process or declined an offer. Then re-engage them through a campaign and bring them back into the pipeline.)

Ultimately, a CRM should be your recruiting team's source of truth, containing every touchpoint you've ever had with an individual. It allows you to feed information about your organization to talent in a way that's thoughtfully-curated, maintain and deepen relationships with them, and allows them to self-qualify and self-select as they advance through your automated outreach sequences.

"CRMs are the best way to organize the data around whom you've reached out to and when you've spoken with them. I had so much success in my last organization when I walked in the door and they asked, 'What tools do you need?' And said, 'I can just use our CRM's advanced search capabilities.' I filled so many roles in that first few months just performing advanced searches in our database—searching tags, searching events, sending out different campaigns based on our last interaction with a candidate.

From a candidate perspective, nothing feels better than hearing, 'Hey, I know you applied to our organization back in 2018. We filled that role internally at the time, but I thought you were a great candidate. Is this a good time to reconnect?' That's not only much warmer; it also allows you to say to a hiring manager—even before a search kicks off—'I can tell you right now that we've talked to x number of people over the last three years that have this skill set or this title.'
So a CRM gives you supply-and-demand insights. It gives you organization and clarity, and it's a critical component to leveraging all the data and the heavy-lifting that the recruiting team does day-to-day. After all, your job should get easier over time—especially if you're working with the same customers."

Daniel Pugh, Recruiting & Talent Sourcing Leader
@ WestRock

Analyze, evaluate, and optimize

Evaluating your strategy might be the most important *element* of your strategy. There's little point in implementing a recruitment marketing program if you can't ultimately determine if it's doing what you want it to do. Collectively, analytics tells the story of how—and where—your efforts are paying off. The more you optimize based on those insights (this often means experimentation), the better your conversion rates will be. Of course, you'll want to know your numbers before you implement your strategy so you have a baseline from which to improve. *Then* track the data regularly to increase your ROI.

Everything we've discussed above can be measured—and luckily, the vast majority of it can be automated:

- Google Analytics will show you how site traffic interacts with your careers page and where that traffic comes from (this is called "referral traffic")

- Sourcing solutions like Gem can help you assess how compelling your outbound messaging is by tracking email metrics like open, reply, and interested rates

- Gem also allows you to A/B test your email campaigns, giving you visibility into the email content that's performing best

- CRMs like Gem offer tailored reports with data such as passthrough rates (so you can see where your hiring process needs some love), and let you measure the ROI on things like events, campus recruiting, and source channel

- Your ATS will also give you valuable information about time-to-fill and candidate source

- Every social platform has its own analytics to help you track engagement

- ... and so on

Here are some questions you'll need to be able to answer for yourself:

- What's happened to your application rate (and to your employee retention rate, for that matter) as you've begun clarifying and disseminating your employer brand?

- How has your pipeline grown in that time?

- What are the conversion rates for each channel you're using for your recruitment marketing efforts?

- What are the rates-of-hire per source?

- How is your employee referral program performing?

- What does social engagement look like *this* month compared to *last* month?

Benchmark yourself internally on these numbers, or use external benchmarks to measure yourself against. Track candidate experience through surveys, through which you can also uncover what your employer brand looks like from *their* perspective. Of course, find out what their experience was of going through the hiring process with you. But also dig a bit deeper from a branding perspective: How much—and *what*—did they know about your org *before* they entered process with you?

If you're just getting started with recruitment marketing, begin with something manageable and focus on what you can do to make *that* element of your strategy better. There *is* no "final best practice" for your website, or your outreach, or your approach to social, or your events; you'll be evolving for as long as you're selling your organization, and data and metrics will help you do that. So get curious, experiment, and find some joy in the recruitment marketing ride.

How Gem can help

Recruit the talent you need to keep operations running smoothly and accelerate into "Industry 4.0"

Proactively pursue front-line talent with best-in-class sourcing & outreach: Source from your most popular sites, automate sequences across email and text, and send outreach from your hiring manager to improve reply rates.

Instantly activate past relationships to fill urgent roles: Organize and search across your CRM and ATS database based on operations experience, machine skills, and more. Nurture these relationships and automate re-engagement at pivotal career milestones, without lifting a finger.

Gain unparalleled visibility into your DEI recruiting efforts: Track the diversity of your pipeline from the very top with our predictive algorithm, and uncover any potential bias with end-to-end insights.

Unlock full-funnel data that your entire team can use to operate like a business: Gem surfaces data from your CRM and ATS to help you monitor pipeline health, optimize passthrough rates for faster time-to-fill, uncover cost-saving insights, and forecast hiring to plan resources strategically.

Capitalize on your recruiting events and job fairs to build your brand: Digitally capture and organize leads and automatically initiate messages to keep talent warm and engaged

"We're a data-driven organization. When we set an expectation and we have the data to back it up, we typically meet those goals. So when we have the data right at our fingertips, that drives more activity and lets us stretch ourselves from a goal-setting perspective. Seeing that data real-time helps us to benchmark; and now I can start setting expectations with the recruiters that maybe historically haven't been there before."

Director, Global HR Operations & Talent Management @ a Global Automotive Parts Manufacturer

Multiply recruiter productivity with minimal change management. Simplify candidate management and hiring manager collaboration with a solution recruiters love (G2 ratings).

Gem

Gem's end-to-end modern recruiting solution empowers talent acquisition teams to engage their entire talent network, optimize sourcing efforts, and uncover actionable insights that guide smarter, forward-looking decisions. Gem works alongside LinkedIn and other places that you source, while integrating with Gmail, Outlook, and your ATS. Find the talent you need to meet hiring targets and scale your teams with Gem.

To learn more and see a demo, visit **gem.com**

Lauren Shufran, Author

Lauren is a content strategist with a penchant for 16th-century literature. When they're not trying to solve talent teams' pain points, they're on their yoga mat or hiking Mount Tam. Come at them with your favorite Shakespeare quote.

Gem