Quality of Those NOT Hired

Measuring the quality of candidates *not* hired can quickly highlight stages where the recruitment process is poorly performed, says HR and recruitment expert, Dr John Sullivan.

He estimates that fewer than two in five organisations measure quality of hire, but even fewer use this "unheard of" metric of "quality of those not hired".

In an article published on ERE.net, Sullivan says he used the metric a few years back when advising a Fortune 100 company that had a "painfully slow" hiring process. He asked a manager to rank all the applicants sourced for a particular job, and months later, after the role had been filled, the manager was shocked to learn that the successful candidate had been ranked in the bottom 25 per cent of applicants - it was letting the top-ranked applicants slip away.

One of the benefits of the quality of those not hired metric is that it helps organisations identify where in the process they are having problems; where the talent either opts out or gets dropped, he says.

This can occur during:

1. Resume screening - "the ATS, a recruiter, or hiring manager mistakenly screens out top applicants";
2. Telephone screening - "top applicants rank poorly on their phone screens or their screen cannot be completed, so they are dropped from consideration";
3. Interview scheduling - "they get frustrated over the number of interviews and drop out or they cannot complete them in time because of scheduling conflicts";
4. Interview assessment - "they voluntarily drop out before the interviews can be completed, or the interview process mistakenly rates them poorly";
5. The offer process - "either the process fails to include most of the top applicants on the list of finalists, or they reject the offer";
6. Reference checking - "even though they are high-quality candidates, they somehow fail the reference/background check".

Organisations that want to use the quality of those not hired metric should focus just on "the cream of the crop" - not every applicant who isn't hired. "I call these individuals 'regrettable misses', and it is these folks that the quality-of-those-not-hired metric aims to highlight," Sullivan says.

He recommends that employers consider a number of action steps to implement the metric, including:

> Setting goals - that include: "accurately identifying the top three-to-five 'regrettable candidates', determining what percentage of top candidates become finalists for the position, and determining what percentage of new hires came from the top candidate list";

Select an evaluation range - "this metric should focus solely on reporting the progress of 'the very top applicants' who senior managers would regret not hiring".

For most jobs, three to five top applicants would be a sufficient number to track, he says;

Report the metric in percentages - for example, 66 per cent of all finalists came from the top-ranked list, and 47 per cent of the time a top-five-ranked candidate was hired;

Identify the stage where top talent slips through - "for high priority and mission-critical jobs, after the hiring process is complete, identify at what specific stage in the recruiting process did a top applicant opt out or get dropped from consideration. You can then use that information to improve that stage"; and

Identify cause for top candidate removal from consideration - "if a significant number of top candidates opt out or are dropped from consideration without becoming finalists, follow up and find out why. If your process screened them out prematurely, recruiters and hiring managers must be questioned to identify what knockout criteria is being applied. If the candidate dropped out on their own, they need to be questioned to see if their early withdrawal could have been prevented".