



Lucy Rayden

Director and Co-Founder at Insight Technology Search



The war for talent post covid-19 from an executive recruiter's perspective.

If there's anything that last 12 months have taught me, it's to be grateful, really grateful. I'm grateful to be working with an exceptional team of people with strong values, ethics and the ability to keep going despite the challenges we're all facing. Although some technology sectors have suffered, many have continued to grow and I'm very fortunate that I work across a range of technology sectors that have somehow weathered the storm quite well, where development never stops.

I am also grateful because my job gives me the opportunity to talk to incredible people every day, global leaders who have dealt with immense challenges, managing companies and manufacturing plants all around the world through the pandemic, keeping things going and most of all making sure their people stay healthy. They too have been humbled by the loyalty and tenacity of their workforces.

The working landscape has changed significantly in the last 12 months. Working from home and having flexible hours are the norm for many people, these have come to be desired and often expected from people changing jobs. Companies have adapted their working practices and mental health is finally receiving the attention it deserves.

As we head into 2021, everyone I talk to is tired, feeling the stresses of a changed way of life and the stresses of a global pandemic.

 ***Now, with so much uncertainty ahead, what does this mean for companies with plans to grow & recruit?***

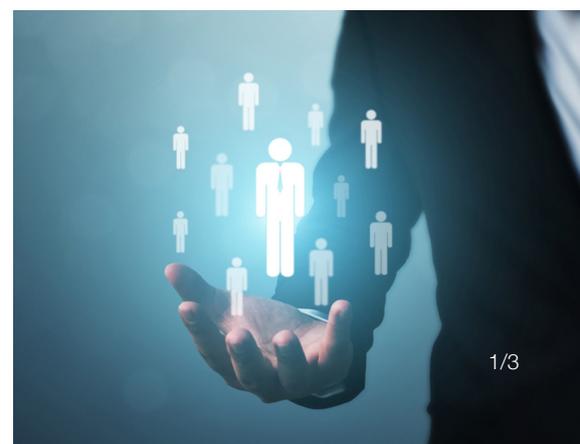
The recruitment process in general has seen its fair share of challenges. Companies are making employment offers to candidates they haven't physically met and having to onboard new employees via video/zoom. This has been a whole new challenge for everyone involved.

Not only are talented technology business leaders hard to find, but when things are turbulent for everyone, changing job is a scarier prospect and finding people who are willing to make a change in such uncertain times becomes more difficult. In a global pandemic the desire for stability is enhanced and fear of the unknown is at an all-time high.

In some instances, with huge challenges to face, new projects and new working practices, people are simply too busy to consider a move or to make time to interview, especially in the companies where technology is booming.

For certain candidates there has to be a significant upside to move at the moment, high calibre candidates are setting their price very high and counteroffers are rife, good businesses don't want to lose their A players and are willing to pay the price to keep them.

Making counter offers to keep candidates can be counter intuitive, as those candidates may continue to look around and usually the reason they wanted change in the first place is deeper rooted than just their salary.



So, what can be done?

Well, the first thing is planning. What are you trying to achieve and what does the organisation need to look like in order for this to happen? Where are the skills gaps?

Think about the person you need and when you need them. When reviewing your hiring strategy, be aware that it may take longer than usual to find the right person and be patient with the people you do find. Think about how you can find, attract and engage the right people and the three channels of recruitment that can help you to do this.

Consider why someone would want to work for you, what impact can they have, what prospects are there for them, how are you different and what are you doing to enhance your employee's wellbeing and to reward loyalty and keep your best people? Your recruitment partner should be able to help you to clearly define this. Flexible working and working from home may no longer be enough, now that it's the norm.

Challenge your own perception of interviewing, see it as a two-way process where you both get to know, understand and evaluate whether or not you are right for each other. Keep an open mind, be aware of your own biases and hire for values, drive, ability and most importantly attitude. Be prepared and if you've made hiring 'mistakes' in the past, ask an experienced recruiter to help you prepare & plan for the interview.

Be mindful and respectful of the candidate's time, the longer your interview process, the more likely you are to lose the best candidates and having more than 3-4 people involved may make the candidate question the company decision making abilities and process. Always feedback without delay, even if you decide not to move forward with that person, they will appreciate the constructive feedback.



Find out what is important to your candidates and make reasonable offers, making low ball offers doesn't work. If someone has worked up in their career to a certain level, why devalue them by offering them significantly less? If they accept, they are unlikely to be motivated when they start and how is that good for any new working relationship?

If you have a talent team, check to see how they are finding the best talent as it is unlikely that the best talent just show-up on the doorstep or applies for your advertised positions. If you aren't 100% happy with your current recruiter then benchmark by testing out another one, ask for recommendations and make sure they become a trusted partner with your company interests at heart. Make sure they can represent you accurately and professionally when speaking to candidates.

Consider boutique and specialist recruitment partners over the big brand names, they need your business more so you may find you get a more thorough, personal and dedicated service. They should be able to understand your business, your technology and your growth strategy so they can successfully market your company to potential candidates.

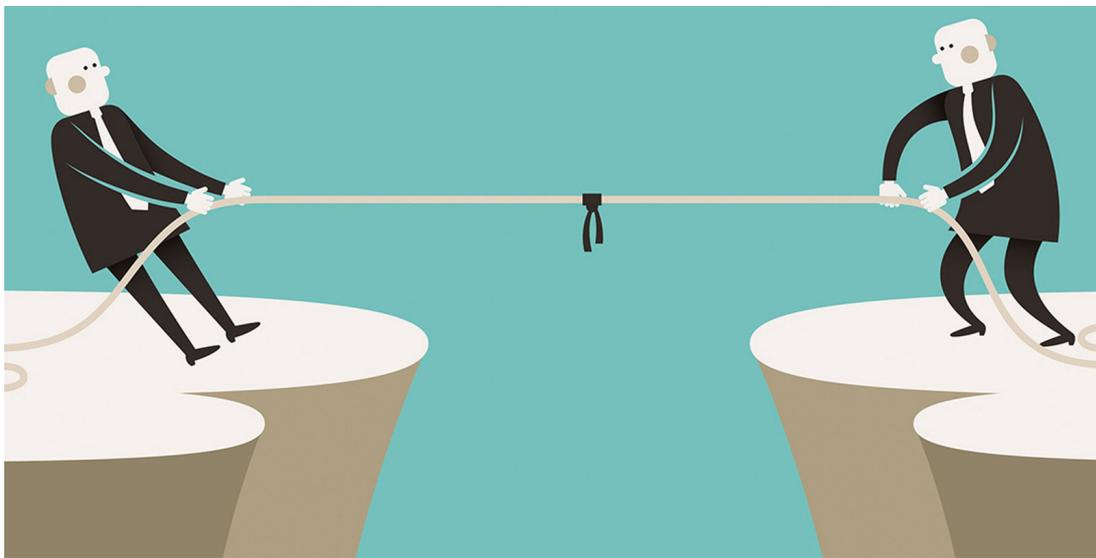
They should also be able to give you up to date information on the salaries and benefits packages of people in the target market. Listen to them and make adjustments in your expectations if needed. If you are concerned that the information, you're getting is incorrect then cross reference with another partner or agree fixed fees with your recruiter to be sure you're getting an honest and unbiased viewpoint.

Think about the model your recruiter works under, a retained recruiter makes a commitment to fill your position, a contingency recruiter offers to try. This is an important distinction. A contingency recruiter has to work multiple positions at any one time to up the odds of filling one of the roles, so it is very difficult for them to prioritise your position or have time to find the best candidates. If you want to ensure your recruiter is presenting you with strong candidates, retain them so they can spend time properly searching for the best people.

By working closely in partnership with external search firms who specialise in your market, you should be able to identify talent in advance of business needs, map out the talent landscape and work on a strategy to build a strong team to drive your business forward. By understanding the bigger picture, they can keep their ears to the ground for people that might be right for your organisation when the time is right.

“ *Starting a new job in Covid is a daunting experience. Make sure you offer candidates the support they need, make sure they have the tools to do the job and most importantly do everything you can to make the person feel welcome and have the opportunity to get to know everyone. Check in with them regularly and check how they are coping with everything, be humble and be human, humility is what everyone needs right now.* ”

And last but not least. Don't forget about your diversity objectives. Leading organisations have long realised that a diverse workforce will yield significantly better results. There are some great initiatives going on in technology companies, research and adapt, the wheel doesn't need to be re-invented. Take a look at companies like Intel who are very successfully sponsoring women in technology for scholarships, what can you do to support diversity in your organisation?



There is a war for talent and the companies with the best talent wins. Companies need to up their game when it comes to finding, securing and developing their people. If Covid has taught us anything, it's that people are our biggest asset and if their mental health, well-being, development and growth prospects aren't our number one priority - then we're failing as leaders.

Companies who are investing in finding, training and developing a diverse workforce and have partners who can help them to find exceptional people are already reaping the benefits.

Thanks to my wonderful team for your valuable market insights for this article. If you would like to discuss your hiring strategy for 2021 and beyond, please feel free to contact me, Lucy Rayden, for a confidential discussion.

Lucy Rayden

Director & Co-founder, Insight Technology Search



M +33 646 406 519

@ lucy.rayden@intechsearch.com

www.intechsearch.com

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#recruitment #warfortalent #mentalhealth #HRchallenges