

About Curatal

Curatal is a talent management company that provides support to organizations and individuals alike by enabling curated talent through an innovative platform. Curatal's talent management solutions include SEA (Search, Engage and Acquire), Talent Audit, Talent Pipe and Virtual Campus for corporates and Job Mate for individual candidates.

Come, explore the world of Curatal as Talent Management is critical for business transformation.

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EMERGING PARADIGMS IN TALENT ACQUISITION

A Compilation
of Select
Perspectives



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All the opinions of the respondents in this compilation are shared in their individual capacity and may not necessarily be those of the organizations they are part of.

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Index

Title	Page No.
Foreword	1
Letter from Curatal	2
1. Anupamm Jain	3
2. Arif Khan	5
3. Arun Prasad	7
4. Felix Jeffrey	9
5. Jaideep Reddy	11
6. Jose M Herrerra Perea	13
7. Kishore T	15
8. Navin Patel	17
9. Ruchika Singh Tanwar	19
10. Seema Iyer	21
11. Seetharam	23
12. Sriram Rajagopal	25
13. Venkateswaran R	27
14. Vijay H M	29
15. Vinod Erapalli	31

Foreword

A catastrophe has the potential to become a catalyst. Just when the world was resigned to a post-Covid era of diminishing growth rates, Indian IT industry experienced excesses of business opportunities like never before. How and why? Let's find out.

Global business, limping back to normalcy after the drastic impact of Covid years, took to digital transformation as the route to scale up their businesses. While this transformed to sustained surges of business for Indian IT since the latter part of 2021 continuing well into 2022 and beyond, the bullish phase has made way for caution and guarded optimism, at best.

Since business has a direct relationship with demand for manpower, the peak demand patterns and behavioral dynamics of the IT professionals would delight a macro-economist. Plagued with severe short supply of good quality talent, talent acquisition became one of the toughest jobs in the IT industry. Finding quality personnel in double quick time on a constant basis, became a classical case study in demand and price behavior. It was a no-holds-barred war for talent.

The issue was simple: Unexpected growth in business opportunities caused a dramatic surge in demand for people against a backdrop of limited supply of quality talent. The rest is details.

It was for the first time that old timers in the HR field felt uncomfortable that ethics were being compromised for tactical wins in the talent market. There were other disruptions too that have stirred the hornet's nest.

We at Curatal, being a strong player and a committed partner in talent management space for the IT industry, thought it apt to bring together the reflections of the senior members of the talent acquisition field, how they coped with the crises and what in their opinion, were the lessons for handling the coming avalanches of business and technology disruptions.

This collection is the compilation of their responses to a few issues that we put up to them. They are:

✍ **How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different:** There are dramatic changes in the way recruiting is done. So how do these leaders read the change?

✍ **Critical Success Factors in Recruiting:** Since business demands have evolved and the target talent market has also changed, what are the weapons of the TA managers? What do they think are crucial factors they should ace?

✍ **Challenges in Talent Landscape:** From a macro-perspective, what are the challenges and any guidance on tackling them?

✍ **Changing Expectations in Talent Market:** Of course, with a whole new generation of fresh talent, expectations ought to be diametrically different. We asked ourselves, "Can we map with a new perspective?" Thus came the idea of the 4Ms, viz., Money, Meat, Meaning and Mode.

- Money: In simple words, it is the compensation play and a host of other benefits
- Meat: By meat, we mean the quality of the job content. The world looks at India for quality manpower. So, how does the Indian manpower look at quality job content? How important is the meat in a job for a prospective candidate?
- Meaning: The IT industry is home to countless good Samaritans, who conceive and lead social responsibility initiatives for the world. We thought it relevant to get a feel of what meaning holds for prospective candidates at the time of seeking careers.
- Mode: Considering that entrepreneurship and startup cultures have pervaded the IT industry, we were keen to capture the prevalent outlook in the talent market as regards their disposition to different modes of working.

✍ **Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT):** While this issue was brought up as an equivalent of the famed Japanese JIT practice, the Indian IT industry has its another version of JIT. We look at both the actual and the desirable, and what it takes to get there.

We are indeed blessed that HR leaders are gifted speakers with strong points of view. This volume becomes richer just by this aspect.

We thank the respondents for their time, and appreciate their patience and commitment to share their perspectives.

Curatal is excited to bring out this coffee table book. As a talent management firm focused on curated talent, we are looking closely at issues that affect the dynamics of talent acquisition and help manage change better. The collective wisdom can show the way forward and build the foundation for the entire industry to manage unexpected challenges in future.

Happy reading!

Letter from Curatal

The disruption in the talent management space caused by the exponential growth of the demand for quality talent witnessed earlier was indeed real. The free-for-all in the marketplace, has set the leaders thinking and surely, the emerging paradigms will validate the transformations.

What we have seen is the changing and more significant role for partners in talent management. Agile and proactive partners will be the key as organizations look for fleet footed responses to sudden surges in talent requirement.

At a global level, Indian IT has built enormous equity as a powerhouse of talent. With manpower balances tilting strongly to India's advantage, we need to discover ways of making significant gains through innovative strategic talent management.

The possibilities are limitless and definitely point to a 21st Century that India can lead through great talent!

Look forward to your thoughts ...



*Pruthvi Nanjappa,
Co-Founder & CEO*



*Manjunath R
Co-Founder & COO*



Anupamm Jain

Talent Acquisition Head at Stefanini.

Anupamm Jain is a proven Talent Acquisition and HR leader with over 21 years of progressive and comprehensive domestic/international experience in all areas of HR in the services and product industry. His earlier workplaces include FIS, Aithent and ThoughtFocus.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Speed: Today's teams move faster and complete a recruiting cycle from initial contact to final offer more quickly.
- Technology: There was no access to refined technical processes earlier. Today, automated processes deliver accuracy. There is greater control through better visibility of the need gaps.
- Diversified team: Today, the search is for more avenues for more reach. LinkedIn is now a job portal. How well you are able to sell internally is also important, since existing employees are good vehicles for referrals.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Candidate experience: whether the candidate is selected or not, deliver a good branding experience.
- Transparency: The ability to map the expectations of the target audience and deliver accordingly is critical. The new generation does not want a 9-5 schedule. Work-life balance is important. At our centres in Hyderabad and Bangalore, I initiated permanent work from home, before the Pandemic. Today, we have workforce across India. News of innovation spreads, thanks to social media, and gets recognition in the target audience.

- Ability to play with data: Today, recruitment is all about data, about how well you can see the trends quarter on quarter. The tools are available for effective analytics. Of course, better AI/ML tools are on the way. It is the manager's ability to read the data. And analytics is more an art than technology, I feel. One can see the room for continuous improvement at each stage in the recruitment process.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Talent landscape: Supply has not drastically changed. Only demand has increased much higher. Tier 2 cities have come up because of lesser cost of infrastructure and availability of people. Companies have now realized they cannot keep hiring from the market. So the focus has shifted to the campus, where multiplicity of skills can be imparted.
- Quality: Companies cannot go on hiring from the market. In a team, 10-15% of the members can run the project on their own. There will be 45-50%, who are not top quality but provide effective support. While the 10-15% will be able to dictate, now even the second level and the passive workforce in teams have also started making demands, because they have understood that there is scarcity at all levels. Remote talent is a new solution, but has challenges, especially in terms of productivity. Best practices and metrics are on the way. Metrics have become more important in the current scenario.
- Mindset: Today's IT professionals think they are Gods. With additional gig projects, they sometimes make more money than from their permanent jobs. People have become opportunistic. It is going to impact in long term. For clients in US, near shore is better than offshore. There is pressure to increase offshore billing rate. At this rate, demand disruptions are the result. And this can cause job market to melt.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: Exponential growth in CTC is the only goal of the job seekers. The current market is all about cashing in on one's capabilities and potential.
- Meat: Candidates are concerned about job challenges so that it can appear as part of the resume. And this in turn creates more opportunities for increased salary jump. It is rare to come across talent that pursues challenges simply for the sake of it, without the money agenda.

- Meaning: There are a few in the system, who are concerned about making a difference through their work. They take more responsibility and try to bring in as much innovation as possible to create a better life for the rest of the world.
- Mode: Those who wish to pursue meaning in their jobs also require more space. Today's organizations are more responsive and are ready to offer the autonomy that such quality talent needs, when pursuing tall goals. In startups, the entrepreneurial mode is practiced, since as a model, they are working with accelerated processes in order to meet product deadlines.

At our centres in Hyderabad and Bangalore, I initiated permanent work from home, before the Pandemic!

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

JIT is not possible. JIT cannot give you cost effectiveness, quality and sustainability. Immediate joiners are the ones fueling JIT. For JIT, companies target those who are in the notice period. It means such people are already tested. The normal notice period for exit is 90 days. If this is revised to 30 days, the challenge can be reduced significantly. People cannot back out in the last minute.

In India, the legal framework for gig workforce is not mature yet. The JIT scenarios arise because often the sales teams commit to the customer, without consulting TA team.

Pipeline concept does not work. People cannot stay on the bench. The moment they find out they do not have a client project, they are not interested.



Arif Khan

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*Arif has 20+ Years of work
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How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

The post-Internet phase in recruiting is a giant leap from the earlier era. Job portals came into the picture with several features. IT companies too embraced technology in a big way to streamline their operations and became sharper outfits in the process. But in the last few years, scope has changed. Demand has increased. Because of this upsurge, dedicated recruitment teams came in. With this increased focus, a few of the differences I can think of are:

- Speed of hiring: Gone are the days when we used to have rolling forecast of talent for 6 months. There would be planning exercises and then the execution would happen. Today, the cycle times are shorter and the speed of hiring has been catalyzed.
- Fierce competition for talent: With severe talent shortage and demand swings, there is fierce competition for talent.
- Fewer evaluation rounds: Recruitment process during the earlier times would start with physical presence of checking the candidate, assessing for culture and then move on to the interview stage. Today, thanks to remote working and sudden talent requirements, candidates go through fewer interviews and with reasonable job fitment, offers are closed.
- Outsourcing interviews: Earlier, internal panels of organizations used to conduct level 1 and level 2 interviews. Now, evaluation activities are being outsourced. Interviews for example, are being effectively conducted by outside partners, and so are campus related assessment tests.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Understand the organization from a recruiter's perspective: The recruiting officer is the brand ambassador of the organization. So, he needs to get across the company related messages as well as the job requirements to the candidate in a very engaging manner.
- Understand the technology: The operational world of IT is full of jargons. The recruiter should be familiar with the difference between a Java and Full Stack developer, front end and back end, Microsoft and other technologies.
- Sales and negotiating skills: Today's recruiting officers and managers are expert bargainers.
- Market intelligence: Talent acquisition managers need 360 degree view of talent landscape - which skills are hot, which companies are hiring, what are the strategies of the day that individual companies are employing to hire, what are the compensation trends, ... so on..

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply: There is severe shortage of quality talent. One of the reasons is that the number of fresh graduates from engineering colleges has decreased.
- Quality: While the total talent base across the industry is huge, quality talent is in short supply. The need for upskilling and reskilling is becoming critical. Unless there are strong initiatives in this direction, organizations will keep looking outside for mission-critical projects.
- Mindset: Opportunities have tripled in last few years. This demand upsurge has created a race for monetary benefits. Talent market has become very volatile witnessing high attrition. Liquidity of the human asset being high, stability of organizations is being impacted.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: For junior to mid-levels, money is presently the predominant factor. Earlier, money was not a differentiator between offers. But today, money is a strong differentiator, and hence the discussion strongly revolves around money.
- Meat: As I recollect, only 25-30% of the candidates for software services companies, evince keen interest in the discussion on kind of work, customers, opportunity to work with latest technologies, etc. This percentage has dropped to half in the last couple of years.

- Meaning: In the junior to mid-levels, meaning in the job is not presently a priority. Only about 5% of the segment may align their work with meaning.
- Mode: The freedom to accomplish goals is largely a leadership prerogative. Leaders of divisions and of organizations, have the first 3Ms, viz., money, meat and meaning well covered. Their goals are wealth creation, brand reinforcement and market expansion. They need and aspire for room for strategic decision making, from the board. At an organizational level, the leader cascades the culture down the organization.

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Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

Just-in-Time, as a practice, is akin to axing your own feet. It is not scalable and is fraught with several issues. By design, it is the result of a lack of plan. Holistically, it is a big challenge for a lateral hire to become a part of the organization in an accelerated manner. There are peer group acceptance issues and cultural fitment issues. In the earlier process, recruiters would check background and behavior and then hire. With JIT, all these are given a miss because everyone is in a hurry. It all percolates to demand. If this practice is allowed to continue, 2-3 quarters down, it could turn a bubble that could burst.



Arun Prasad

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Talent Acquisition Leader with 18 years of rich experience in designing & managing the entire recruitment life cycle process for campus, lateral and strategic/leadership hiring for global locations.

Prior to Ivy, he has worked at UBS, Bank of America, JP Morgan and Headstrong Singapore.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Candidates' market: 10 years back, market belonged to the recruiter. Now, it is candidates' market. Post-Covid, lot of opportunities have sprung up in unexpected ways. The companies were anxious of the Covid effect and had even started reducing their staff strength. But they had to cope with unexpected demand surge.
- Technology: 15-20 years back, HR departments never could boast of being tech-savvy. But today's recruiters are more digital recruiters. They are now more tech savvy. In fact, if they are not, they will fall behind.
- Expansion of recruitment operations: Because of competition, there are today more sub-roles that address more resource functions within recruitment. These include content creation, onboarding, branding, ... It is a necessity because of the growth of breadth of functions within recruiting. 20 years back, there was no need to explain the job function. Today, recruiters have to speak about the details in the technical questions. So, they are more involved in technology. Branding today is more about the details. Even the big companies are in need of communicating the job role to the last line. Companies are looking at MetaVerse to give people an experience of AI and VR to give them a feel of how they will be working.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Data driven recruitment: Recruitment as a function uses state-of-the-art solutions. Darwin Box and Success Factors are examples of ATS that are widely in use by recruitment teams. These reflect the analytics piece that delivers the competitive edge. The fierce market realities and the high stakes in resource mobilization are driving companies to deploy the latest in predictive analytics through machine learning.
- Digitally savvy recruiter (with high social quotient!): Wherever there is presence of IT professionals, you can expect the shadow of a recruiter! They will be visible in various social media. They are keen to spot and net the hot resources.
- Change management: The ability to manage change in the way things have evolved with time will be a defining factor. I think we have experienced in this post-Pandemic phase of how the dynamics in demand can swing the entire supply chain. The industry may have to be prepared for more intense swings. We will soon see the need for more mature HR policies, because you cannot forever keep hunting. The cycle has to stabilize at some point and at that time, this will demand change management abilities of the leadership.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply: Sourcing of early to mid-level professionals is the critical aspect. Majority of attrition is also in this segment. Cost per hire is on a spiral rise. Considering that supply is scarce, companies are spending a lot on digital marketing. Earlier, it was the mainstream print media which hogged the budgets, but today, we are spending several times more on presence in digital media.
- Hiring the best candidate: Very quickly, companies have understood that the old school's search of the best candidate is now a mirage! The perfect Mr. X is not there. Instead, the conversation is now about the percentage of fitment. 70% is the outer limit!
- Mindset: Offer drops are killing. And this shows the new gen's way of thinking. Irrespective of the size of the company and the brand appeal, offer drops are hurting every company. Earlier generation may have considered this mindset mean. But today, there is no place for such niceties.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: 60% of the students on campuses prefer to go with a known brand. Glassdoor provides salary

information to all. At entry to mid-levels, candidates' importance of money may be 40%. At middle levels, demand for more money will reduce to 20%. In fact, the higher you go, significance of money among the 4Ms will come down.

- Meat: Importance of meat depends on the quality of the professional. Those who are working on core product development, will value the job content. Such people will place content importance at 40%. Meat is important because the future prospects are better with better meat on the resume!
- Meaning: At entry to growing up levels, this is hardly in picture. But as you can expect, with money and meat behind, thought of more meaning comes in.
- Mode: Entrepreneurship is usually a bug that bites at the young level. You can find this in higher quality professionals in core development roles. It is the role of HR leadership to identify such restless minds and synergize their aspirations with organizational goals. by providing them more room and authority and more importantly, the freedom to fail as well.

Because of competition, there are now more sub-roles that address more resource functions within recruitment.

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

As a talent acquisition manager, when you are in the market, you have to fight. You cannot preach at that time. While some recruiters are of the view that JIT means snatching a candidate who has served the notice period, JIT can evolve in the IT industry with more wholesome features. With better change management, we can see innovative ways of ensuring JIT. Maybe, better alliances with partners can help.



Felix Jeffery

Director - Strategic Accounts & Global HR Mobility @ HTC Global Services www.htcinc.com

He has 26 years of multi-functional experience in the IT industry with particular focus on Talent Acquisition. His earlier workplaces include Stratsys Consultancy, Consolidated Cybernetics, and Pacific Institute of Technology

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- 20 years back, it was about adopting technology and having sufficient investment to set up the IT infrastructure. Technology was slowly getting to be a part of people's lives. I too was excited about computers and in fact, we used to assemble and sell 286, 386 and the line-up that followed. And as software prospects improved, everyone wanted to be part of the IT boom. US was the destination. Today, it is about adapting to newer technologies. So many new flavors, tech streams, it is indeed a dynamic transformation and technology revolution!
- Earlier, recruiting was happening through mailers and telephone. Companies used to wait for people as they would come out of training centers and hand out pamphlets. One could say the approach was of human touch at a very small scale. The talent pool was limited. There was no or little awareness about how to build career paths. Then, there was the brain drain. And a few years later, reverse brain drain occurred. Infosys, TCS including the top 5 technology companies started bagging exciting offshore work, which resulted in getting the talent back to India.
- Today, it would be difficult to imagine a recruiter's life without technology. The sheer volume of profiles, the complexities of follow up and finally onboarding making talent acquisition one of the most thankless jobs! In fact, the recruiter is responsible for building a company's intellectual capital which defines the company's success.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Partnerships: Leaders in talent acquisition must ensure synergy and thus smooth operational flows. Strategic associations or alliances, like seeking 3rd party panelists for interviews can help. Without compromising on due diligence, leaders must be innovative in making use of partners to ensure quality of hire because pre-hiring is an important stage.
- KYC (Know Your Company): Recruiters need to have knowledge base and up-to-date information of the organization and complete understanding of the organization culture and technology areas. The recruiters should reflect and echo the vision and mission statement of the organization and play a role as the brand ambassador to attract the right talent.
- Roadmap for Hires: Ensuring excellence of human resource requires continuous attention. One must ask, "Do you want to upskill? What is your immediate aspiration? What are your long-term career objectives?" Learning and development is a continuous process and it is the way to stay ahead of competition.
- Train, hire, deploy: Going forward, Campus sourcing seems to be the best model from a cost point of view as well as strategic fitment point of view, although the resource may not be project-ready. It is for sure a investment for the future. The resource comes at relatively lesser cost and it is possible to embed more responsibility and commitment to stay.
- Differentiators: Understand your key differentiators and showcase them to stay-afloat in competition.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply: The post-Pandemic phase is interesting. The new-normal in the talent market has created access to new geographies and beyond borders, in fact borderless! You no longer fight wars between Hyderabad, Bangalore, and Chennai. Home is where the pro is and the war for talent is through the social media. In fact, I have created an analytical tool, "Resource Mindset Analysis", to provide assessment and show metrics on the probability of the resource joining the organization.
- Quality: The present focus is on volume of the talent numbers, provided the quality is at an acceptable level, which in the industry today is around 70%. I believe in the present flux, there is some compromise on the quality, but soon this could get fixed with constant training and productivity monitoring.
- Attitude: Of course, when you are pampered with offers and choices, there could be attitude issues. One needs to accept this as a passing phase and play a mature role in creating more conducive climates

around us. Resource demand Vs supply Vs increased hire cost Vs recession is a roller coaster in the IT industry and both the organization and resources should realize and accept this evolution.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: The 4 M's are interrelated. But at this point, money is assuming a larger-than-life share in an IT professional's life. Given the market situation, it is natural. But it may not be healthy in the long run, either to the individual or to Indian IT industry. It is not difficult to look at options.
- Meat: The people who opt to work on product management look at this aspect, because work challenge creates inner happiness.
- Meaning: One can expect this feature in professionals with higher order thinking skills. They see higher challenges contributing to greater good for humanity. This is evident with senior professionals.
- Mode: The bulk of the industry is content with a corporate mode. The people who seek challenges also seek more freedom and thus the entrepreneurial mode of work. And I feel the work at home culture will bring more flexibility and work-life balance.

I have created "Resource Mindset Analysis", an analytical tool to provide assessment and show metrics on the probability of the resource joining the organization.

Pipeline Hiring - Recruiting for Flexibility

Pipeline Hiring. This provides more flexibility to the customer and cost savings as well. While the resources might have a skill gap of 30-40%, they can always be trained on the job. These resources can also be deployed at client site for a pilot-run before they are included into the project team as ONE FTE. The "shadow" to "dedicated resource" transformation happens much faster.



Jaideep Reddy

Vice President at J.P. Morgan.

Proven Recruitment Leader in Technology Product Recruitment for the last 18 years across India/ APAC & Australia Region.

Jaideep has 20 years of experience in HR, with most part of it in the IT industry. In the area of talent acquisition, his leadership has been effective. He was earlier the Talent Acquisition Manager at IDFC First Bank, Danske IT and Support Services, Genpact, Accenture, DXC, Wipro and Vinciti Networks.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Beyond portals: Earlier, at the core of recruiting, were the job portals, which used to house resumes of job seekers. Now, the portals are only a part because recruiters are looking for additional details. So, along with the resume, to check out the finer details about the candidate, there are other solutions which help in fine combing and picking high quality talent.
- Specialization: Earlier, if a candidate had experience in a large organization, he/she was considered a quality talent. Today, recruiters believe it is not about the time spent, but about the quality of work in the present organization. More importantly, specialization is the name of the game. If you are not specialized, there is no role for you in the evolving IT journey.
- Salary hike: A salary hike of 25-30% was the norm during change of jobs, earlier. Now there is no norm.
- Productivity: Earlier, efficiency and work ethic meant more time in the office. Today, the number of hours one spends at work is not relevant. It is more about productivity. A recruiter's key question will be: Is this person going to be productive?
- Offer acceptance: Earlier, once an offer was made, it was sure that the candidate would accept it. Now there is no guarantee. That is the kind of ethics in today's IT industry. The acceptance to number of offers ratio is 1:6 or 1:7!

- Emerging importance of work-life balance: Work no longer determines the way of life. Today, it is life that defines the quality of work. They are asking, "Can I work part-time for some time and later take up a full-time job"? This is a big change. Consequently, a person's ability to work across time zones and from remote places, becomes important.
- Contractors are now a way of life. Independent consultants as a talent segment will become stronger in India in 2-3 years. They will likely be super specialists with acknowledged value addition possibilities.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Hyper personalization: TA managers will have the all-important task of "sourcing the right person for the job". One may call this statement a cliché, but it will now turn out to be a complex exercise in hyper personalization. TA manager will ensure that the candidate's potential from all aspects is in strong alignment with the job and organization's goals.
- Purpose of hiring: If you are building something great, you need to bring in talent that is great. In other words, the principles of strategic hiring will bear out more strongly.
- Commitment: The 2-way commitment from the employer and the potential candidate will together make for a great engagement and to the organization's future. A good way to achieve this is to invite the shortlisted candidates and explain the job scope and ask how they can contribute. The employer gives a glimpse of the technology environment, the domain perspective, the impact the work will make in the market and to life on the planet. Once the connect between their work and the bigger picture is clearer, the candidates begin to see the impact they can make and be motivated to perform to potential.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply: There is a big shortage in select set of skills in areas like data, digital transformation, Python and analytics. The demand may become more acute in the next 18-24 months, especially in domains like BFSI, e-commerce and healthcare.
- Mindset: Candidates' mindset is largely driven by compensation. The overriding concern of the candidate is profile value over time, which is the net career worth at any given point of time.
- Quality: There is a job for everyone across the spectrum. The talent requirement is like a pyramid in this \$200 billion industry. Post-Covid, digital transformation is not location-constrained.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: People today have very high expectations in terms of monetary rewards. It is also true that a decent lifestyle today is much more expensive than earlier.
- Meat: When it comes to purpose of role, nobody wants to do the mundane. Going up the value chain, is a core aspect of the modern techie. And also appreciable is the clarity of the technology environment. The candidates want to know this and the role bit, before discussing money.
- Meaning: True hiring is when the candidate is aligned with the organization's goals. Technology is only a route to achieve the broader goals. So, it is a must that the candidate sees the connect between his work and the last mile of the organization's solutions. Unless the meaning goes deep inside, we do not rise from inside as true humanity. Everything else is incidental.
- Mode: The root cause of several cases of attrition is independence, or lack of it. Employees resist micro-management. They seek autonomy. Organizations that do not address this, will be affected in the long run.

Hyper personalization: TA managers will have the all-important task of "sourcing the right person for the job".

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

I feel, at a certain level, say 1-7 years, JIT is possible. At senior levels, it is not good and healthy, because ultimately as an employer, you are competing with your own industry peers for the same talent. And in the process, we become responsible for cost escalation. We need to realize why a job has moved from Silicon Valley to India. If the reverse will happen because of cost escalation, what do we do with talent supply?



Jose M Herrerra Perea

Chief Executive Officer of ROI Partners, and a C-Level Advisor having 20 years of global success delivering remarkable growth in business.

Jose has tremendous insights into the complex dynamics of talent acquisition, apart from being a commercially astute, tech innovator and award-winning executive with a solid history of spearheading complex turnarounds of +\$200MM.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Automation: There has been a huge leap from the past in the way the entire recruitment function has evolved. It is nothing short of a revolution in technology. For example, with ATS, application screening, processing of candidates and automation of testing has become possible. Similarly, in other facets of recruiting, technology and automation have become standard operating procedures.
- Specialization: There will be increased need for professionals with specialization in specific technology areas and/or verticals. This is because with industry penetration and more insights, the solutions that will be created will reflect this advanced maturity. Consequently, recruitment processes now are aligned to these specific streams.
- Fitment: Earlier, focus was on skill sets. Today 80% of the interview time is spent to find out if the candidate is the person with the right values, how she/he suits the organization, because with good fitment, more longevity of the hired candidate in the organization can be expected. Skills can be acquired. But mindset is difficult to change.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Clarity of role: How well does the company brief the role to the candidate is a crucial success factor. For this, the recruiter should have clarity of the skills required. This will help in better assessment and evaluation.
- Effective and engaging evaluation process: The interview and other aspects of the evaluation process should be looked at as opportunities to make an impression on the candidate. If the candidate is selected, it is a great first welcome. And if the candidate does not make it, engage with her/him. It is important to create a positive experience, irrespective of the outcome because this is the first interaction with the organization, as a brand.
- Good onboarding: There is a relationship between a good onboarding for the first 6 months, the subsequent performance in the company and employee retention in their first year of employment. If the employee is able to find his/her feet in the organization, this process becomes a strong foundation for the future journey in the organization. During the process of onboarding, the new employee gets to learn the DNA of the organization and is motivated to contribute effectively in the future.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply: From a global perspective, I think in technology roles, the chasm is increasing in an accelerated sense. The world has begun to seek digital transformation. For this, there is a huge requirement of technology professionals. However, for roles across functional areas like sales, marketing, accounting, etc., there is balance.
- Mindset: It is common knowledge that new generation employees have less loyalty to their employers. However, it is also true that people avoid job change because changing jobs is stressful for employees. So, what does this mean? They seek change because their expectations from the job change exceeds the anxieties of job change. The key is expectations' management. Earlier people knew that they had to work hard. Today, not many employees think beyond 3 years' timeframe.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

Today, the universe of technology professionals is large. It may not be possible to singularly identify traits common to all. We could look at the preferences of employees, who are part of product development companies.

- Money: Of the 4 Ms, this is most important for the entry and junior level professionals. Money

becomes last priority for leadership roles, not because commensurate compensation is not important. But more so, because they do not feel the need to ask.

- Meat: For the entry and junior level segment, the quality of the job role and the resultant learning hold great value, since this is the foundation of their future growth. In my opinion, meat is priority #2 for this segment. Also, once the initial years are spent on high quality of work, the future employers get the confidence to entrust their high challenging work to such achievers. So, good money comes without asking!
- Meaning: This is a natural progression in terms of objectives. When the first 2 Ms are a given, the next step on the ladder is meaning. As a professional acquires more experience, both in terms of technology and leadership, the urge to impart greater meaning to the roles becomes higher. Importance-wise, for senior roles, Meaning: 50% Money: 10% Meat: 10%
- Mode: Leadership demands more space. So, more responsibility demands more freedom. This usually happens in senior roles. Also, young professionals, who are brimming with ideas seek more space and money to explore. Such professionals too value independence. This however, is a small percentage.

There is a direct relationship between a good onboarding for the first 6 months and subsequent performance in the company.

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

The question is, "What is the reasonable and fastest time to bring in the right person?" In the past, we have filled positions in quick time. But longevity has suffered. JIT does not work in producing long-standing employees. If we can address the question "Are those people ready to work for you in a positive way?", we can proceed. Markets have become volatile. JIT is a compromise. May be partners can help.

Going forward, organizations will learn the lessons of JIT: plan the hire and reduce the cycle time of recruitment.



Kishore T

Talent Acquisition Manager at Zen3 Infosolutions, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tech Mahindra.

Kishore has over 20 years of multi-functional and diversified experience in the IT industry. While Talent Acquisition remains the core focus, he has a well-rounded perspective of operations, acquired over the years through working at organizations like TRX, Mskills and Teletext.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Unimaginable reach: More than the last decade, during the last 2 years, no one would have imagined the change in reach. If I am in Hyderabad, I would not think of outside this city to source my required talent. But today, my market virtually has no boundaries!
- Technology: Nobody foresaw the potential of the technologies we had. The Pandemic forced the entire industry to adapt Work-from-home option! People can work remotely from anywhere. Infrastructure cost is reduced. With no seat and transportation cost, there is a reduction in cost per employee. Remote / work-from-home paved way for better productivity, since the commute time and flexibility kicked in for better time management.
- Online medium has bloomed both in urban and rural areas. With complete cycle of recruitment going online, the potential was always in place, but we did not realize it until it was forced by the Pandemic.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Attitude: If a candidate has the right attitude and is committing, then 80% onboarding is done. An additional principle that I follow is: Discipline, Consistency, Quality. When we begin to embed this across our teams, best practices become a way of life professionally and personally..

With such attitude, when recruitment teams interact with potential candidates, excellence is displayed at every touch point.

- Give the candidates a good experience. Even if they are not joining now, they will call you 6 months down the road. Moreover, a good experience in today's world gets shared through the social media. This kind of recommendation from another peer holds lot of value.
- Engage the candidate: This is the art of a recruiter. Build a friendly conversation. Some candidates may be tough to talk to. They may not divulge much initially. But later they will, when the recruiter engages with a friendly and personal touch.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply: Because of remote working, the market has indeed become expansive. This scenario is very nascent and the dynamics are likely to create more possibilities in future. A combination of technology and aggressive hiring practices is likely to see more innovation in retention and referrals, through effective engagement. Teams have both performers and non-performers. Closer management of teams will address the need gaps for upskilling of non-performers and bring them up to speed. This calls for effective micro-management practices, where you encourage team level leaders to identify people who have scope for improvement and encourage them to go for upskilling.
- Quality: Remote working has brought the need for consistent work metrics. In product development, metrics are easier. While individuals' fitment to their roles is a matter of discussion, communication is another issue that may need attention. Some techies are good in technology. But they come short in communication skills.
- Attitude: Candidates are getting tougher in their discussion and bargaining stance. It is a natural result of their perceived vantage position across the table. An engagement approach will help in building the bonds and taking the relationship forward. This new-found importance due to scarcity of talent may get equalized in time and then sanity may be restored. There may be a role for seniors in the organization to play mentors and help the younger lot in the billable category to have their feet strongly rooted.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: The younger generation is aspirational. They understand that the current market is hot from a compensation perspective. Hence they are keen to strike it rich.
- Meat: On the technology front, preference of techies is product development from scratch, not working on patch work. They seek immense satisfaction working on ideas end-to-end. There is opportunity for interaction with clients, to add technical skills and vertical domain skills. And as they work toward product release goals, they relish the leadership and the space they get to acquire entrepreneurial skills also. In the process, they are exposed to the different aspects of the business and work flow.
- Meaning: As teams get to work on more exciting projects, they are exposed to the end user situations. Some of these can be important and game changing for the common man. In such cases, the techies do take pride. But it is not that they seek such projects only.
- Mode: As techies in the conventional services sector, not many look for the entrepreneurial part. They are more focused on 9 to 5 corporate mode. The opportunities too are limited.

Discipline, Consistency, Quality. When we begin to embed this across our teams, best practices become a way of life.

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

Just-in-Time is the DNA of our team, though it is very challenging. We need to first convince internal client in sync with external clients, roles are niche and not easy to fill. We should be open for a buy-out and premium pay at times in addition to roll offers as a back-up for last minute surprises. Way forward is to hire-train-deploy model and is a logical way to cater to immediate needs. Clients are also aware of the deficit of skills and the market dynamics are ever changing and Just-in-Time is the only immediate option majorly.



Navin Patel

Global TA Head at Affine. An expert in Talent Acquisition domain with around 2 decades of experience and an innovative strategist who has risen to the top of a diverse, global matrix organization that cherishes ethnicities, Navin carries a good blend of experience and exposure gained from TA Ops, talent sourcing, recruitment delivery, and formulating staffing plans.

A keynote/panel speaker in HR forums like ET HR world, and institutions including IIM & IITs, he has earlier worked with Mindtree, Brillio, Accenture, First Advantage and Puravankara.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Technologies have improved. Processes have gone online. Proctoring mechanisms are in place, and there are exciting online applications. Joining formalities are now online, and the good part is that these are also accepted by the IT industry.
- Sourcing or talent pool: Earlier we would search 1 or 2 portals like Naukri and we could find our ideal candidates. LinkedIn was a professional networking site. Now LinkedIn has evolved as a hunting ground for talent. It is more focused on the jobs' side and has multiple filters. Products like Talent Insights from LinkedIn or Talent Pulse from Naukri, give recruiters detailed perspectives of the recruiting landscape. There are also sites like Github and sources like Indeed. One can also hunt for talent on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. So, as a recruiter, I have the challenge of monitoring so many platforms.
- Earlier it was an employer's market. What was important was employer branding to attract and retain good talent. Now, it is a candidate's market, thanks to the anticipatory demand for talent. Employer branding has made way for talent branding. This has resulted in offer on offers, out-reach efforts and aggressive measures to attract and retain good talent, whatever it takes!

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Speed: Recently, in a survey among talent acquisition leaders, about the factors that needed transformation. 60% identified hiring speed. The entire process of assessment, interview rounds, offer approval process, documentation, normally takes about 15-20 days. With candidates having many offers and looking to make choices in quick time, companies will lose out with longer processes.
- Overall candidate experience: This is a big differentiator. It is not just a recruiter's responsibility to sell the job and the organization. Every touch point is crucial, because the candidate is evaluating at all levels if the organization is a good place to work. So, there needs to be open communication from different sources about the organization, their roles, the kind of work that happens, across multiple touch points.
- Analytics: Talent acquisition managers need to analyze data and track important factors for a particular area of the organization. Customized data analytics and review of the same from time to time is important. Insights come from better use of technology. And technology fluency is important for TA managers. But it is more important to understand the nuances of recruiting. Recruiting is not only a process-oriented endeavor. Effectiveness counts more.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply: Most of the battle for talent is in the billable category. And 70% of the supply is from lateral hiring in the experience range of 3-8 years. Break-up figures for volume of hiring is along expected lines: 50% in services, 20% in product companies, 10-15% captives and the balance for startups.
- Quality: Indian talent pool has the volume and the quality, which is a distinct competitive advantage vis-à-vis other countries. When global events bring uncertainty to business, the IT industry in India has a better resilience to withstand the shocks, and hence a preferred destination. Moreover, with talent cost in India being a fifth of what it costs on-site, the first option is usually to move the job to India.
- Mindset of candidates: It can be captured in one line - to have the best of everything. Earlier, employees were weary of changing jobs, because cultural adjustment was a key issue. But now, in the experience levels of 3-8 years, mobility is high. 3 jobs in 5 years counts as a healthy average.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: Expectedly, it has been all about money play, especially in the experience range of 3-8 years. The candidates see the current bargaining power as a great opportunity to rise up in the quality of life. Moreover with global travel opportunities

dwindling, there is pressure from within to make the best of what is on hand.

- Meat: This becomes the differentiator between similar offers on CTC. A job offer with compelling job content in terms of challenges, can swing the decision, because of the long term prospects.
- Meaning: It does not count much at the lower levels. But at senior levels, since the other 3Ms are practically the same across offers, the opportunity to seek meaning by making societal impact can be a strong motivator.
- Mode: The new business models in organizations encourage professionals to be more entrepreneurial in approach, pretty early in careers. So, for the new generation, this too can be a differentiator.

Overall, the 4M model can be used as an aggregate count for rating a job on a few key components.

Candidate experience is a big differentiator. It is not just a recruiter's responsibility to sell the job and the organization. Every touch point is now crucial.

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

Just-in-Time is an ideal state to have. If organizations learn to adapt and play, the challenge may be less daunting.

We have full time employees and contract staff. Contract staff is evolving, unlike earlier. Like in US, one can look at contract staff as viable, enduring options. Today, there are skill-based communities and platforms, where access to remote developers across skill areas is possible. With imaginative ways, organizations can reach talent from any part of the world and get work done.

There is a role that vendor partners can play. As true extended arms of the organization, they need to bring in agility, sensitivity and an outreach that can complement the TA strategies effectively.



Ruchika Singh Tanwar

Associate Director Talent Acquisition, she is heading Talent Acquisition at UST BlueConch, where she is defining recruitment strategy and process to meet business need on time and efficiency.

She has over 15 years of focused experience in the field of HR in IT industry, having worked with organizations like Capgemini, Xpanxion International, Quickstart Global and Os2i.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Earlier companies would choose people. Now people choose companies! India has for long time been a talent market where people chased jobs. But now, the unthinkable is happening. Companies are targeting and going all out to acquire good talent.
- Companies are looking beyond the traditional way of hiring now. The limit is defined only by how creative you can get to break newer barriers. The virtual world has opened new doors.
- External market is changing. "But how can we change internally" we ask. You do not anymore give importance to degrees on a resume while hiring. You see the person, engage in a conversation and then see the potential for future productivity. Ultimately, it is the individual that matters. Learning potential and attitude to learn will be the key factors to look for in talent.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Branding: Branding is the sum total of the interactions at all levels - including individual level. For example, when recruiters talk technical aspects fluently, it builds confidence in the candidate about this organization, since even the recruiter is able to engage through core knowledge base. The image that

the recruiter presents to the candidate is that this company has a pervasive tech culture. There can be other similar differentiators for an organization that can go down as branding elements.

- Technology has revolutionized the practices: The essential recruitment framework remains the same. But technology has made the whole process of engaging with the new recruit from the initial resume screening to the final onboarding stage - consistent, measurable and visible.
- Experience: Deliver a memorable evaluation experience through the entire cycle of recruitment. This is seen as one of the branding highlights for talent acquisition. The thinking is that the candidate may not join now, but could be a target for future too.
- Alignment with business: Talent acquisition is now strongly aligned to the future of the business. Top management has realized this. TA teams add value to business and have become accountable. This is indeed the new paradigm. But often, we are so deeply stuck in processes that we do not go beyond to align with the bigger picture of the organization. When TA is involved in driving business growth, the talent picture and the demand picture are well integrated across the supply chain. There is better visibility on the resource side and more clarity on how this affects business dynamics.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- There is scarcity of talent because every customer is talking of transformation. Because of this scarcity, candidates have more options. Consequently, every firm is now hiring strongly even in Tier 2 towns. Virtual world too has opened up possibilities. We are not limited to looking for talent in our city alone. We are scouting for talent across continents also: like in Mexico and Poland. The key factors we look for are attitude and learning potential, even if the candidates do not have adequate communication skills. Organizations should constantly invest in capabilities building, not just at junior and middle levels, but for business leaders also.
- Quality: We believe the output of the professionals is a result of the systemic success of the organization's processes. While the intrinsic capabilities of an individual can be enhanced over time, the organization can invest in raising the bar through upskilling.
- Mindset: With money becoming an overriding consideration, there is no commitment and empathy, even in senior candidates.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: Compensation is today the top factor for talent acquisition. In recruitment, quantum of money play may be more in product development companies, as compared to service companies. But weightage for money factor may be more for services companies.
- Meat: People prefer product companies for the quality and content of the work. In the middle management levels, more weightage is given for this factor when compared to services companies.
- Meaning: Not many junior to middle management techies may give a deeper thought to this. But organizations can bring about involvement by sharing the big picture with their employees on a regular basis. Employees find meaning in their roles and in their work through engagement and inclusive policies.
- Mode: It is mostly when the employee is taking on leadership roles, does he need independence and authority. The outliers will need this and get it too.

Ultimately, it is the individual that matters. Learning potential and attitude to learn will be the key factors to look for in talent.

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

It depends on how proactive you are to coming business demand in next 6 months to 1 year. The readiness with which we are working, is helping us to hire. 45-50% is proactive hiring, because of the business alignment to strategize and move forward. It is always the case that we cannot predict market demand fully. As much proactive as we can get, as much less dependent we can be on just-in-time hiring.

We are now changing from what we can do, to having conversations about what the customer needs.



Seema Iyer

Presently HR Advisor to startups.

Seema has held various leadership positions for over 20 years across organizations in technology and space industries, including as a CHRO at MetricStream, USA, SSL, Hewlett-Packard Enterprise, SAP, HP and Sun Microsystems.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Proactive: Recruiting practices have become more proactive than reactive. Workforce planning will be based on demand. Organizations need to be able to forecast demand. This is possible when you try to figure out the trigger points. A simple rule can be that for every product being added, you need 'X' number of pre-sales people, 'Y' number on support and so on. So, if you have the product launch timelines, you have the demand numbers. Then you work towards building a pipeline of people based on where they are located and the skillsets. Our effort is to network with them and keep them warm.
- Less focused in an area: Today, with remote working possibilities, the restrictions on being located within specific areas have gone away. Recruiters have more freedom to source the right talent from anywhere.
- There has to be awareness not only on the content of the question but how it is phrased, how it is asked, and who are the interviewers, to root out any inherent bias in the interviews.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Passion of the manager and the recruiter is important. The candidate sees the organization's energy through them. So all things being equal, what can be the reason for a candidate to choose a specific company? It is the enthusiasm and passion of the manager to get the right talent. In fact, passion is the reason how unicorns hire promising talent. You need to make the other person visualize the dream and urge him to get on to the team.
- Leadership. Youngsters prefer organizations which have clout in the marketplace, due to thought leadership and/or market leadership. While one can argue how a startup can source talent, it is true that dominance is a preferred attribute when it comes to sourcing talent.
- Career development. Articulation of the career path to the potential employee is important. Does the candidate see the organizational training and growth? How well are we able to demonstrate the success of the existing employees? Answers to these questions will pave the way for a productive hire.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply: The last couple of years have seen lots of quick changes. Due to retirement of employees and COVID, there was a significant shortfall of employees in the workforce. That forced tech industry to digitize and leverage technology. In fact, tech companies were unable to keep pace with the pent up demand for digital transformation. And they hired in big numbers, which now in hindsight was overhiring. Then, we saw, massive downsizing in the same companies which has impacted the early talent in a big way. So, one solution is to offshore work and keep the balance.
- Quality: Over the last 3 years, quality of the available talent has gone up. Especially with the new generation, they are thinking in different terms. We can leverage their thought processes and be smarter. I see this happening globally through internship and college hiring.
- Mindset: A key question I ask my TA team: Are we interviewing them on basic technical stuff? Or are we looking at their potential? Training is possible in may be 3 months. Do they have the mindset or attitude to learn - that is the key.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: Freshers are talking clout. Where I am working, first priority is a mix of meat and the

meaning piece. Second thing is money. With some experience, money acquires more importance. And when the experience level reaches 10+ years - the individual has more expenses to deal with and hence needs more money. As you reach higher echelons, money is more a consequence.

- Meat: Common thinking at entry level is not to think much about where the career is going. Just join a leader. It is safe to invest one's early career in such places. A little time into the career, they are looking at where the career is going. They now begin to value freedom and mentorship. Effective mentorship makes for better quality of work and more challenges. So at level 2, meat gets priority.
- Meaning: People begin to look for increasing meaning in their roles with experience, involvement and mentorship. A good mentor helps you in enhancing the quality of work and provides clarity of the bigger picture, which in essence lends more meaning.
- Mode: While unicorns provide more entrepreneurial work culture, corporate models also allow for more space in decision making across levels. From an employee's perspective, the current preference is for flexibility in work.

*A key question ...
are we looking
at their potential?*

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

Just in time is how the business demands are. Individual companies manage their resources to be in readiness to address immediate opportunities. The contractor model reflects this scenario. The India-US piece actually got going because of sudden spikes in market demand. The simplistic argument can be that one foresees the need and is proactive to address it. The pipeline model, wherein you are nurturing a defined segment of professionals, is effective. In this case, the organization is in engagement with this audience, without right away making the offer. For junior levels, I would go the contractor route because handling bulk volume requirements becomes viable. About the possibility of more Gig workforce in organizations, unless the legal aspects of employee benefits have clarity, I do not see this segment growing in a big way.



Seetharam

Senior Director, Talent Acquisition at Virtusa.

Seetharam has 17 years of global, multi-cultural and diversified experience in formulating & implementing Talent Acquisition strategies. His earlier workplaces include ABC Consultants, FIS Global, Cazar, TCS and HCL Technologies.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Processes: Recruiting processes have witnessed significant change - so wild to imagine that what seems common today, was non-existent a mere 10 years back! One must ascribe this to the Internet and how the recruiting fraternity has embedded this at the core of its search processes.
- Flexibility: Back in the 70s and 80s, employees were a single-organization employees. Come 90s, people welcomed job changes. But still, employers called the shots. While the new millennium did see changes, the Pandemic has caused tectonic shifts. Indeed, the power of choice has changed hands from the employer to the employee.
- Reach: The hiring manager's reach has become seamlessly expansive with multiple touch-points. Thanks to LinkedIn, Facebook, ... it has never been easier to touch a wide range of candidates. Earlier, it was through newspapers. Today, it is overwhelming that a recruiter can see thousands of candidate profiles from anywhere.
- Greater emphasis on employer branding: We are in a digital world, which means actions are transparent and news spreads like wild fire. There is opportunity and risk. Candidates can get all information about organizations - revenue, locations, compensation, clients ...

Glassdoor website gives information on companies that is useful to prospective employees to make their choices.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Data: Earlier, a candidate used to send a resume. Today, one can see his/her digital footprint. AI can help in discovering a candidate's strengths, and also confirm if the information on resume is correct. We will soon see bigger innovations in AI that will be useful for talent acquisition.
- Quality of hire: From a recruiting perspective, marketing orientation has become a default practice in talent acquisition. The prospective employee is the new potential customer and one can do nothing that does not impress him/her! This is because bad news travels faster than good news in today's social media.
- Video interview technologies: AI-driven platforms have indeed delivered paradigm shifts in efficiency. A voice mapping AI platform can do checking, biometrics and basic video interview. So, the human interface in level 1 is almost redundant!

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply is an issue. India Inc's hiring activity recorded a 16% year-on-year growth in March (*Economic Times: April 5, 2022*). With lateral hire becoming cost ineffective, they are going back to campus. With an average attrition of over 20% even in bigger companies, talent management has become more precarious! It may be a good idea to acquire colleges, own the curriculum and prepare graduating students as per your specific requirement.
- Mindset: Organizations are reducing expectations. One can no longer expect a candidate to be a readymade, perfect fit. 70% fitment to a job is considered acceptable. Reskilling, upskilling and learning are becoming important.
- Quality: Quality of talent is much better as compared to 3-4 years before. This is because organizations have been on campuses setting up centres of excellence - especially in Tier 3 colleges, by way of building industry-standard infrastructure, coaching faculty, and efficient work processes.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: Apart from direct compensation, employees welcome benefits other than money. Spend on

employees on wholesome causes is likely to be received better than through bigger cheques alone.

- Meat: Talent is looking for opportunity to make a difference. Progressive HR Managers adopt a 3 pointer catalyst, viz., transactional, tactical and strategic. Strategic involves big picture visualization and implementation. Transactional focuses on doing things right and ensuring that fundamentals are adhered to. And tactical is a little higher view of operations.
- Meaning: When the above-mentioned 3 catalyst model is adopted, people automatically see more meaning in their jobs. They can then see a bigger goal, or meaning in the job role.
- Mode: Employment models are changing. When people have more demanding power, flexibility is the result. Post-Pandemic, while organizations have announced work from home, a few ask for even more - like working for fewer hours at their convenience, splitting time among organizations, ...

The prospective employee is the new potential customer and one can do nothing that does not impress him/her!

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

The way I understand it is how fast we get the candidate to our door, say 15-30 days. It could be in different models like contract or a regular hire. Even if the candidate has to go through multilevel interviews, a recruiter's role is to ensure that the position is filled within the stipulated time as required by the client. Just-in-Time as a scenario, could come down with campus hiring going up. Today, in many organizations, campus hiring will scale up to 50%. So, a well planned hiring engine can be in place.



Sriram Rajagopal

Founder Director of Imaginetech and Stratos Studio, Sriram has over 28 years experience in the HR field, with focus on Talent Acquisition. His motto is to democratize talent discovery. He also plays a guiding role at Revature, a technology talent company.

He has earlier held top management positions in Diamondpick, Cognizant and Taj Hotels.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Discovery is easier: Recruiting as a practice virtually bears little resemblance to the scenario as it existed 10 years ago. The arrival of job sites made candidate discovery easier, thus accelerating down-the-line recruiting activities.
- Effectiveness of multiple channels has gone down. It is also true that no one channel has managed to stay effective over time.
- Shortage of bandwidth: Business growth has put a demand on the core resource, viz., talent. Increasing pressure on supply chain, and business demands have forced organizations to take a short cut and accept newer norms that favour the incoming talent. These include crowd sourcing, which involves reliance on outside help. Job fitment, which used to be the pride of yesteryears, is now perilously in the range of 50-70%. The number of levels of interviews/ assessments has reduced. Essentially, over 10 years, the process remains the same. But in terms of execution, it is nowhere as rigorous as it was 10 years ago.
- Pandemic: The watershed era in Indian IT will definitely be the Pandemic. TA managers will in future talk about:
 - Joining rates: We have experienced drastic reduction
 - Referrals: Peer group acceptance has greater credibility
 - Attrition: High attrition rates thanks to industry dynamics
 - Salary hike: During a job switch, what used to be 20% stands at 100% today

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Knowing where to look. 60% market is looking for same kind of people. The candidate has so many options. The differentiators will be factors like how you:
 - reach out
 - market
 - present your job content
 - brand your organization
- Speed of process: Shelf life of a candidate is typically 1-2 weeks. So, the TA Manager has to move quickly so that the talent quickly goes through all the activities within that time. Faster process time earns you goodwill from candidate. So, when the market is predominantly driven by compensation play, if you can score brownie points through faster pace of processing, the candidate can take it as an organization's DNA and decide to go with you.
- Flexible. Pre-Pandemic joining rates are indeed a thing of the past. Candidates today insist on a range of preferences. Remote work is one of them. They are reluctant to get back to the physical workplace. So, a success factor is how flexible the organization is on factors like compensation, remote work, ...

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply: Industry is growing at a faster rate of 15%, as compared to the earlier 8%. The normal \$20 billion industry is this year expected to touch \$30 billion. The additional \$10 billion is the demand that is behind the rapidly changing dynamics. Moreover, the industry went conservative in hiring talent from campuses in 2018. That has also created a ripple effect in the billable category of 3-15 years, which comprises 90-95% in terms of volume. There is more offshoring also because remote working is in. Most client organizations now do not insist on Offshore Development Centres.
- Quality: Given the fact that under pressure to bring in additional talent, and to cover attrition, there is no luxury of time to choose. So, one must allow for higher margin of error. In this case, the job fitment and alignment with the organizational culture are the compromises.
- Mindset: There is no loyalty. Brand does play a role. Foremost, "How much can I leverage?" is the factor.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: Money plays a major role in getting in. Because of the present day swings in compensation,

every candidate opens with the prime agenda of maximizing the compensation.

- Meat: Once the compensation issue is settled, the candidate's next focus will be on the quality of work. Early attrition results in cases where employees are not happy with what was promised and the actual job role. One third of the new recruits across levels, leave within the first 3 months because of the quality of work. The common grouse could be, "Instead of development, I am doing application support."
- Meaning: For some people in product companies, this can be a key motivating factor. They form a small subset and are outliers.
- Mode: From campus, the order of preference will be:
 - #1 product companies,
 - #2 scale up companies like Ola, Hankler, Sprinkler,
 - #3 GCCs.

This preference is also indicative of the aggregate view of the 4 Ms.

Over time, the talent acquisition process has remained the same. But in terms of execution, it is nowhere as rigorous as it was 10 years ago.

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

In the billable category, recruiters work with JIT as the driving paradigm. The smart TA managers will make an offer just in time. The demand is not just in time. How the TA team manages the recruitment is just in time. The key is to dissuade the candidate from taking one offer and go job shopping for bigger compensation.



Venkateswaran R

Global Head Workforce Management, Early Career Engagement & Leadership Hiring

Venkat is a HR leader with over 25 years of experience across HR Strategy and Transformation, Talent Supply Chain, M&A Integration, Recruitment, Organizational Assessment, Performance Management, Training & Development, Employee Engagement, Coaching & Mentoring. He has led teams globally and has expertise in designing the employee life cycle, creating integrated HR processes and programs that facilitate change building a robust culture.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Change in landscape: India continues to see the waging war for talent, amidst geo-political, recessionary turbulence & inflation, the candidate is at the epicentre.
- Real to virtual: 10 years back, working was a touch and feel experience. Professionals had the experience of working with people and not bots. Today, it is largely virtual. A few years back, work culture allowed people to grow relationships with peers, interactions with clients and other work-related complexities. Today, the focus is more on the here and now, and instant gratification.
- Business models have changed. Cycles have shortened. The Pandemic has been a watershed period. With more uncertainties, end customers want to ensure that their bottom lines are unaffected. Through this, they expect their IT partners to cope with the situation and help them to stay ahead of their demand curves.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Candidate experience. When a candidate you are looking for has 5-7 offers, the challenge is to be ahead in the race to grab him and ensure a personal connect through
 - o Awareness
 - o Post-offer engagement
 - o Brand & employee engagement

- Opportunity to learn and grow: A good candidate is always looking to add value through learning. If your organization has a reputation of taking the responsibility of up-skilling & reskilling with mentorship opportunities, this is an advantage.
- Role-fit capability matrix: Role clarity and forward planning can ensure that the candidate with a given set of skills finds his/her right role..

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- The initial S-Curve of this industry happened at a linear pace, providing a balance, and stability among the players. But today, the supply-demand gap is big. The demand swings are huge and missed opportunities for companies due to lack of talent, have put the sword on the heads of TA managers. This has a ripple effect - missing revenue estimates for following quarters and taking a hit at the stock markets. With high intensity chain reactions, TA managers are the new poster boys and villains, as their respective days turn out.
- Sub-contracting and gig workforce: This is likely to emerge in the future, because they offer the variable option to cope with unexpected demand. The legal frameworks are yet to be in place though.
- The future is about automation, virtualisation and building connectivity.
- 70% work from home has meant that new work metrics come into place.
- Quality: Fitment to a role would touch 90% earlier. Today's standards are at 60% with lateral hires. Companies now believe "Hire and Train" models can evolve to deliver better job fitment.
- Mindset: Accepting 5-7 offers and still chasing higher salaries is a common sight. But one has also witnessed aliases. Moonlighting has been a cause of concern in work ethic at the industry level and demands serious attention & action.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: Considering that we live in high cost times, no one wants to let go of a good opportunity.
- Meat: Very few in the beginner levels show an appetite for good work content as #1 priority. Meat is one of the necessities.

- Meaning: Frankly, in today's high-volume transactions, this is a lost commodity. There is so much of intensive interaction happening, and it is difficult to expect meaning in the job to emerge as a top contender.
- Mode: There are a lot of job shifts happening in Tier-2 cities. The focus of the candidates is to scale up the corporate hierarchy than show desire for freedom and seek ownership of goals and responsibilities. In product development areas, there are the outliers who seek more space and budgets. There is maturity in the corporate landscape today, to accept them and groom them. Very soon, we can expect such professionals to put a bigger premium on their heads.

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Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

There is a difference between a customer's immediate need and JIT. Many TA managers believe we are already in JIT. JIT is an action plan to ensure a seamless availability of a resource. Whereas an immediate need calls for firefighting to grab the nearest resource at a premium! Once such situations become more common, we may see a new order that will be stable and sustainable.



Vijay HM

VP - Head TA and RM (India) at Trigyn Technologies, Vijay is a HR leader with proven experience in managing complex Talent acquisition challenges for IT and ITeS organizations.

He has over 22 years' focused experience in Talent Acquisition in organizations that include Mphasis, First Advantage Global Operating Center, Cognizant, Capgemini, Accenture, Raffles, Aditi Technologies, ITspace.com and Vision Computing.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Volume of hiring: Hiring around the turn of the last Century was going on at a lazy pace, when compared to today's frenzy. Take college placements for example. They started picking up volumes after 2000. Until then, placement action was very selective on few campuses. Then came the era of scale. Large armies of the best campus hires were deployed in application maintenance roles. But look at the choices for students today - from captives to startups!
- Watertight workplaces to innovative work models: Employees about 15-20 years ago, had a fairly assembly line or factory-like work culture. Not too many metrics related to the work output. Compare that to today's world of extremely employee-friendly flexibility and reach out policies! Today's work ethic is increasingly metric-driven and does not mind the process when the right metrics have been achieved. Agility is the mantra.
- HR is several notches higher: No other functional area has made as much impact over the last few years as recruiting and in a broader context, HR. Singularly, as the demand put pressure on more and more talent, HR continuously remodeled itself and manfully took upon the onerous task of building up the talent force for addressing immediate and strategic market opportunities. While bringing in new talent is one facet, retention is a more important facet. The respect for TA and HR teams have indeed gone up in organizations several notches higher! Not just at work, even during Covid times, HR was the humane face of the organization both to the internal employees looking up for support and for the outside CSR activities.

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Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Campus: A stronger foundation is built with fresh talent acquiring skills and growing up to take on bigger roles, the way it suits the organization. A strong campus hiring strategy helps build skills and retention from bottoms up.
- Flexibility: Options like "Work from anywhere" give flexibility to the employee to spend more time with his/her family back home in the village, or wherever. He/she is a happier person and hence should contribute even more! Also, if someone wants to work 4-5 hours, the organization should be ready. With this new age work culture, security and flexibility can also be included. Work from home is a great opportunity for us to attract diversity and intrusion. With the gig work force getting dominant, flexible work contracts, without cutting out on social security may be in order, sometime soon.
- Encourage honesty: Some organizations have stopped insisting on degrees. They believe only skills and deliverables matter. Background checks are redundant. This way, they would like to encourage employees to be honest.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- Supply: India will undoubtedly, be the most important source of technology development and support well into the future years. Given this pivotal situation, the search is now for countries across the world, which can augment the supply. Countries like Vietnam and Philippines have pockets of talent available, which are cost effective and can fill in the gaps in supply.
- Quality: Considering that large quantum of work has moved to work-from-home, there is an urgent need for agreeable metrics on a daily basis. Work should be defined very well. Because there is a huge shift from the earlier offshore development centers to remote working, tight controls need to be in place to ensure work ethics to safeguard sensitive data, and to enable smooth organizational working.
- Mindset: The current moment is the time to leverage your skills to the max! Youngsters want experiences. They bring no loyalty to the workplace. There are instances of employees asking for 6 months of work and 6 months' holiday, because they would like to go spend long times in unknown territories. Another difference is in the expectations of a city bred person versus someone from a village or a Tier 2 town. For the city person, the basics are already met. The aspiration is for something out of the ordinary, may be a travel experience or a fancy bike. Whereas for employees with rural background or from Tier 2 towns, the city-breds are their aspirational models. An apartment, a car or parents living with them - such movements up the social order become their goals.

Changing Expectations in Talent Market

- Money: At the lower to middle levels, considering that large volumes of the candidates come from outside big cities, the windfall through the high compensation will continue to excite and take centrestage for quite some time. Take Full Stack technical area for example. Someone who is earning 2X times his experience, is today asking for 5X to 6X. Well, that is the norm. And at least, the candidate is not complaining! However, there is a need to hyper-personalize compensation packages because needs vary. Some people need more medical benefits. So, they may like the organization's intervention more in medical support. And a few others may look for support in areas like children's education.
- Meat: Gen Z will throw caution to the winds, but are very passionate when it comes to work and upskilling, because they see work related rewards that can finance their future aspirations. The cream of Gen Y is ready for future leadership.
- Meaning: It is generally the middle level leaders, who through their exposure to working on products for B2C segments, open their minds to the potential impact they can make through their work. One can see this in techies working on products like premium mobile phones or medical equipment, etc.
- Mode: People doing some truly cutting edge work, need more support and tolerance to failure. This may be offered either through more space or compassionate work practices. Sometimes, mid-sized niche technology firms or service oriented firms have this as their DNA.

Just-in-Time Recruiting (JIT)

Just-in-time recruiting is affecting the entire industry. One of us in the industry is hiring a person and another is snatching that same person for a premium. The issue obviously is the 90 days' notice period. Discussions are supposedly in progress at forum level, to bring the notice period down to 15 or 30 days.

The problem gets very acute in smaller organizations. Suppose you are hiring someone at architect level. It is a key role. So, in order to cope with the probability of joining, you make offers to 2 applicants, expecting one to join. And if the vagaries are too much, you make an offer to 4 applicants, expecting one to join. Now, imagine, 2 of them join. Situation is, you cannot have 2 architects. And on the other hand, you cannot go without an architect as well, right? It is okay with bigger organizations because they can absorb the additional architect in another area. But not the small and medium companies.

Bigger organizations in the industry can take the lead to address this issue and influence policies.



Vinod Erapalli

Associate Vice President at Altimetrik.

He has 27 years of global, multi-functional and diversified experience in the IT industry, including his present role of formulating & implementing Talent Acquisition strategies. He was earlier at Wipro, where he spent 20 years across delivery and workforce management areas.

How Today's Recruiting Practices Are Different

- Positioning: Earlier the market was organization driven. Today, it is candidate driven. It is imperative in today's world to create branding and positioning not only to your customers but also to the talent pool in the market you want to hire from.
- Candidate assessment: From “what you know” to “what can you do” the evaluation approach of a candidate has shifted from a pure skill test to an overall aptitude and attitude check. Assessments are more comprehensive today - hands-on and real use cases are given to solve rather than just answering questions in an interview or passing an online test with objective type questions.
- Candidate experience: There is a sharp focus on imparting good candidate experience through the journey of contact to closure. Regardless of the candidate joining, a good recall of the interview experience is important, since word travels fast and that word becomes a referral for the next candidate.
- Alignment: Earlier, candidate aligned himself/ herself to the organization what is the company's core business, who are the clients and how do I fit in? Today, that generation has changed. It is about “What's in it for me? How will this company's operations and fortunes affect me?” “Me” is now at the centre more than ever before.

- Reference: In this digital age candidates are more connected. They look for validations beyond the positioning and the branding that organizations create for themselves. Therefore, it is important for the organizations to build a good brand recall and establish desired perceptions in the candidate market.

Critical Success Factors in Recruiting

- Having a good strategy in place on all the aspects from branding, assessment approach, candidate experience, tapping into the right talent pool in the market, creating a positive perception and good reference in the market about the organization is key to attract top talent. Alongside, accurate forecasting and planning of the demand for hiring talent are also crucial for success. Organizations have to do adequate planning of demand by establishing a rolling forecast on a quarter-on-quarter basis. It helps in keeping the need for “just-in-time hiring” under check. Just-in-time hiring can adversely impact the cost per hire metric, profitability and the median compensation grid.

Challenges in Talent Landscape

- There are several challenges faced by organizations in the talent landscape today. Escalating compensation demand by the prospective candidates, impersonation/negative background verification checks/moonlighting, offer-to-join ratio are just to name a few. While these must be addressed and are crucial for success, it is imperative to be sharply focused on selecting the right candidate in terms of matching skills, experience and expertise, and cultural fitment.
- Supply: Matching skills accompanied with relevant experience is critical. Having the relevant work experience matters whether the demand is for commodity skills or niche skills or super niche skills. Prospective candidates may have the required skills but if they do not have the experience similar to what is exactly needed, there will be impact on the project deliverables. For example, if there is an end-to-end development project work, hiring talent that has been working on bug fixing alone will not be a good fit.
- Quality: Having relevant work experience is good but expertise makes a big difference. There is little margin for error in hiring quality of talent when there are time-bound, mission critical projects/products that need to be delivered.

Altimetrik's Approach

Altimetrik is a leading digital technology player in the industry with the mandate to attract, hire, and retain top talent. We have been pioneering and perfecting several strategies that are helping us address some of these issues.

Highly qualified talent acquisition team, proven methodologies of attracting talent, and an effective vendor partner ecosystem supporting us with sourcing and preliminary technical assessment, gives us a strong foothold in addressing our hiring needs.

Altimetrik's Playground is a unique assessment platform and methodology that helps identify highly skilled, highly relevant talent imparting positive candidate experience.

Accurate forecasting leading to creating a warm pipeline of talent ensures that there is certainty on meeting the timelines for setting up the teams needed for the projects.

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Altimetrik is partnered with some of the world's largest and highly innovative brands to delivery digital business success through exceptional skills and expertise. Our teams comprise practitioners who bring rich experience and expertise on the various industry domains we cater to and cutting-edge technologies that can take digital solutions from idea to production in a fast, simple, and agile manner.

Our commitment to building a diverse, inclusive, and high-trust culture has kept us among the great places to work which is a bona fide testimony for talent to believe in us.