



## Winning the War for Talent

*The new model for online recruitment sources qualified candidates more effectively by tapping exclusive online communities.*



**Talent is the secret weapon in a knowledge-based economy, where strategic success depends upon creativity and innovation. In today's job market, traditional recruitment methods take too long, cost too much and produce too few qualified candidates.**

To stay competitive, leading employers are investing in new sourcing techniques to recruit qualified professionals. A new recruitment model has emerged to connect employers with candidates through existing, members-only communities where participation is exclusive, privacy is protected and identities are authenticated.

Forty-three percent of global executives recently surveyed report that talent sourcing is a moderate to severe challenge, making it a top risk factor in achieving high performance for their organizations.

The winners in the talent war will be those employers who look beyond job boards and open networks overrun by active applicants to find passive candidates willing to be engaged in the trusted environment sanctioned by credible organizations.

Recruitment advertising in these exclusive, sanctioned communities builds brand awareness among members who share an academic, professional or social affinity. By targeting verified members of these communities, employers can build their own talent pipeline of qualified interested candidates, shortening the recruiting cycle, reducing advertising costs, and increasing the quality of their hires.

## **The War for Talent is Raging**

In today's increasingly competitive global marketplace, recruiting and retaining top talent is a strategic imperative. Forty-three percent of global executives recently surveyed report that talent sourcing is a moderate to severe challenge, making it a top risk factor in achieving high performance for their organizations.<sup>1</sup>

Two well-documented trends are making it increasingly difficult to find and attract quality candidates. First, the workforce is aging, and there are not enough professionals to replace retiring baby boomers. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the U.S. workforce will grow by only 3 percent from 2000 to 2020 as a result of the retiring baby boom generation.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, there is a shortage of students entering professional fields such as engineering, technology and medicine. In the 21st century labor market, the U.S. Dept of Education predicts that 60 percent of jobs will require skills possessed by only 20 percent of the workforce.<sup>3</sup>

The combination of these trends creates an intensely competitive labor market, where the most sought-after candidates have more choices, leading to lower recruiting yields for employers.

## **Online Job Boards Becoming Obsolete**

Online job boards such as Monster.com and CareerBuilder.com have attempted to solve this problem by aggregating job postings and job seekers. But rather than delivering better results for employers, these communities flood the applicant pool with active job seekers who are frequently under qualified for professional positions.

According to recruitment industry expert Peter Weddle, there are more than 50,000 job boards and career

portals in operation on the Internet.<sup>4</sup> The proliferation of job boards has created confusion and frustration among job seekers and diminishing returns for employers.<sup>5</sup> As a result employers waste valuable resources at a time when their staffing needs are most dire.

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In a recent recruiting survey conducted by The Adler Group, 89 percent of respondents indicated that they are not seeing enough strong candidates for important positions, and 63 percent reported that the quality and quantity of responses from the major job boards is either a huge problem (20 percent) or growing problem (43 percent).<sup>6</sup> In 2006, employers reported spending more than one-third of their recruiting budgets on general job boards, even though the quality of applicants provided by the boards was only 22 percent favorable.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly, posting job requisitions in job-search communities does not produce new hires at a rate sufficient to meet the demand for talent. This model for online recruitment advertising is no longer viable. Industry expert Lou Adler seemed to be speaking for many when he asked, “Is the transactional corporate recruiting model doomed?”<sup>8</sup> Too often, the transaction between employer and applicant is not completed because applicants’ credentials are insufficient, or candidates withdraw in favor of opportunities where social networks play a role.

To compete effectively in the talent war, employers will have to go beyond online job boards to find more productive pools of talent.

## Open Networks Hold False Promise

Open networks allow employers to take advantage of existing social relationships to make more meaningful connections with candidates than are possible on job boards. Market leaders LinkedIn and Facebook bring together large communities of individuals connected to one another by either professional or personal relationships. These relationships can be used by employers as channels to promote job opportunities. But despite their size and first mover advantage, LinkedIn and Facebook fail to deliver on their promise of a better recruiting experience.

LinkedIn and Facebook have three fatal flaws:

First they provide no authentication of the opportunities being presented within the community, the employers offering the opportunities, or the candidates being targeted. With no pre-qualification or screening, community members may not be the professionals they claim to be, and their academic credentials may be real or fabricated. The fact that there is no way to tell if someone is accurately representing themselves creates a credibility gap that can repel the best employers and candidates.

The open network model is fatally flawed, because it does not provide the trusted environment necessary for community members to effectively help one another.

Second, LinkedIn and Facebook provide at best rudimentary privacy settings. These do not address the complexities of human interaction, where different types of connections require different levels of trust. Open networks lack adequate privacy settings, which marginalizes utility and fails to protect highly

desirable members from being aggressively contacted by other members who are seeking their assistance. Likewise, recruiters can easily abuse the ability to contact anyone in the network in order to headhunt or obtain personal references without a potential candidate's knowledge or permission.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the confidentiality of passive candidates who accept a professional inquiry is easily violated, since it is impossible for them to express interest without exposing their identity and contact information. Thus, one positive response can easily lead to an endless series of additional solicitations.

Finally, lack of shared affinity and exclusive, sanctioned environment means open network connections and communications tend to be transactional in nature and driven by those seeking assistance. Most interactions are driven by "have not's", and the ensuing nuisance-factor causes the best candidates to resist actively participating. A response to the blog post "Are The Most LinkedIn Really LinkedOut?" said it best – "In a day in age when online social networks get all the attention, the best social networks still are still very much exclusive to the real world."<sup>10</sup>

The open network model is fatally flawed because it does not provide authenticity, privacy or affinity. Without a trusted environment or motivation for community members to assist one another for the greater good of the community, both candidates and employers fail to realize the full potential of the connections being made.

## **Exclusive Online Communities: A Superior Alternative**

Exclusive online communities sanctioned by existing organizations succeed where open networks fail. They provide a higher degree of trust and shared affinity, which increase the motivation for members to help one another. Because the community is sanctioned by the sponsoring organization, it is much



## **The Affinity Circles Difference: An Exclusive Technology Platform**

### **For Authentication and Privacy Protection**

- **Membership database integration.** Affinity Circles partners with sponsoring organizations through exclusive multi-year contracts. The hosted platform integrates with the organization's membership database, enabling authentication of each community member's identity and credentials.
- **Advanced privacy settings.** Members can easily control what information they make public within the community, based on the degree of connection between themselves and every individual member.
- **Branded community.** In the closed community officially sanctioned by the sponsoring organization, members enjoy the benefit of "members only" exclusivity, encouraging the exchange of highly valued opportunities.

### **To Ensure Receptivity to Employers**

- **Permission-based marketing.** Affinity Circles partners with the sponsoring organization to actively promote the community to all members. Those who choose to join the community are electing to network with their peers and receive opportunities from preferred employers.
- **Candidate confidentiality.** Members who are interested in learning more about professional opportunities can express interest in a preferred employer without revealing their identity or personal contact information.
- **Automated Filtering.** Once members express interest in an employer, pre-set filters trigger messages that notify members who are under-qualified, and provide advice on how to increase the marketability.

### **For Targeting Qualified Candidates**

- **Targeted recruitment campaigns.** Employers can use narrowcasting techniques to target candidates whose credentials have been verified by the sponsoring organization, a trusted third-party. Selection criteria can include a combination of variables, including educational background and work experience.
- **Personalized messaging.** When community members log in, they see targeted messages from employers on a personalized home page. They can see why they were targeted, and they can choose to make contact or to explore the opportunity while remaining anonymous.

easier for the identity and credentials of members to be authenticated. In addition, the exclusive “members only” environment increases privacy, a pre-requisite for many individuals who have the resources to other members.

The connections made in an exclusive online community are authentic and private; employers, community sponsors and participants each play a role in maintaining trust among all parties.

Perhaps most importantly, the organization-centric environment highlights the shared affinity between members, which translates into an increased willingness on the part of individual members to provide assistance for the greater good of the community. As the Associate Director for the Adelphi College career center noted, “An online networking site to connect alumni will go a long way in matching students with those who are predisposed to help and even hire them.”<sup>11</sup>

The connections made in an exclusive online community are authentic, private and good for the entire community, not just the individuals directly involved. According to published research, the connections between people who share an alma mater, professional trade, or other special interest are more valuable than purely social connections, particularly when there is no immediate benefit to the parties directly participating in the transaction.<sup>12</sup>

The key to successfully fostering this type of altruism is creating an environment of trust. In “Social Networks and the Importance of Trust,” Neville Hobson – one of the leading European early adopters and influencers in social media communication for business – says trust in social networking sites such as Facebook is diminishing, because members of these

open communities are seen as commodities. He predicts that there will be a rise in niche networks in 2008, and “the ones that become successful ... are the ones you trust.”

Tapping into exclusive online communities provides three competitive advantages to employers in the war for talent:

- **An established presence.** The company must be an active participant in online communities where professionals interact, so there is awareness of the brand as a preferred employer.
- **Advanced targeting tools.** The community must provide targeting tools that enable an employer to use the sophisticated sourcing techniques necessary to identify and engage qualified candidates.
- **A Talent Pipeline.** The community must provide a way for employers to create a long-term relationship with candidates who are interested in learning more about professional opportunities without compromising the candidate’s privacy.

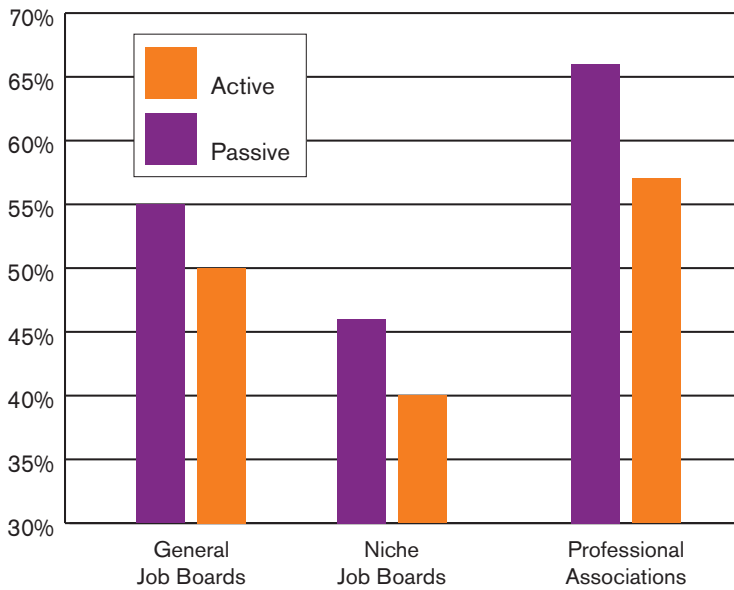
### **Established Presence Brands Preferred Employers**

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ness among members, who are a highly desirable demographic. Equally important, a presence in these communities exposes employers to a deep pool of passive candidates. Employers with an established

## % of Job Seekers Expressing Comfort with Submitting Personal Information



Source: JOBCentral 2005 Job Seeker Survey<sup>16</sup>

discovering passive job seekers, and 58 percent of respondents plan to increase their investment in this area over the next 12 months.<sup>15</sup>

### Advanced Targeting Tools Source Qualified Candidates

Even with an established presence, the challenge remains to source talent within the in online professional community. According to recruiting industry expert John Sullivan, many recruiting organizations continue to identify “the ability to find candidates” as their No. 1 difficulty.<sup>16</sup> To address this challenge, Sullivan recommends a sophisticated talent sourcing technique he calls “narrowcast sourcing” or “narrowcasting.”

presence can leverage their company brand to make recruitment announcements appeal to these passive candidates. In a competitive job market, candidates often have multiple choices, and a known entity is usually preferred.

Exclusive online communities offer the utility of open social networks without the risks associated with overexposure. Many professional associations and academic institutions offer their own private online communities where members can connect with one another in a trusted, secure environment. With increased privacy, job seekers – particularly passive candidates – are more comfortable sharing their personal information such as current employer, job title and work history.<sup>13</sup>

Savvy employers are taking advantage of this shift in candidate preferences by establishing a presence in the exclusive communities hosted by professional associations. In a recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), employers reported that professional associations and trade groups represented the most fertile ground for

Narrowcasting is a method of sourcing candidates from narrowly defined population groups that exhibit attributes similar to those that map to success in specific jobs. The intent is to find someone who thinks and acts like those who are most successful in the job.

There are two steps to narrowcast sourcing:

- **Identify where talent resides.** Sourcing activities focus on the online communities whose members share interests and values similar to those professionals who are most successful in the job. The best way to identify communities where talented

Narrowcasting can be most effectively applied in affinity-based organizations, where professionals with common interests actively congregate and network, such as alumni associations and professional trade associations.



## CASE IN POINT: Juniper Networks Targets IT Professionals

As a leading provider of high-performance network infrastructure for business, Juniper Networks ([www.juniper.net](http://www.juniper.net)) was looking for ways to brand itself as a preferred employer to experienced technical professionals with a specific educational background.

Over a five-week period, inCircle Recruiting helped Juniper zero-in on candidates with computer science and electrical engineering majors from top universities. The campaign also exposed Juniper to employees of specific companies that they have had success hiring from in the past.

The targeted online recruitment campaign produced immediate results:

- 515 targeted candidates visited Juniper’s employer profile.
- 87 targeted candidates expressed interest in Juniper.

***“inCircle Recruiting helps us target and engage the pool of candidates that we care about most.”***

– Damon Berkhaug, Senior Director,  
Global Staffing, Juniper Networks

professionals reside is to look where current employees network.

- **Target recruitment ads by select criteria.** Define a set of parameters that are indicative of success in a job, such as educational background or professional affiliation, and target community members with those attributes. Such targeted ads can increase candidate click-through rates by 30-300 percent.<sup>17</sup>

Narrowcasting can be most effectively applied in affinity-based organizations, where professionals with common interests actively congregate and network, such as alumni associations and professional trade associations. Using shared affinities to target candidates also helps reduce the risk of a bad cultural fit with a company – a problem experienced by 85 percent of human resource managers surveyed by OfficeTeam.<sup>18</sup>

To narrowcast effectively, employers must be able to

specify candidate attributes such as college degree, major and class year; geographic location including city, state, country and region; as well as current and previous industries, job functions and employers.

## The Value of a Talent Pipeline

A recent SHRM survey indicated that 39 percent of employers reported difficulty in managing the volume of direct-response resumes they received in the past 12 months.<sup>19</sup> And the pace of hiring is picking up - 64 percent of respondents to a recent recruiting trends survey anticipate that hiring activity in their organization will increase in the coming year.<sup>20</sup>

Instead of getting flooded by resumes from applicants trolling job boards and open social networks, employers need to recruit from a pipeline of qualified, interested candidates for increased efficiency and effectiveness.

The advantages of recruiting from a talent pipeline are three-fold:

- **Reduced time-to-hire.** Recruiting from a pipeline of qualified, interested candidates results in reduced time-to-hire, the most frequently cited measure of the efficiency in recruiting.<sup>21</sup> Candidates in the talent pipeline can be tapped as soon as specific requisitions are opened.
- **Lower recruiting costs.** Applications sourced through social networks in exclusive online communities have a higher yield than applications sourced

Employers who participate in exclusive online communities get access to a talent pool populated by qualified passive candidates – professionals who trust the opportunities they hear about within the community.

through direct response advertising, which cost more to generate and process.<sup>22</sup>

- **Higher quality applications.** Candidates in the pipeline come from a controlled source, rather than open channels such as general job boards, newspapers and commercial resume databases. Developing a talent pipeline allows employers to screen candidates without sacrificing the near-term volume of applicants.

Exclusive communities can produce a higher number of trusted referrals from employees who are also members of the community. As reported by the DirectEmployers Association, this is the No. 1 most valuable source of hires.<sup>23</sup> In addition to a reference, such insiders provide valuable insight into industry trends, what’s going on at the company, and how the hiring process works.<sup>24</sup>

| Source of Hire             | Source Value Index |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Employee Referrals         | 3.56               |
| Social Networking          | 1.58               |
| Niche Job Boards           | 0.82               |
| Commercial Resume Database | 0.80               |
| General Job Boards         | 0.59               |
| Newspapers                 | 0.57               |
| Career Fairs               | 0.56               |
| Search Firms               | 0.53               |

(Source Value Index = Percent of Hires / Percent of Spend)  
 Source: 2007 Recruiting Trends Survey, Sponsored by the DirectEmployers Association<sup>25</sup>

## Success Factors Converge in Affinity Circles

The three critical success factors for sourcing talent in exclusive online communities are established presence, advanced targeting tools and the ability to build

### The Essential Difference: Our Ecosystem

**inCircle is an exclusive online community where valuable opportunities are exchanged between organizations, members and employers.**



a talent pipeline. These three factors converge in the controlled environment of closed communities where membership is exclusive and privacy is protected.

Affinity Circles is uniquely positioned to help preferred employers source quality passive candidates by helping them tap into the exclusive online communities of highly educated professionals.

Affinity Circles provides the platform for online communities sponsored by more than 150 organizations, including alumni associations such as Dartmouth College and Stanford University, and professional organizations such as the Asia America MultiTechnology Association and the State Bar of Texas.

Membership in these communities is by invitation only, and the identities of individual members are authenticated by the sponsoring organizations. Community members control the content of their online profiles and who can access each profile field containing personal information. When users view their community connections, they can filter contact lists by region, occupation or industry; and they can

search for contacts using criteria such as current and previous employer or job function.

When employers establish presence in Affinity Circles communities, they leverage the brands of the sponsoring organizations to build credibility with qualified candidates. In addition, community members see their inside connections to employers through employees act as trusted ambassadors in the community, a position from which where they can make candidate referrals and endorse job opportunities.

Affinity Circles accelerates the talent sourcing process by building an ecosystem that connects organizations, members, and employers through exclusive technologies that enable the exchange of professional opportunities.

In an affinity circle, employers have permission to reach out to passive candidates. Community members gain the advantage of first exposure to job opportunities, without putting their current positions at risk by exposing private information prematurely. Sponsoring organizations add value for their members by providing a platform for these private interactions. In the war for talent, Affinity Circles delivers victory for all three constituents.

## **inCircle Recruiting Seizes Market Opportunity**

The online recruitment advertising market is a multi-billion dollar opportunity and growing. According to Lehman Brothers “Newspaper Fact Book,” the total recruitment advertising market was \$6.5 billion in 2007, and 35 percent of that market was online. By 2011, Lehman Brothers predicts the online market share will grow to 46 percent.<sup>26</sup>

Affinity Circles’ product, inCircle Recruiting, capitalizes on this growing marketing opportunity by offering employers the only solution for talent sourcing in exclusive online communities. inCircle Recruiting is an



### **CASE IN POINT: Lam Research Builds Talent Pipeline**

Lam Research Corporation ([www.lamrc.com](http://www.lamrc.com)), a supplier of wafer fabrication equipment and services to the worldwide semiconductor industry, was seeking to more effectively increase employment brand awareness among a targeted audience of passive and active candidates.

Lam used inCircle Recruiting to specify their target candidates based on educational background and professional qualifications. Next they ran a campaign of targeted announcements to drive desirable candidates to their branded employer profile within the Affinity Circle networks.

After one month, 745 targeted candidates had visited Lam’s employer profile 843 times.

***“inCircle Recruiting helps us build a talent pipeline of high-quality candidates whom we may not have access to anywhere else. The targeted campaigns help us get our brand message in front of the right candidates, passive and active. The social network helps those candidates connect with our current employees and encourages internal referrals.”***

– Mark Retzer, College Relations Manager,  
Lam Research


application that enables companies to run simultaneous recruitment campaigns in the leading online professional communities, collectively representing more than 15 million verified alumni and professionals.

inCircle Recruiting’s targeted, online ads drive candidates to the employer’s branded profile, where they can explore career opportunities and express interest in being contacted. These ads generate click-through rates of up to 20 percent – significantly higher response rates than traditional recruitment media such as job listings and banner ads.

Two pricing models – subscription-based and pay-for-performance – give employers the option of running unlimited recruitment advertising campaigns for a flat fee, or paying only when a candidate grants permission to be contacted. Both models offer unlimited outreach

to a high-yield talent pool, making inCircle Recruiting the logical choice over traditional direct response advertising and impression-based pricing schemes.

The McKinsey & Co. report on “The War for Talent” predicts that “the most important corporate resource over the next 20 years will be talent,” and the most astute and agile companies will devise “more imaginative hiring practices.”<sup>27</sup> These forward-thinking employers will wage the war for talent in the social networking media, which are now used by 65 percent of business professionals according to a recent survey by the Institute for Corporate Productivity.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike other market solutions, inCircle Recruiting creates a pipeline of qualified, interested candidates that employers can tap when job requisitions open. Online recruitment advertising through inCircle Recruiting reduces the time to hire, increases recruiting yield and, most importantly, drives higher quality hires. 

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## About Affinity Circles

Affinity Circles is the leading provider of exclusive online communities for exclusive organizations seeking the exchange valuable opportunities between members, organizations and employers. Today more than 150 nationally recognized organizations utilize the inCircle community platform to connect over 15 million members with dozens of preferred employers in a dynamic, trusted and sanctioned environment.

To learn more about Affinity Circles and inCircle Recruiting, please go to [www.incirclerecruiting.com](http://www.incirclerecruiting.com), or call us at (650) 810-1529.

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