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candidates, and that's a real problem. Big companies are going to incredible lengths to boost their hiring and retention capabilities. IBM, for example, has built a tool that uses AI to predict (with what IBM says is 95 percent accuracy) which employees plan to quit within the next six months, so managers can take steps to keep them from leaving. Research firm Gartner says almost every Fortune 100 company now has a head of talent analytics and a team of data scientists embedded in the HR department. With resources like that available to larger employers, how are SMBs supposed to compete?

The answer is, by asking for help, leveraging the advantages inherent in their corporate culture, and tapping into the same kind of data- and technology-driven capabilities that big companies use.

Experienced recruiters can help

SMBs whose recruiting efforts have stalled often turn to options such as hiring contractors and/or interns. While that can fill some gaps, it's not a broad-based solution for the long term. One option worth considering is enlisting the help of an experienced, discipline-specific recruiter who is familiar with the challenges SMBs face in today's market, suggests Mary Massad, division president of traditional employment operations at Insperty. "Recruiters with access to a variety of industry job boards and resume databases, knowledge of sourcing techniques, and strong negotiating skills can locate and attract talent that employers may not have access to in such a tight labor market," she says.

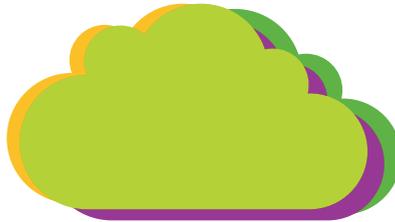
In addition, SMBs should take advantage of their inherent advantages and find creative ways to communicate them to candidates, such as social media platforms and videos. "Larger companies are often more rigid than smaller ones, and the path to advancement consists of more steps that take a longer time to navigate," Massad points out. "Regardless of resources available to larger firms to locate talent, the flexibility of smaller companies to offer more opportunities for growth with a quicker path to advancement will work to their advantage in attracting and retaining talent."

Tech can halve application-to-hire ratios

Finding great talent is a top pain point for SMB owners, and in today's competitive employment market, job seekers are in control. To compete in this environment,

SMBs need to partner with HR solutions providers that can help them deliver next-generation recruiting and new hire experiences for their talent pools, says Irina Novoselsky, CEO of CareerBuilder.

"Working with the right HR technology partner gives businesses



"SMBs can compete for the best talent by leveraging the advantages inherent in their corporate culture and tapping into the same kind of data- and technology-driven capabilities that big companies use."



intelligent and integrated systems that save time and money while reaching the best talent," she says. "AI and machine learning are continuing to improve recruitment processes so those responsible for hiring can make the most of their human resources. The key to making AI and machine learning work – to transform from being just an engine to being a smart engine – is having the right data."

CareerBuilder's Talent Discovery Platform puts this kind of talent acquisition technology firepower within reach for SMBs, Novoselsky says. Built with the 310 million unique resumes and 10 million job titles CareerBuilder has collected throughout its nearly 25-year history, the platform leverages data to help connect employers with the right candidates. "While it typically takes 150 applicants per new hire, CareerBuilder's tools utilize our vast data to evaluate resume information based on context, nearly halving that number to 77," she says. "That means hiring quality candidates faster," she says.

Access to senior leadership is an advantage

One of the qualities SMBs can emphasize, to make themselves more attractive to candidates than their larger competitors, is the opportunity for employees to work more closely with senior-level managers. That gives them access to valuable training and mentorship, Massad says. "There may also be greater opportunity at smaller companies to take on duties and assignments outside of their job description."

SMBs typically have greater scheduling flexibility than larger firms, which can be attractive to working parents or those with long commutes, Massad adds. In addition, SMB culture tends naturally to focus more on its employees than large-company culture does. "Whether the culture emphasizes work/life balance, innovation, creativity, or whatever else makes it stand out, promoting this can be a powerful draw over larger firms," Massad says.

That's just the approach Mavatar, a blockchain technology startup, takes. Smack-dab in the middle of Silicon Valley, Mavatar is fishing in the same talent pool as the tech industry's giants. It can't compete on salary, Susan Akbarpour, founder and CEO, admits, so it focuses on "unique appeals that big firms cannot match." For Mavatar, that includes opportunities for employees to work closely with senior leadership and "to wear a lot of unexpected hats," thus picking up new skills they'd never encounter in a big company with more finely delineated roles, she says.

Adopt outside-the-box thinking

Finally, SMBs can get a leg up in this intense competition for the best employees by embracing unconventional thinking and practices. "In addition to personalized messaging or brand videos that help job seekers connect with a company's purpose – both important for a rich candidate experience – job listings that use location-based technology and augmented reality help employers deliver on candidates' top desires, like shorter commutes and more money," Novoselsky says. "More and more we're seeing organizations, especially those that are lean, needing a right-hand person to take on the recruiting process. CareerBuilder offers end-to-end solutions for the entire hiring process, taking on that role and allowing businesses to focus on other high-value activity." ■

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