SECUREVISION

2022 Edition

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND TACTICAL GUIDANCE

For The Modern Talent Acquisition Leader

SecureVision eBook

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Intro

Over the last few years, we have seen shifts in talent acquisition and recruiting best practices to attract and retain top talent. Despite the shifting landscape, you still need to hire and achieve your recruiting targets. As a talent acquisition leader, it's your job to not only fill open headcount, but also communicate to leadership the macro changes that are impacting talent acquisition and how your company needs to adjust and optimize for them. Not an easy task.

This eBook offers a combination of thought leadership and hands-on tactical guidance for modern talent acquisition best practices. We cover:

- The Mindset to Create a Scalable Talent Acquisition Program To Attract and Retain Top Talent
- Utilizing Your Applicant Tracking System To Optimize Your Talent Acquisition
- Time To Fill Best Practices for Recruiters and Talent Acquisition Teams
- How Talent Acquisition Teams Should Approach Hiring Plans
- Armed Only with Influence, How Talent Acquisition Leaders Can Implement Change
- How To Select an RPO Recruitment Agency

Since 2015, we have worked with over 140 companies (primarily tech companies ranging from growth stage to enterprise) and are constantly monitoring the latest trends in talent acquisition; this eBook is infused with these trends and insights.

Thank you for trusting SecureVision with advancing your knowledge of talent acquisition best practices. Without further ado, here is our eBook: Thought Leadership and Tactical Guidance For The Modern Talent Acquisition Leader.

James Mackey, CEO SecureVision
"We Build Championship Teams!"
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Chapter 1: The Mindset to Create a Scalable Talent Acquisition Program To Attract and Retain Top Talent

At SecureVision, we help our clients with their talent acquisition strategies and improve their talent acquisition functions to produce great outcomes. This chapter explores how getting serious about your talent acquisition program will help you attract and retain top talent - something that is critical to scale.

The majority of our customers, a majority of growth-stage organizations in general, are in a very reactive place when it comes to talent acquisition. We see companies invest a ton of resources into optimizing their revenue functions, product functions, engineering functions, etc, and they'll get to the point where they've reached this critical moment of scale where they need to hire dozens, if not hundreds of people. But then they realize that their talent acquisition program isn't really built out to a system that works at scale.

What are some of the things that companies can do to create a talent acquisition and hiring function that will serve them well at scale to take advantage of the amazing growth opportunities that are currently on the market?

Talent Acquisition Philosophy

Many companies are facing the challenges of: How do we scale? How do we scale effectively? How do we scale quickly? Let's start with the required philosophy that a company needs to implement in regards to talent acquisition and their culture overall. It might sound simple, but the philosophy is this: a commitment to talent acquisition functions.

Simply offering great salaries and being remote does not cut it. Almost every other company is now offering that; what makes you different? An organization committed to talent acquisition functions looks at it holistically. They always want to improve the talent acquisition function to make sure they're offering a great candidate experience. So, on top of and in addition to great salaries and offering remote, they are looking at things like the employee on-boarding experience, employee experience in general, how to become and maintain a people-first culture, etc.

Understanding the Data

In order to understand the aforementioned tactics and how to optimize for them, it is all about looking at the data. Critical decision-making data must be found by looking at the market, looking at benchmarks, looking at your space, and looking at internal data, to gain an understanding of what a relevant package is in terms of both salary and culture. What are candidates targeting? What do candidates need? Building a culture that infuses your values is not easy. And again, it starts with a commitment to the talent acquisition function and a commitment to leveraging your data.

When trying to build a culture, a company, and a talent acquisition program that will help attract and retain top talent, some of the data you will need to collect and review is from: the interview process, employee surveys, simple internet searches to see salary benchmarks, historical data from your prior interview processes, data that from an applicant tracking system, and talking to influencers or specialists in your market who can guide you and share Insights from the market.

Just remember that if you do an employee survey, and ask everybody what they think, be sure to actually implement some of those changes. If you don't implement the majority of what they asked for, then everybody might throw up their hands and ask, “why are we doing this?”

Top Loss Reasons

Another critical piece of data is top loss reasons. On a per roll basis, department basis, and a company wide basis, understanding why candidates are dropping out of the process is critical. This data should inform the strategic direction of the employment package, professional development, promotion paths, etc. As long as companies are looking into top loss reasons, and taking actionable steps to eliminate the top reasons candidates are dropping out, they should ultimately end up in a decent place.

To summarize and simplify, creating a talent acquisition function that can scale: step one is to collect data and step two is to take action on it.

Companies are so focused on optimizing toward revenue, engineering, and product functions, they tend to not optimize their talent acquisition function. Ultimately this is what's required to

get great outcomes from talent acquisition and have great hiring, retention, on-boarding, and experiences for people considering your team.

At SecureVision, we're really big on creating a people first culture. That's something that has proven itself to us over the past couple of years to be the optimal way to do business. It's not only aligned with our values, it's also just incredibly effective for talent acquisition and retention.

Every time a company does the right thing, they reap the benefits. They're getting great new team members and are forming these amazing teams so they can innovate and produce great outcomes for their customers.

Continuous Improvement

The most successful companies see talent acquisition as something that they need to keep improving each day, each month, and each year. They never stop, they are always looking at data, analyzing that data, and ultimately using the data to make business improvement decisions.

They have this mindset where they are always thinking about what else they can do and are always making changes and improvements on multiple fronts. The spirit of continuous improvement has been infused into their talent acquisition function. It's not just about raising salaries, maybe in a certain area, it's not just about opening it up to remote or offering the remote option, it's about having a good careers page, it's about having the data and collecting the proper data so that you can keep on improving.

A huge, dramatic change all at once isn't always the answer either. There is a lot of pressure to come up with something like that. However, it's a lot of smaller, incremental improvements and incremental changes that are being made that are leading to the most dramatic results. This is also part of having the right philosophy, an understanding that small incremental changes can lead to a massive change.

Talent Acquisition Impacts Everything

Talent acquisition impacts every function in every department. When you have a people-first culture, when you're investing in talent acquisition, good things tend to happen with your team.

The reality is that if you get talent acquisition right, you can ensure that you have the best people working every function across the board for your business, which is ultimately going to have an exponential effect on where your company ends up. We find it to be an interesting thing that a lot of very experienced, smart people miss this when they're scaling a company.

Chapter 2: Utilizing Your Applicant Tracking System (ATS) To Optimize Your Talent Acquisition Function

The Problem with your ATS

A properly setup and utilized Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is critical to optimizing your talent acquisition function and generating great outcomes from it. However, ATS's are a pain point for most companies. Typically, we see companies using an ATS as a messy data placeholder because there was no initial strategy in place when the ATS was brought in.

The ATS just gets turned on, but then there is an immediate struggle for the talent acquisition team to pull the right reports for management so they can understand the progress that the entire company is making, that each department is making, and for each specific role that they want to dial into.

A lot of really intelligent, skilled talent acquisition leaders are very frustrated working with their industry-leading ATS. The ATS has the functionality they need, but they're frustrated because it's not giving them what they need and they don't understand why. They can't get anybody on the phone with the ATS provider to actually walk them through and tell them how the system should be (or should have been) set up.

Our experience has shown that up to 90% of clients do not have a properly utilized ATS and it is not set up to work well at scale. However, configuring an ATS does not take a ton of time to do, it just takes a plan. A lot of companies are missing that plan.

Proper ATS utilization is one of the most impactful things that SecureVision is implementing for our clients. Ensuring that they're setting up their interview structures and stages in the right format to where they can actually get value from the system at scale. Making sure they have a foundation to unleash the potential of what they could actually be doing with the system opposed to just a placeholder for candidates that are actively in process.

The reality is, there isn't a whole lot of training given to most talent acquisition professionals on how to properly utilize an ATS. When recruiters are coming up and they move into a Director of

Talent Acquisition role, or VP of Talent Acquisition role, etc, they are basically left alone to figure it out. Not surprisingly, mistakes are made with how an ATS is set up.

Utilizing your ATS to Help Scale Your Talent Acquisition Function

So, what are some of the top things a company should be doing with their ATS to actually get the value they need that's going to enable them to scale effectively?

Step One

The very first step is to think of an ATS as a CRM that contains everything about your hiring process, your candidates, interview processes, etc. Ideally, you have a roll up view of all the stages in each of the aforementioned processes in your company, and then a granular view to be able to go per department and per roll. Understanding this concept will help you utilize your ATS more effectively - and might require re-work if your ATS has already been set up and running for a while.

Getting your workflow into the ATS means you need to map out the hiring and recruitment process data from a company level, while still maintaining the segmentation per departments and per position.

You will have to document what each of these processes looks like. In other words, as you are documenting your processes and writing down each granular step, you are actually putting together your company's requirements for a successful ATS implementation. This will help you have a clear picture of what's happening on a high level and a granular level so you can see what's happening per department and position.

Step Two

The second step is to work with the ATS implementation team to make sure the system fits the various workflows that we described in step one. In our experience, the ATS implementation team will help you with some things but you still need to do most things on your own.

But, if you are just getting started with your ATS, you can go into that implementation meeting with a more clear idea of how you want things structured. If you have already been working with

your ATS for some time, you might not get much value from the ATS implementation team. That is where SecureVision comes in and where we provide value to our clients.

Step Three

The third step is to have a skeleton-stage structure in place. The skeleton-stage structure will ensure everybody company-wide is working from the same initial plan. Within that you can place custom interviews so that hiring managers have flexibility to put their specific, custom interviews into the system but are also working within the greater company-wide skeleton structure.

This approach pays off when you pull pipeline reports, time and stage conversion rate reports or whatever reports that you are pulling within the ATS because you will actually have a bird's eye view. And then you can zoom in on a department or specific role to see the stats that you need to.

Continuous Feedback Loop

Step Four

The fourth step is a key component to optimizing your ATS. Gathering feedback from other departments and key stakeholders, taking that data and information, and making adjustments accordingly.

As the talent acquisition department, you need to make sure you're interacting and connecting with the hiring managers to get their feedback on how their specific interview process will be conducted. Once you have that data, then it’s your job to translate that into the ATS and modify that skeleton stage structure that we referred to earlier. This process needs to be done per position, per department, on a regular basis, to effectively utilize your ATS.

Data Mindset

The more data you collect, the better you will be able to optimize your ATS. Be sure to add custom questions for each interview within each stage on a company level. You want to make sure that you're analyzing and vetting candidates based on the same criteria.

There is a tendency to only focus on your in-the-moment workflows because there isn't much immediate pain associated with setting up the workflows in a way to capture the right data that's going to work for you at scale. The issue is that if you don't do it, then six months to a year or two years down the road, you're going to have this massive mess in terms of data and then it becomes a lot harder to clean up that data in hindsight versus just doing it from the jump.

Chapter 3: Time To Fill Best Practices for Recruiters and Talent Acquisition Teams

Most Underestimate Time to Fill

Companies have a tendency to underestimate time to fill**.** And when they're doing their hiring plans, they typically make best-case-scenario assumptions versus the reality. If a single software engineer role was filled in 30 days in 2020, that doesn't mean you should project 30 days for all future software engineer roles. Market conditions are constantly changing and that software engineer might take 60 days in 2022.

We recommend adding two weeks on top of your average time to fill just to be sure you have enough time. Although there is a lot in your control to make hiring more predictable, you're still dealing with people, who can be unpredictable. Adding two weeks will make sure you have a little bit of extra time and will help you set realistic expectations.

Your time to fill estimates shouldn't be averaged out across the entire company. At a minimum, it should be broken out on a department level basis but ideally on a per role basis. The best way to come up with accurate time to fill estimates on a per role basis is to look at the data for your specific company.

What Does The Data Say?

Forecasting time to fill for different positions is an exercise made easier with data. Look in your systems to see the average time to fill for technical roles, sales roles, marketing roles and others. Using internal data is the best way to benchmark. Consult with your SecureVision talent advisor to understand current market competitiveness for each role you're trying to fill.

If you're in a situation where you don't have any data, here are some general time-to-fill guidelines to help you:

- junior roles can be around 30 to 45 days
- mid-level roles can be 45 to 60 days

- senior roles, leadership roles, senior director roles, etc, can be 60 to 90 days

From this point on, start collecting data to help you generate more accurate forecasts.

How Time to Fill Impacts Capacity Planning

Communicating realistic time to fill goals to hiring managers, senior leadership, and department heads is critical to setting yourself up for success. A lot of companies end up with a really tight five or six weeks time to fill for every position across the board, and then they don't fill those roles on time and the talent acquisition team winds up looking bad.

Inaccurate time to fill estimates can mess up the hiring plan for the entire year. When you start capacity planning and assigning roles out to your recruiters, the workloads they have to manage ends up becoming a lot more which can lead to poor outcomes for the talent acquisition team.

Consider this, if a recruiter is working on an executive leadership role, for example VP of technology or VP of Product, there's a good chance that could take up to 50% of their time. The reality might be they're only working on that singular role 50% of the time, and then they're working on maybe three other positions for the other 50% of the time. That's only four roles, which is contrary to how a lot of companies are doing it, which is putting 20 - 30 open roles on a recruiters plate regardless of the role.

Given the competitiveness in the market for talent, baking in a higher time to fill makes sense. Even if the time to fill is 45 days, you need to give yourself and your team realistic goals and enough time to accomplish those goals. Of course, velocity is important. So you always try to meet that goal as well.

Chapter 4: How Talent Acquisition Teams Should Approach Hiring Plans

An annual hiring plan is a critical component of the talent acquisition process that you need to get right at scale. In fact, getting your hiring plan wrong can seriously derail the growth trajectory of your company because you will be losing out on top talent to your competition.

A hiring plan should factor in how many positions you need to fill for the upcoming year, time to fill, recruiter capacity, number of growth positions, number of backfill positions, current market conditions, anticipated market conditions, data from your talent acquisition function, executive buy-in, and more.

It is not an easy task and getting this wrong can directly impact your ability to deliver great experiences and outcomes to clients and employees.

When Should A Hiring Plan Be in Place?

We often see hiring plans put together in December that forecast headcount being filled in January. That is not realistic if you're also starting to recruit in January because a lot of placements will have a 60-day time to fill in this market. You will likely be playing catch up all year and have management upset with a perceived lack of results which leads to a constant frustration with talent acquisition.

Hiring plans are very important to get right at scale and need to factor in a realistic time to fill. Falling behind with your hiring plan can impact growth and the ability of your company to reach its potential.

Given the competitiveness in the market, your preliminary hiring plan should be in place by the end of Q3 and should be iterated on in the early stages of Q4.

Without the hiring plan in place, you can't get your talent acquisition budget approved. Companies that are not increasing their budget by at least 15-25% are terribly positioned to achieve hiring outcomes for 2022 given current market conditions.

Technology Stack

Talent acquisition teams also need to consider their technology stack. In order to effectively scale, you need a technology infrastructure to support your talent acquisition function. Relying on manual processes will simply not get it done. Are you leveraging Gem, posting to LinkedIn Recruiter, using an RPO, etc? You will need answers to all these questions.

Hiring Goals

It sounds simple, but it really does start with having a clear picture of your hiring goals. Although no forecast is perfect, the goal is to have as clear of a roadmap as possible. Things to consider when whiteboarding your hiring plan are how many positions do you have to fill? What are the roles? How many tier-one roles (critical roles to your specific hiring situation), How many tier-two roles? What departments need the headcount? How many recruiters are on staff? How long will it take to fill each role? Etc.

This is where the actual planning starts and it doesn't have to be perfect. In fact, you need to bake in flexibility and adaptability into both your hiring plan and also the mindset of the talent acquisition team because there are always unknown unknowns that pop up. For example, a public health crisis.

Time to Fill

When whiteboarding your hiring plan, accurate time to fill forecasts are critical. We have an entire blog post dedicated to the subject. Please see Time To Fill Best Practices for Recruiters and Talent Acquisition Teams.

How Many Openings Should be Assigned to a Recruiter?

An industry best practice that we see amongst our clients is that a recruiter should be working on between seven to eight positions at a time. This assumes they're doing the full cycle for those positions: searching for the candidate, sourcing them, interviewing them, and managing the relationship with the hiring managers and the candidates.

It's possible that the recruiter can add tier-two positions to their plate. For tier-two positions, the recruiter might not need to focus on them all the time. It's up to the talent acquisition team to prioritize this but to achieve the best outcomes for your recruiters, it's wise not to overload them and make sure they have enough time to do everything that they need.

Keep in mind that it's possible that you'll need to take roles off a recruiters plate. If a recruiter is working on an executive leadership role, for example VP of technology or VP of Product, there's a good chance that could take up to 50% of their time.

The reality might be they're only working on that singular role 50% of the time, and maybe three other positions for the other 50% of the time. That's only four roles.

With capacity planning per recruiter, when we say seven to eight openings at a time, that's average. We just mentioned two situations where this might flex up or down.

Planning for Backfill Hires

In 2021, more than 50% of the hiring plans for growth-stage clients we reviewed for our clients did not factor in backfill hiring. When you are capacity planning you need to consider potential backfills. Companies seem to overlook this and don't factor in potential backfills when forecasting.

You have to know the attrition of your team, what turnover looks like, and what that is in terms of a percentage of your overall headcount to better assist with forecasting. For example, on a quarterly basis, you might need to bake in eight backfill roles of additional capacity for your recruiting team. This is in addition to the growth headcount that you're projecting.

So, start with as clear of a picture as you can. Of course these goals tend to change as you go through the year, that's expected

Chapter 5: Armed Only with Influence, How Talent Acquisition Leaders Can Implement Change

We hold the philosophy that what you know is 50% of the job, and the other 50% is being able to pull people along with what you do.

If you are a talent acquisition leader and you want to implement change in your organization, whether that be making changes with your ATS, a hiring plan, changing from a high volume approach to a high touch approach within your capacity per recruiter mode, or anything important to optimizing the talent acquisition function, it can be very difficult to get buy-in from executive leadership.

How do you get buy-in from executive leadership to implement change? It's a combination of two things:

1. Data
2. Clear, concise communication

Gathering The Right Data

Before gathering the necessary data, you need to clearly define what improvements you are trying to make. Perhaps you want to open up positions to remote or raise salaries for certain hard-to-fill roles, there's data in the market that you can pull and present to the leadership team.

Data from the market could include going on LinkedIn, Indeed, Dice, or other job boards and looking up salary ranges for the role you are trying to fill or seeing what benefits and perks other companies are offering that are also trying to fill that role.

LinkedIn Talent Insights is another great resource for data. We use data from LinkedIn Talent Insights for our own internal data models.

In addition to data from the market, you need to pull data from your applicant tracking system. Your ATS will be your main source of data. Data such as prior recruiting attempts to fill the role, time to fill, where candidates are dropping out, what went wrong, what went right, etc.

Blend in what is and isn't working from your current recruiting process. For example, "last year when we filled this role it took X days and currently we are averaging Y days, so we should make adjustments due to current market conditions which have extended the time to fill for this role because it is now more competitive."

Think of anything that you can pull in terms of actionable data that you can show to the leadership team for that specific improvement. Having an opinion is one thing, but being able to show data is another. It's easy to argue and shoot down an opinion, but data is factual evidence that is hard to argue against.

How to Communicate

One general rule of thumb is to position yourself as presenting evidence instead of presenting your opinion. Saying things like, "the data is suggesting that…" or, "the data tells us to…", etc, can resonate with decision makers.

Most decision makers at your company are probably not in talent acquisition. They might be in other departments altogether so you need to properly convey to them what you mean, and what this data means in terms of business objectives.

Your challenge is to communicate the data in terms of how recruiting outcomes impact overall business objectives. Convey to them the impact the decision has and the impact if they don't make the improvement and things continue status quo.

Understanding Executive Outcomes

You have to understand executive outcomes prior to making your pitch. You need to know how to express why certain tactical changes, certain purchases, certain changes when it comes to remote or compensation, directly impact executive outcomes. Typically you're going to be talking about upside, but talking about downside, failure, and catastrophe, generally, is what gets people to move.

You will need to tailor your pitch according to the executive you're talking with. For example, the CEO has different objectives than the COO and CFO.

If you're connecting with a CEO, or a CFO that's controlling a budget, you have to be able to paint that picture through data about how this is going to significantly negatively impact outcomes. For example, not hiring strategic roles are going to prevent the company from maximizing the growth opportunity that's in the market today is a statement, if backed up by data, that will resonate and instill a sense of urgency to act now.

Sometimes people are going to listen to you the fifth time you tell them they need to make a change. The reality is you have to have thick skin and be willing to bring something up consistently and you have to be willing to step on the line sometimes. It can be an uncomfortable thing to do.

But if you never come near the line you're not going to be able to push your agenda to help the company get the outcomes that they've essentially hired for you to get. Ultimately you're accountable for the talent acquisition outcome. If you're accountable for it, then you're sure as hell gonna influence it.

Know When to Hold 'em, Know When to Fold 'em

There are some environments where you might find yourself in a battle on a weekly basis. And when you stop battling it out, then the things you need to have happen stop happening. If you're in an environment where you have to prove and push every single week, then that's when you need to start looking for a new opportunity.

Find a company that understands the value of talent acquisition and is willing to optimize and invest heavily in it. Some companies are more optimized and invested in people functions, some are more invested in revenue functions other more in product and engineering functions.

And just general good career advice is you go to a company that is optimized for the thing that you do. If you're an engineer, then go to a company that is optimized for engineering and product, if you're in revenue, go to a company that's optimized for revenue, if you're in sales, go to a company that's optimized for sales, etc.

Specifically for talent acquisition, it's one thing if you work at a company where you have to educate them, you use data, you pull them along to do the thing you need to do, and it's on a

quarterly basis or an annualized basis, that's fine. But if you're constantly battling it out, sometimes education is not the path. Sometimes the path is just finding the people out there that see value in what you do and team up with them.

Even if you’re winning some of the battle, having to constantly battle is draining and you will likely burn out.

Chapter 6: How To Select an RPO Recruitment Agency

Selecting an RPO recruitment agency can be a process. This chapter breaks down the key questions to ask an RPO recruiting company while you are interviewing them as a possible talent acquisition vendor.

Ask About The Delivery Team

It's critical to uncover the experience of the delivery team to determine how well they understand your environment.

Unfortunately a lot of RPOs will staff their agency with the cheapest labor available instead of the most knowledgeable and experienced.

Asking these pointed questions will help you determine if the RPO has a deep understanding of your space, or is just trying to make profit:

- Describe the experience the delivery team has in [your industry]
- How many years of experience does the delivery team have?
- How many people will be focused on my account?
- Who is going to work with me on a day-to-day basis (ask for the LinkedIn profiles)?
- Does anyone on the delivery team have experience as an internal recruiter?
- Has anyone on the delivery team previously been in a talent acquisition leadership role?

In addition to the questions you should be asking them, it's important that they - unprompted - ask some questions about you to help them understand if they can truly provide value and positively impact your hiring goals. Look for them to ask you questions about your current talent acquisition process:

- Average time to fill
- Candidates interviewed per placement
- Top hired candidate sources
- Top loss reasons (why you passed on candidates and why candidates pass on you)

Points of Impact

Before you go into the call, start thinking about what point of impact you need the RPO recruiting partner to have. If you already have a robust internal recruitment program, maybe you just need additional recruiting horsepower. But if you're just getting started, maybe you need a strategic advisor to help shape your talent acquisition function (in addition to the recruiting horsepower).

Here are some additional questions to think about prior to the call:

- Does your internal team have enough bandwidth to manage all active searches after the sourcing stage?
- What weaknesses does your talent acquisition program have?
- What fires are you currently experiencing?

Many times, what makes someone an expert is their ability to solve problems quickly and identify fires before they grow. Be on the lookout to see if the RPO firm you're speaking with is able to identify some of your fires in the first few conversations you have with them in the sales process. They should be providing guidance and actionable steps to improve before you sign up with them.

Conclusion

Thank you for trusting SecureVision with advancing your knowledge of talent acquisition best practices. We hope you found our eBook valuable.

SecureVision is not only your partner for finding and hiring top talent for your organization, but we can also help optimize your existing talent acquisition function to prepare you for scale.

Since 2015 SecureVision's recruitment experts have partnered with over 140 VC-backed tech companies, ranging from growth-stage to enterprise clients to recruit talent in every department.

To see if SecureVision is a good fit for your company and hiring goals, please contact us today!

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