

# Finders Keepers

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BY PAT GALAGAN

One day out of the blue, a young software engineer working for the University of California received a call from a Google recruiter saying she had seen his LinkedIn profile and wanted to talk. After several phone calls, group interviews, and tests, he was offered a job at Google.

How did Google find him among millions of LinkedIn members? Google recruiters mined LinkedIn's vast amounts of data to locate someone with his specific skill and experience, and a likely compatibility with Google's unique culture. And it worked. He took the job.

If you don't already recruit with the help of social media and data-crunching tools, you will soon. Social recruiting is on the rise, according to a 2014 study by Jobvite, a social recruiting company. It found that 94 percent of recruiters use, or plan to use, social media in their recruitment efforts and 78 percent of recruiters have made a hire through social media.

The process works in reverse too. Job seekers now market themselves by polishing their online presence to focus on projects they have done or built that might catch the eye, or the search algorithms, of recruiters. Jobvite found that 41 percent of job seekers landed their current jobs through an online social network or job board.

## What employees want

Making a good job match has become easier with social tools. And now that the recession is fading, employees are venturing into the job market, making the process of finding and keeping talented people a growing concern for many companies. Recruiting expert John Sullivan predicts that in 2015 "Retention problems will increasingly impact recruiting as more employees become comfortable shifting away from security needs and toward more exciting job opportunities. Turnover rates will increase by over 25 percent."



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One of the biggest sources of corporate angst is finding and keeping good talent and developing them to serve the corporate purpose.

## AS EMPLOYMENT TURNS TOWARD A SELLERS' MARKET, COMPANIES ARE PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO WHAT JOB SEEKERS SAY THEY WANT.

As employment turns toward a sellers' market, companies are paying more attention to what job seekers say they want—development, coaching, and meaningful work in a company with a transparent culture. With a bit of on-line exploration, job seekers can learn about a company's real culture—which might not match the one presented on its corporate website. This has led some companies to practice more transparency online and forced others to be “shockingly authentic,” according to Jack MaclLeod, former general manager of MXM Social, a digital marketing company. “You're no longer who you say you are; you're who everyone says you are.”

### What employers want

Employers have wish lists too: people who will learn fast, become productive quickly, engage with the company's goals, and stick around. In a recent *New York Times* “Corner Office” interview, Barney Harford, CEO of Orbitz

Worldwide, said “I'm looking for people who've got passion, energy, and curiosity. You want someone who can learn fast and who will be able to adapt as the organization adapts.”

Searching for talent on sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn can sometimes lead to candidates who look good

online but don't work out in real life. Traditional criteria such as education, for example, don't guarantee a person will have a passion for learning or emotional intelligence—two traits in high demand.

An alternative approach is the practice of “inboarding” existing employees. *Forbes* contributors David Sturt and Todd Nordstrom of the O.C. Tanner Institute explain that “This involves helping existing employees improve their knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitude to grow within the organization.” They regard inboarding as different from hiring from within because it “re-socializes employees to the current and emerging culture, and the emerging opportunities, of a company.”

### They're here; now what?

As companies invest more effort and resources to find and keep the right talent, pressure grows to better manage employees' performance. This in turn has prompted changes in traditional performance management. Coaching, frequent recognition, and continuous feedback are some of the practices replacing or supplementing the widely dreaded annual performance review.

“One in four employees dreads their performance review more than anything else in their working lives,” write Harvard Law School lecturers Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen in their book *Thanks for the Feedback*.

Numerous companies made news in 2012 by dropping formal performance rating systems and other traditional performance management practices. But a 2013 study by the Institute for Corporate Productivity found that only 6 percent of organizations had discontinued formal performance ratings in 2012. A subsequent i4cp study in 2014 of companies planning to stick with traditional performance management found four characteristics of effective performance management systems in successful companies:

- Modern performance management is customer-focused. For example, metrics such as net promoter scores, customer satisfaction, and sales are used to judge employees' performance.
- Performance management is consistent across the organization, that's to say applied to high- and low-level employees.
- Transparent performance management processes “are probably the most cost-effective.”
- Coaching is the key to performance management success.

Mentoring plays a role too. Jenny Dearborn, senior vice president and chief learning officer at SAP, says, “Research shows that the most successful performers have between eight and 12 mentors.”

Interviewed for *ITBusiness.ca*, Dearborn says, “Research shows us that developing themselves through mentoring and coaching is in the top five things Millennials want from



## ideal candidate

their employers. But in general, top performers, regardless of their age, are those who are most interested in formal mentoring.”

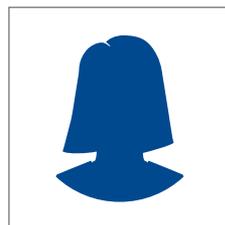
### Cloning the culture

Recruiting, hiring, and developing top talent is a high-stakes undertaking, so companies want to do whatever it takes to make their executives successful. Getting executives to understand, embrace, and spread the corporate culture has become a big deal, especially to CEOs. Take Apple, for example. Before his death, CEO Steve Jobs began planning Apple University, an executive development program meant to carry on his vision after he was gone. He was thought to consider Apple’s culture his most important creation.

Like many Apple projects, the executive development program was and is a closely held secret. How do the instructors teach executives to think like Jobs, a famous autodidact and school dropout? We are not likely to find out. One of Jobs’s tenets of success was secrecy. Apple University dean, Joel Podolny, and his instructors are not “made available” by Apple for press interviews.

That has not prevented a few details from leaking out. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Podolny asked leading business professors to research the company’s major decisions and the executives who made them. Some of those executives teach at Apple University. There are classes and case studies that orient executives to Apple’s culture and decision making. According to an August 2014 article in the *Christian Science Monitor*, there is a course titled *The Best Things*, named after Jobs’s remark that to make great products, you had to “expose yourself to the best things that humans have done.”

Podolny, former dean of the Yale School of Management, was recruited by Jobs to lead the development of Apple University. A report by Peter Burrows in *Bloomberg News* in Febru-



ary 2014 said Jobs hired Podolny to start Apple University so the company could “study itself.” In the 1990s, Apple had closed an earlier version of a corporate university, and it did not move executives through a succession of jobs as a way of developing their capabilities.

In February 2014, Apple announced that Podolny would no longer be Apple’s vice president of HR. A press release stated, “Apple University is an increasingly important resource within the company as we continue to grow, so Joel Podolny will be focusing full-time on developing and scaling the University he helped establish.” In a *New York Times* report, Ben Bajaran, a consumer technology analyst for Creative Strategies, wrote, “When you do the case studies on Apple decades from now, the one thing that will keep coming out is this unique culture where people there believe they’re making the best products that change people’s lives. That’s all cultural stuff they’re trying to ingrain. That becomes very difficult the bigger you get.”

Meanwhile, that software engineer whom Google recruited so effectively left after a few years to work for a small tech startup where he felt his hard work would have more of an impact. Google was getting too big, in his opinion. Now instead of two long daily commutes on the Google bus, where most people open their laptops and continue working, he rides his bike to work, occasionally taking his dog with him.

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