

## “I Can’t Fill This Job!”: Getting Beyond Talent Search Traps

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CIOs are having a hard time finding good candidates for open positions. They’re not alone.

Fifty-two percent of employers in the US are struggling to fill mission-critical positions, according to [ManpowerGroup’s Annual Survey](#). The number of employers experiencing difficulties is at an all-time high despite one of the higher unemployment rates in years.

So what should a CIO do? Keep searching as current employees become more frustrated because they’re overloaded trying to cover extra work? There’s another way.

**Get the Kinks Out of the Acquisition Cycle.** The first thing to do is to sharpen the acquisition process. Talent acquisition is a notoriously leaky process. Companies lose money throughout slow screening, ineffective matching, and incorrect selection processes.

Improving administrative process efficiency can net companies gains up to 41% of the total acquisition process, [according to Taleo](#). Tackling hiring manager efficiency issues can yield gains up to 80%. Start by getting clear on your company’s sourcing strategy so everyone knows how to go about finding job candidates and you don’t

have to reinvent the wheel with every open position.

***Spend More Time Building than Buying.***

Sometimes companies have to bring in external talent to fill a rare skill gap. Often companies can build what they need internally through development. As an added benefit, internal candidates are already proven and they don’t need to spend time learning the business or the organization culture.

There are three keys to making the “build” strategy work. First, design experiences that take into account how people learn.

According to the [Center for Creative Leadership](#), 34% of pivotal learning occurs from hardships in which people handle difficult situations. Twenty-seven percent comes from challenging assignments while 22% happens through learning from others. That leaves a small percentage that covers training, education, coaching, and so on. Use this knowledge to create experiences that challenge people and allow them to learn from others.

Second, make the challenges appropriate. Stretch goals excite and engage. Impossible goals frustrate and demotivate.

Third, give people advocates during the process. They'll need someone by their side as they take risks, experience setbacks, and persevere despite adversity. Their advocates are valuable mentors and cheerleaders.

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***Mine What You Have.*** Current employees have many untapped skills and abilities. Often, people don't know all they know. Their skills become tacit, just part of the air they breathe, and not something they can describe. Luckily, their peers can. In fact, peers can usually describe those skills better than leaders can.

A colleague in a multi-billion dollar, global information business wanted to identify the movers and shakers in her organization. Before conducting the study, she asked leaders: "Who do you think are the top 30 in our organization?" Then she conducted an [organization network analysis](#) in which peers identified who they go to in order to solve problems, innovate, and make ad hoc decisions. She identified the top 30 identified in the study. The results: only 5 overlaps between the two lists. After looking at the leaders' list, she realized why. Their top 30 included only people they knew personally. The leaders were blind to the employees two to three degrees away who had hidden, and impressive, skills.

The lesson: don't rely just on your own knowledge. Reach out to the people who know—the people who work with employees every day—to find the hidden riches in your workforce. And, maybe, you'll find the right candidate to fill that elusive job.

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