



Inbound Recruiting: How the Internet Will Impact Talent Acquisition in 2016

The internet has completely transformed the way job seekers discover and apply to jobs, as well as the way they connect with companies' employer brands. Research shows that more than seven in ten job seekers now start their search on Google, rather than going directly to a job board. Additionally, social media and other internet-driven technologies are playing a more crucial role in their search than ever before.

While the list of internet-related impacts to the candidate side of the process is vast, it's important to point out what this all means for recruiters and the talent acquisition function as we settle into 2016. If a more significant part of the job search process is, in fact, taking place online, then recruiters need both the skills and competencies and overarching IT support to meet candidates there.

This eBook will inspect several key trends that are emerging from this digital transformation. More specifically, it will explore the concept of inbound recruiting as career sites take off as the top source of hire, and why prioritizing new partnerships between recruiting and marketing, the adoption of new technology, and taking a data-driven focus will position you for long-term success.

What Is Inbound Recruiting?

Recruiting teams are starting to consider things like their career website, social media, and Google to be integral resources. Naturally, this has been making them think more like digital marketers, to the point that a new discipline of recruitment marketing or inbound recruiting has been emerging in recent years. Most TA teams, though, are still in the early, experimental phases of developing a strong inbound strategy.

This eBook does not intend to go deep into inbound recruiting strategies. Rather, it will explore the trends driving inbound recruiting as a strategic initiative. For reference, however, we will quickly discuss the staples of the inbound recruiting model.

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Inbound recruiting is about creating quality content and driving engagement. It's about working smarter, not harder.

The main drivers behind both inbound marketing and recruiting are changing buyer and job seeker preferences and expectations in the internet era. They no longer want to have ads pushed onto them. Rather, they expect to be able to discover and engage with products and jobs in a more organic way (i.e. finding a job on Google or learning about a job opening because they follow a company they like on social media).

At a high level, the role companies play in this inbound model is creating opportunities for buyers and job seekers to discover and engage with their brands. Inbound is about pulling rather than pushing. As a result, a new paradigm is emerging in recruiting where talent acquisition teams are focused on attracting job seekers to their requisitions, and then nurturing them until they're ready to make the decision to apply.

A set of activities, which may really be as complex as a company wants to get, can aid each phase of this model, from attraction to nurturing and conversion. But for the sake of simplicity, those activities can be found in the model below.

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More information on the specifics phase can be found in the following resources:

- [The Talent Acquisition Leader's Guide to the New Candidate Journey](#)
- [What "Candidate Experience" Means in Today's Digital World](#)
- [Candidate Expectations Have Outpaced What Career Sites Offer](#)

Again, each phase of the inbound recruiting model above—discover, market, convert—can be approached in many different ways. It is suggested that companies start small, experiment and then iterate. [More on that can be learned here.](#)

Inbound Recruiting Trends to Stay Ahead of In 2016

The following sections discuss a variety of trends and strategies we've seen gain momentum in the past year. Companies aiming to get more out of the internet should consider the following information in the context of their business. There's no one-size-fits-all approach to inbound recruiting—you have to build out a strategy that works for you.

Career sites will continue to dominate as a source of hire

In 2015, Bersin by Deloitte and a number of other firms highlighted a changing of the guard in source of hire. There was a time when job boards dominated as the top source of hire, but a combination of a better economy, evolving internet-user expectations and preferences, the increasing power of employer brand, and many other factors has made the career site the centerpiece for recruitment efforts.

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As we've discussed in the past, this hub-and-spoke model is emerging, where the career site is the hub and sources like Google, job boards, social media, employer branding content, and recruitment marketing emails are the spokes. Each spoke—or source—in this model drives inbound interest and traffic.



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Social recruiting, career site SEO, and more all gained ground in the list of priorities in 2015 and will play a central role in the future.

We feel this trend will only pick up steam, particularly as more companies continue to focus on both the strength of their career site and optimizing the various channels attracting candidates to it. Social recruiting, career site SEO, and more all gained ground in the list of priorities in 2015 and will play a central role in the future.

TA teams will adopt more top-of-the funnel digital marketing strategies

With the job search process becoming internet-centric, it only makes sense for talent acquisition teams to meet candidates on this digital turf—and that starts with getting people to acknowledge, discover, and interact with your brand in the first place. Inbound marketers have been leveraging an

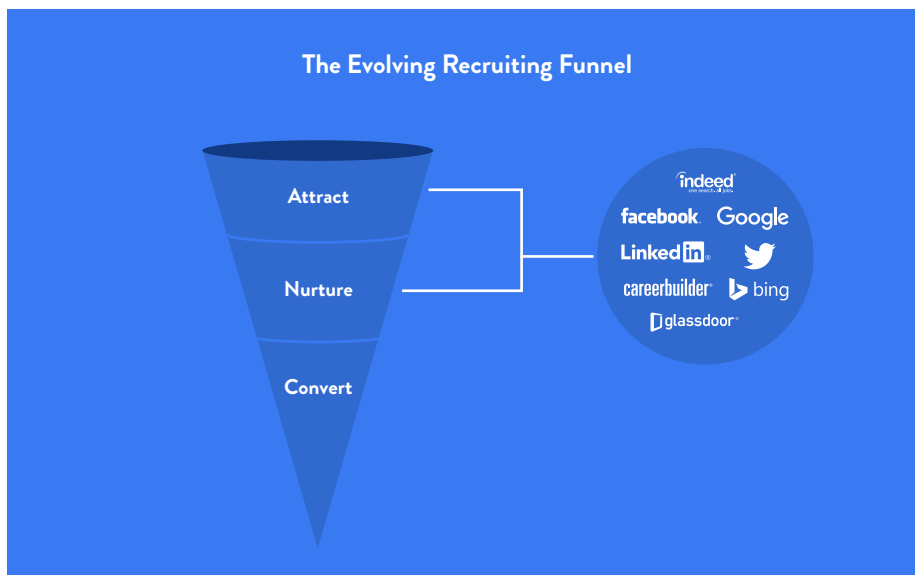
always-deepening set of top-of-the-funnel strategies and tactics to do this.

It is awareness around the importance of a strong career site that will continue to drive talent acquisition teams to develop their own top-of-the-funnel recruiting focus. The more inbound traffic and interest, the better. We expect an large amount of resources to be allocated to driving this in 2016.

In particular, top-of-the-funnel digital marketing strategies like content marketing, social media marketing, and SEO that previously may have not impacted talent acquisition efforts because they weren't being leveraged will make huge waves for companies in 2016. These strategies may not deliver game-changing results overnight, but if put into practice they will build on themselves over time.

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Recruiters will play less of a role in the early phases of job search process

Similar to the way consumers now do most of their research online and even buy things without ever going into a store or talking to a salesperson, the process of searching for a job and submitting an application is following this path. Research from the Talent Board showed in 2014 78.6% of job seekers became

aware of a career opportunity from their own job search, not a recruiter.

As the job search only becomes more internet-focused, this trend is likely to continue. This newfound focus on top-of-the-funnel recruiting strategies will impact the role of recruiters in the early phase of the job search process.

Although this may seem like bad news for recruiters, it's not. In sales processes involving complex products or services, which are similar to the process of hiring a worker, inbound marketing has not made salespeople obsolete. Rather, their job has evolved. With the internet playing a major role in the early phases, it only makes sense that traditional job functions will evolve accordingly. This will be discussed more in the next section.

Disintermediation will allow recruiters to focus on engagement

This whole movement toward a self-service, find-jobs-on-your-own model seems to be resulting in a cutting out of the middleman—a.k.a. disintermediation—in the job search process. This is actually good news for talent acquisition teams, because it means recruiters can focus less on menial sourcing strategies and more on working to engage and build relationships with quality candidates.

Inbound marketing helps to shift the burden of sourcing off salespeople, because consumers and buyers are being pulled into sites via content, SEO, social, and so on. The same thing is starting to happen in talent acquisition, and we expect to see more focus on inbound recruiting result in improved candidate experience as well as better candidates and recruiter productivity in 2016.

Two areas in particular, social recruiting and employer branding content, will likely get the most attention as resources are shuffled around. Companies have been trying to figure out how

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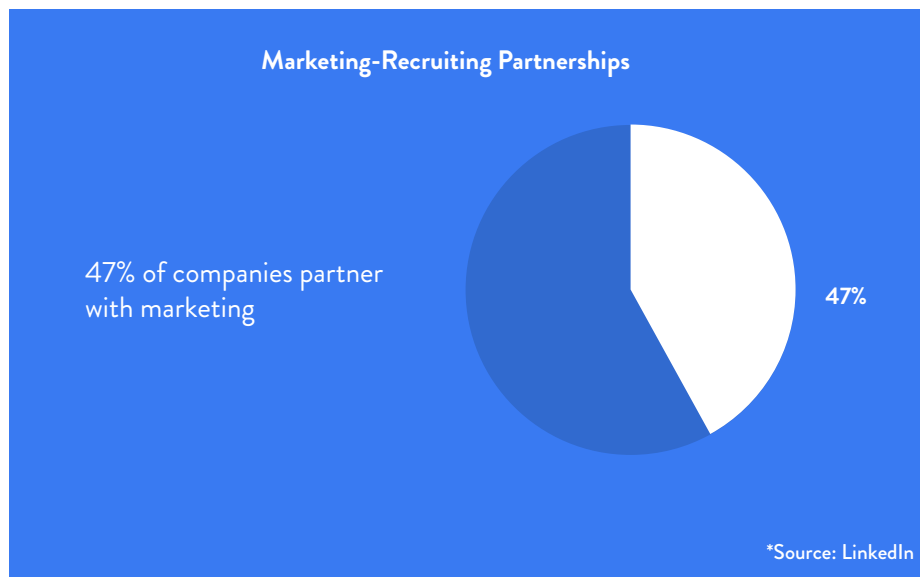
to leverage social media for quite some time, and few have been notably successful at it. More recently, there's been a buzz around employer branding content. In both cases, awareness of the impact these strategies could have coupled with freed up resources will drive new types of benefits for companies in 2016.

New partnerships between marketing and recruiting will be forged

Research from LinkedIn shows 47% of recruiting teams partner with marketing to build their employer brand. Considering marketing has vast experience in building brands on the internet, in addition to attracting, nurturing, and converting buyers, it only makes sense for relationships between the two departments to deepen.

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We expect more collaboration and knowledge transfer to take place between marketing and recruiting in 2016. Companies that can enable this cross-functional interaction will see the impact in their inbound recruiting performance. This transfer of knowledge will go both ways, as both functions have unique experiences trying to attract and convert strangers into buyers/candidates.

Replacement/covering up of candidate-facing ATS will accelerate

One of the biggest opportunities for improvement, and yet the most often overlooked (or ignored) aspect of inbound recruiting, is the candidate-facing UX and UI of the legacy ATS. For candidates, there is nothing more off-putting and conversion-rate killing than the back-office look and feel of applicant tracking system apply flows.

At a time where consumer brands are competing based on user experience, job seekers' patience for poor career site candidate experiences is fading rapidly. As awareness continues to raise around this topic, it is expected that the laggards still presenting a legacy ATS experience to candidates will do something about it this year—whether that's via ATS integration or entirely ripping and replacing the system.

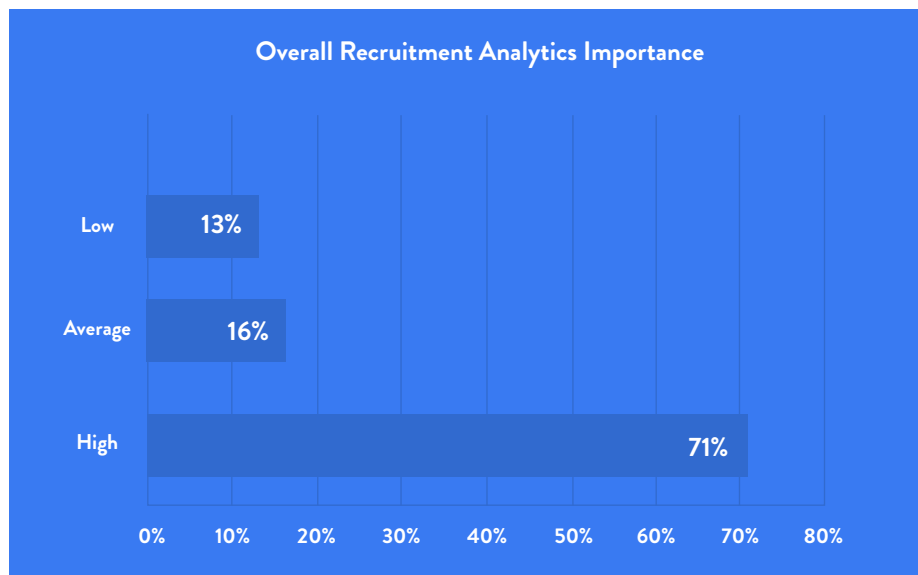
Some companies still don't even offer the option to apply via mobile. It's hard to believe, but it's true. Those guilty of this are more than likely simply putting too much faith in their ATS, when in reality the vendors behind those ATS' aren't moving as fast as today's dynamic candidate expectations.

“Data-driven recruiting” will become more than a topic of conversation

Used effectively, data can support and guide decision-making and help talent acquisition teams understand where to allocate their resources. As recruiters start to think more like internet marketers, it's only natural that they will use data in more strategic ways. 2015 will be remembered as the year a majority of recruiting leaders became aware of the power of data. 2016 will be the year many will make it part of their strategy.

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We also expect more recruiting teams than ever to go above and beyond ad-hoc performance management, deploying next-generation recruiting analytics solutions. Adoption will be driven largely by awareness, but also by the simplicity of SaaS delivery and subscription models, as well as the recent and ongoing consumerization of analytics.

What should be prioritized will be unique to every company, of course. But there are two important elements that must be accounted for in any inbound recruiting strategy. First, the foundation has to be in place. In this case, the foundation is the career site. As mentioned, too many career sites are providing outdated UXs and UIs, while candidates have come to expect exceptional experiences. And yet, they are emerging as the top source of hire. If you're doing all of this work to send candidates to your career site and the experience is not on par with the best in the market, then you're wasting resources.

Second, with a foundation in place, companies need to get experimental. There is no secret formula to the mix of digital marketing strategies that talent acquisition can leverage. Every company will develop their own inbound recruiting strategy, which will be comprised of creating employer branding content, social media content and social recruiting efforts, an SEO

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strategy, and other aspects driving inbound traffic to the career site.

Getting that mix right will take patience as well as the ability to improve and adapt over time. Every digital marketing effort can be measured in some way, so it will be up to recruiting teams to take qualitative and quantitative approaches to see what's working and where to change the strategy. Most importantly, remember: inbound recruiting is a journey, not a destination.

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Is your career site ready to convert inbound job seekers into candidates? Follow the button below to get your free career site assessment from one of our specialists.

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