HOW TO HIRE:
9 TIPS FOR YOUR SMALL BUSINESS

Tax Breaks For Hiring
Top 10 Interview Questions
21 Tips for Office Space
What is an H1B Visa?

Spotlight:
Building A Dream Team For Your Cloud Based Business
Knowing how to hire the best accounting and finance talent isn't easy, especially when you're a small fish in a big pond. Large corporations that can offer more money and flashier benefits make the competition for top professionals pretty stiff.

What Do Millennials Want from Your Workplace?

As a small business owner, much of your staff is probably made up of Millennial employees.

13 Tasks Your HR Person Should Be Completing — Beyond Recruiting

As small businesses and startups grow and add more employees, the need for someone to manage human resource (HR) functions becomes prevalent.
20 Top 10 Interview Questions to Ask Prospective Employees
While unemployment is at its lowest in five years, it is still challenging to find the best employees for your company.

22 20 Surprising Stats About the Gig Economy
More than a fourth of the U.S. is now officially part of the freelance gig economy, a recent report indicates.

25 Tax Breaks for Hiring
Payrolls are expected to expand this year, making it more challenging for employers to find good workers.

28 What is an H1B Visa and Will Proposed Changes Affect Your Business?
President Donald Trump has suggested changes to H1B visas that could impact some small businesses and their employees.

30 Hiring Freelancers: Does Your Business Comply?
The rise of the gig economy offers attractive benefits for workers and businesses alike.

34 Building Your Dream Team for a Cloud-based Business
Cloud computing is taking off on a massive scale.

38 Forget The Perks: Generation Z Will Want Benefits — and Money!
A majority of the new crop of “digital natives” heading into the workforce soon value high salaries and health insurance over trendy Millennial office perks, a new survey has found.

41 21 Tips for Office Space
Renting your first office space can be an exciting turning point for your business.

46 How to Use Social Media to Find Employees
Social media has transformed how businesses recruit today.
You know those small business failure statistics you read about? Well, here’s a tip: the way to avoid becoming another statistic is to surround yourself with good people.

That’s why we decided to make this issue all about people and staffing.

A great team starts with hiring smart. See the 9 hiring tips outlined in our cover story contributed by this edition’s sponsor, Accountemps - A Robert Half Company.

Don’t forget the must-have list of 10 interview questions to ask. Interview questions aren’t a silver bullet for hiring, but it pays to be armed with solid questions when you talk with a candidate.

And for that fast-growing team, you may soon need more office space. Check out our tips for finding appropriate space and negotiating a lease.

Oh, and we list a few tax breaks to see if you can take advantage of them this year.

Small businesses are gravitating toward the cloud to run their businesses with online software and services. It requires a change in the skills your team will need. This month’s Small Business Spotlight is about how to build your dream team for a cloud based business -- who you will need to hire and why.

Finally, check out our stats on the gig economy and other hiring statistics that you may find enlightening. There’s this and much more.

Wishing you much success

PS, for a copy of our Editorial Calendar, visit http://sbt.me/3qo.
The health of your team is about more than just preventing an outbreak of the flu. Let’s face it. If they don’t show up, you’re on your own! But if you’re serious about the people helping you build your business, start with a wellness program for your employees.

And once you’ve whipped your employees into shape, so to speak, it’s time to look at your office. How much is that conference room or warehouse you’re no longer using costing you? Rent it out for events using a service what’s being called the Airbnb of event spaces. It’s called Splacr, and it creates an interesting opportunity.

And speaking of Airbnb, the online marketplace known for bringing hosts and visitors together has launched a new platform. It’s called Trips and it may start whole new businesses in the gig economy. From those marketing a local “experience” to those acting as co-hosts on behalf of space owners who are out of town, there are a lot of opportunities.

Whether you run a large team or are a solopreneur working with a few partners, collaboration remains an important part of the process. Changes to Google Hangouts are expected to enhance the platform’s uses for collaboration in business -- especially with simpler Group Chats.

With all this collaboration comes an increasing number of tools designed only for that purpose. Take Wordly, the handy little tool that let’s you move your content from Google Docs to WordPress with a single click. It lets your content team work together on a post before sharing it with the world.

Seek out other similar tools to enhance your team’s productivity.
“The professional from Accountemps worked harder and had a better knowledge base than the person she was temporarily replacing.”

– Director of Accounting, Nonprofit Firm

Learn more at roberthalf.com/accountemps/testimonials
How to Hire
9 Tips for Your Small Business
Knowing how to hire the best accounting and finance talent isn’t easy, especially when you’re a small fish in a big pond. Large corporations that can offer more money and flashier benefits make the competition for top professionals pretty stiff.

According to a recent survey of small business owners, 50 percent of respondents believe hiring new employees will be the biggest challenge they’ll face this year — more than the need to increase profits (46 percent), provide healthcare plans for employees (44 percent) or grow revenue (39 percent).

So, when bigger salaries and an employer-sponsored cafeteria aren’t in the budget, how can you attract skilled accounting and finance professionals in a crowded marketplace? Learn how to hire the talent you need with these 9 small business recruiting tips:

1. **Emphasize the ‘Small’**

As a small business manager, your workplace culture is your secret weapon. You’re not a megacorporation. Play up this fact in the job posting and during interviews.

Small businesses offer valuable nonwage perks that many larger firms cannot, such as flexible hours, a collegial work environment, direct access to senior management, faster implementation of ideas and changes, the ability to branch out and try new roles, and so on. Don’t hesitate to toot that horn.

2. **Use Different Recruiting Strategies**

Your small business hiring efforts already includes traditional tactics, such as using online job boards and adding job postings to your firm’s website. But those who really know how to hire branch out and use additional methods.

For example, get to know the directors of nearby college career centers and ask them to keep an eye out for promising young accountants who would fit well in a small business culture. Does your company have a presence on social media? If so, how can you leverage the community you’ve built to uncover new talent?

If you’ve never used a recruiter before, consider contacting one. Skilled recruiters know how to hire because that’s all they do. These experts have access to deep networks and can spread word of your opening much farther than you can alone. Recruiters also can save you time by handling many aspects of the hiring process for you, something any small business manager can appreciate.

3. **Leverage Your Current Staff**

One trick to understanding how to hire the right accounting and finance talent is to talk to those you’ve hired in the past. Spread the word among your team.

Encourage your employees to contact their friends, family and acquaintances to generate a pool of personally recommended finance candidates. Who knows how to drum up promising applicants better than staff already familiar with the merits of working for your small business?
To make this plan even more successful, institute an employee referral program to encourage and reward team members for helping the company land talent.

4. Keep an Open Mind

It pays to be flexible during the small business hiring process. While you shouldn’t settle for subpar employees, do try to see the potential in nontraditional candidates — diamonds in the rough.

For example, don’t automatically reject an otherwise skilled bookkeeper over what would normally be a resume red flag, such as an extended employment gap. Rather, during an interview, inquire about why the person was out of the workforce for so long. It could be that he or she had family commitments to attend to.

Similarly, consider taking a chance on new graduates and hardworking professionals who may make excellent workers but require a bit of extra training.

5. Don’t Drag Your Feet

Another advantage that small businesses have over their larger peers is that there are typically fewer layers of management involved in reviewing a staffing request, evaluating candidates and ultimately approving a new hire. That means hiring can happen much more quickly. And that’s good news in today’s market, for two reasons.

First, finding the right person can take a while. In a Robert Half survey, CFOs says it typically takes an average of four weeks to hire for a staff-level accounting or finance position; it takes five weeks for a management-level position. The more streamlined your process, the less time you’ll be without a critical member of your team.

Second, the most in-demand candidates aren’t available for long. If you can evaluate a potential hire and extend a job offer quickly, you have a better chance of beating the big boys for the best talent.

6. Remember that Recruiting is a Continuous Process

There’s no off switch when it comes to small business hiring. Knowing how to hire means always being ready to talk about your small business and remaining on the lookout for potential accounting and finance hires. At networking events, industry conferences — even social functions — have your elevator pitch and business cards ready.

The more streamlined your process, the less time you’ll be without a critical member of your team.

The reason? Though they may not be proactively looking for a new job, many talented professionals fall into the category of passive job candidates; they would be willing to make a move if and when the right opportunity arises. Other individuals you speak with may have a friend or acquaintance who could be an ideal addition to your firm.

Remain in recruiting mode even when you don’t have active vacancies to staff. The more resumes and professional contacts you have in your pocket, the more prepared you will be if a staff member suddenly resigns or business demands skyrocket.

7. Build Your Brand

One key to knowing how to hire is being visible. Every business needs to build and market its brand, but doing so is especially important for
small business recruiting, as you don’t have the name recognition that larger companies enjoy. After all, how can skilled accountants find you if they don’t know you exist?

Invest in an engaging and informative website, participate in appropriate social media channels for your business, and become involved in the local community. Send professionally written press releases to your city’s newspapers and local business magazines. Seek opportunities for speaking engagements and sponsor local events. As a company, donate time and services to worthwhile charities. While doing so, have employees wear T-shirts emblazoned with your business name and logo.

The more visible you are, the more likely accounting and finance professionals will remember your small business when on the job hunt.

Increase your brand visibility; candidate will find you only when they know you exist. Get help from specialized agencies. Once hired, ensure that you retain talent.

8. Get Help When You Need It

One secret to learning how to hire is realizing that you don’t have to go it alone. While you’re recruiting for your full-time position, a specialized temporary staffing agency like Accountemps can help keep accounting operations humming. As one satisfied client told us, “With Accountemps, it was a simple email to state what we needed, then make our selection from the list of available candidates provided and set a start date! Much simpler and faster than the traditional hiring process. In addition, we couldn’t be happier with the skilled candidate we got.”

Small businesses can also use a temp-to-hire strategy as part of their effort to identify potential full-time staff accountants, payroll processors, escrow assistants and more. This approach gives you the unique benefit of being able to evaluate candidates as they work with your team on a temporary basis. Once you’re confident they’re a good fit — and the workload is sustainable — you can convert them to full-time status. One of our clients explained why this strategy is attractive: “You sent the perfect person for us. She fit right in and brought exactly what we needed. Now, we get to keep her!”

9. Remember the 3 R’s: Retention, Retention, Retention

The way to beat the competition is to hire on your own timeline, and the best way to do this is by improving employee retention, which ensures you’re not caught unprepared with a sudden vacancy.
So make an effort to keep your current accounting and finance team members happy and satisfied. Work with employees to map out a personalized career path, and promote a positive corporate culture through volunteerism, company outings, an employee appreciation program and the occasional free lunch. Offer flextime and remote work options, even one or two days a week, and your staff — especially working moms and dads — will appreciate your firm’s dedication to work-life balance.

Knowing how to hire accounting and finance professionals is key to running a business of any size. However, having an effective recruiting strategy is even more critical for small businesses; you can’t afford to misstep and make a costly bad hire. Use the tips above to jump-start your small business hiring efforts, and you’ll be able to successfully compete with the bigger players.

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Staffing Stats You Can Use

3.4M
Workers are wrongly classified as independent contractors.

58%
of employees who go through formal onboarding stay with a company 3+ years.

64%
of small business owners believe they can’t attract the right job prospect.

94%
of salesperson prospects say base salary is the most important job offer.

50% or more
Of the employee’s salary can be the cost to a small business if he/she is a “bad hire.”

69%
of job seekers get scared away by bad reputation of a company.

26%
of small business offer maternity leave time beyond federal or state mandates.

60%
of small business offer “telecommuting” as a benefit.
As a small business owner, much of your staff is probably made up of Millennial employees. That’s why it’s important to keep these workers engaged, happy and excited to be working for you. However, that may be easier said than done.

If they had the opportunity, in the next year 25 percent of Millennials would leave their current employers to get a new job or to do something different, according to a recent survey of Millennials. The percentage rises to 44 percent when the time frame is expanded to two years, and by the end of 2020, two out of three Millennials say they want to have moved on from their current jobs.

This isn’t just because Millennials are young and still in entry-level positions, either. A significant number are experienced employees in their 30s. In fact, 57 percent of Millennial employees who have senior positions still say they want to leave their jobs by the end of 2020.
What Do Millennials Want at Work?

How can you keep valuable Millennial employees from working with “one foot out the door”?

Help them develop leadership skills.

Millennials in the survey rate leadership as the most valuable skill/attribute an employee can have, but also believe that businesses aren’t doing enough to help them become good leaders.

More than seven out of 10 Millennials who plan to leave their employers in the next two years say they’re not happy with the way their leadership skills are being developed at work. In contrast, the most loyal Millennial employees are more likely to say that their employers provide a great deal of training and support for those who want to take on leadership roles, and that even younger employees are actively encouraged to aim for leadership roles.

Ensure that your business makes a positive contribution to society.

Nearly 90 percent of Millennials in the survey agreed with the statement, “The success of a business should be measured in terms of more than just its financial performance.”

Encourage mentorship.

Millennials in the survey who have experienced mentoring say it has a positive impact on their job satisfaction. Those who plan to stay with their current employers for more than five years are twice as likely to have mentors as those who are not planning to stay that long.

In the next year 25 percent of Millennials would leave their current employers to get a new job.

In addition, more than 80 percent of Millennials believe that business has great potential to do good. You can’t fool Millennials into thinking that your business is socially responsible just with PR, image or buzz, either. You’ll need to provide high-quality products and services,
good customer service and demonstrable environmental and/or social responsibility to earn their respect.

Show them how they individually contribute to the positive impact that your business has on the world.

Millennial employees look for jobs in which they can actively contribute to the positive impact a business has on society. Make sure all your employees understand the role their particular duties play in accomplishing the larger goal, no matter how removed their day-to-day tasks may seem from the big picture.

Create a supportive, inclusive working environment.

The Millennial employees in the survey who are most loyal and satisfied are more likely to say they work for companies where there is open communication, a culture of mutual support and tolerance, a strong commitment to inclusiveness and the active encouragement of creativity and idea generation among all employees.

Help them achieve their personal goals.

Millennials actually have fairly traditional personal goals: They want to enjoy work/life balance, be able to own their own homes and obtain financial security.

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As small businesses and startups grow and add more employees, the need for someone to manage human resource (HR) functions becomes prevalent.

Whether that task becomes the purview of the CEO, an outsourced HR provider or in-house staff member (either part-time or full-time), the person will need to perform a range of duties, recruiting being one of them but not the only one by far.

So, beyond searching for a new employee to fill a vacancy, a good HR person will serve a small business best by performing these 13 other duties as well:

**Legal Compliance**

Perhaps the biggest single function an HR person must perform is to ensure the company stays compliant with state and federal regulations.

“There are always updates and new regulations proposed, and HR needs to think about the impact they will have on business,” says Sabrina Baker, a human resources consultant and business owner “Take the (proposed) new overtime law, for example. A company can get in big trouble if it does not comply.”
Policies and Procedures

Another important HR responsibility is to work with the business owner and executive staff to develop a series of policies and procedures, and then publish those in an employee handbook.

From the day that a company’s first employee steps on the property, an employee handbook should be ready. That handbook should contain any and all policies the company has in place.

Here are some examples of common company policies:

- Vacation
- Sick time
- Leave of absence
- Performance management
- Behavior

Employee Training

After developing the handbook, the HR person should train employees on what it includes. This should also be part of new employee orientation.

Vision and Core Values

While it’s generally the role of the CEO or company founder to lay out a vision for the company -- and to put it in writing, a good HR professional has a stake in it, too.

An HR person should boost a collaborative culture behind that company vision. So, every person that walks through the HR person’s door should be aware of the company vision and be held accountable to it.

HR should also be vigilant for signs of this collaborative culture in action and reward it.

Employer Branding

A CEO or small business owner is mainly focused on polishing the company brand on the consumer side.

Conversely, the HR pro should be working to boosting the brand of the company from within. That includes not only promoting a positive culture among current employees but also improving the image of the company as a good place to work.

Employee Advocacy

An HR person is not only a cheerleader for the company and brand, it should also serve as a place of independence for employees.

In the event that there is conflict or trouble within the company, the HR office should be a place where an employee can go and know they’ll be heard with an open mind.

HR can and should be a go-between with employees and management.
Employee Retention
Encouraging employees to stay with the company is another area where HR plays a role. (That’s one reason to brand the company as an employer of choice.)

Activities would include keeping employees engaged at work, providing advancement opportunities, cross-training to do jobs outside the routine and using employee recognition and reward programs.

Compensation and Benefits
Developing a plan for employee compensation and benefits programs is native to HR’s realm of responsibilities and should be one of the first projects the department tackles when getting set up.

Benefits Administration
Administering the benefits plan once it’s developed is also HR’s job. In smaller companies that often includes open enrollment for health care coverage.

Performance Reviews
G&A Partners, a human resources solutions provider, says on its blog that employee performance has a direct impact on a business’s success. Therefore, implementing a strategic employee performance strategy is vital, and represents another task HR must shoulder along with the employee’s supervisor.

Workplace Conflict
It’s unfortunate that, sometimes, employees come into conflict with each other or with management. In either case, it’s the HR department’s job to try and resolve workplace issues when they occur. That includes coaching employees on conflict resolution methods and developing policies and procedures for conflict management and resolution.

Employee Files
According to a blog post from When I Work, an HR technology provider, human resources
must keep three particular files for each employee: I-9, general and medical.

Required by law, the I-9 is a form used by the U.S. Government to identify and verify employee work eligibility. General files include documents such as resumes, reviews, disciplinary actions, W-4 forms and more. And the medical file contains doctor notes, disability information and other medical data.

**Human Resources Industry Trends**

With the rapid changes taking place in the workplace, it’s important for HR professionals to stay current on industry trends.

**One way is to join the Society for Human Resources Management, the leading association for human resources professionals.**

**Another is to read blogs, white papers and articles from HR product and service providers, practitioners and consultants.**

**Lastly, participate in social network groups and forums for HR pros.**

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Top 10 Interview Questions to Ask Prospective Employees

While unemployment is at its lowest in five years, it is still challenging to find the best employees for your company.

Not only do they need the skills to perform their jobs well, but they also have to fit within the company’s culture.

To hire the perfect people, it’s important to ask the right questions. This is a challenge for many small business owners because they typically talk more than the job candidate or they just ask questions which review his or her resume.

Here are the questions that every small business should be asking during a job interview:

**Can You Tell Me About Yourself?**
This is always a good introductory question. Ask and then don’t say another thing until they are done. What they actually say is not critical, but how they answer this question is.

Do they focus on personal or professional details? How do they see themselves? Does this view fit into the culture of the company?

**Can You Tell Me About a Time When …**
Many job candidates can talk in generalities about their skills and accomplishments. However, asking for a specific example is a much more effective way to discover what they have really achieved.
For example, when interviewing a sales candidate, pose this to them: “Tell me about a time when you won a customer from a competitor.”

**How Will You Contribute to the Company?**

This will highlight their goals for the specific job and which of their skills would be most beneficial for the company. It will also tell you how they see themselves as part of a team.

Remember, their goals should match the company's. When they deviate, employees leave.

**What is a Specific Example of the Biggest Professional Challenge You Have Faced?**

How a candidate faces adversity is key. Even if a project didn’t go as planned, it’s important to find out how the applicant reacted and would remedy the problem in the future.

**How Would You Solve …**

Test them. In a professional setting, these are typically hypothetical situations or ones that have actually occurred at the company. They should demonstrate job-specific problem solving skills.

Don’t be afraid to ask them to solve problems they would face in the first month of their job at the actual interview.

**Why Are You Here?**

Andrew Alexander, President of Red Roof Inn, says this helps reveal what the person’s passion is. The applicant should want to work at the company, not just want a job.

Employees that are passionate about the company’s mission excel at their position.

**What is Your Ideal Job?**

Liz Bingham, partner at Ernst & Young, says this question helps match whether or not the person is suitable for the open job.

It reveals what their passions and strengths are.

**What Areas of Improvement Were Identified in Your Last Job Review?**

Andrew Shapin, CEO of Long Tall Sally, says the answer to this question can show self-awareness and weaknesses when people answer this question honestly.

**To hire the perfect people, it’s important to ask the right questions.**

**Where’s Your Passion?**

Hilarie Bass, co-president of Greenberg Traurig, says they only hire people who are passionate about that profession.

It helps attract committed employees that will make the business successful.

**How Do You Measure Success?**

This answer will tell you what the candidate values and if it matches the job compensation structure.

What are your favorite top interview questions to ask? get in big trouble if it does not comply.”

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Barry Moltz (Nextiva)
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20 Surprising Stats About the Gig Economy

More than a fourth of the U.S. is now officially part of the freelance gig economy, a recent report indicates. In the future, more and more people of all ages and ethnicity will declare their independence from the 9-to-5 daily corporate grind for the freedom, autonomy and self-determination that the freelance, gig economy lifestyle brings.

A new report from a leading provider of tools and resources for freelancers and entrepreneurs contains the following rather surprising statistics on the new gig economy.

Nearly 54 million Americans participated in some form of independent work in 2015.

You might find these to be of particular interest if you’re considering throwing off the corporate cloak to take on the freelance mantle.
Gig/Freedom/Freelance Economy Statistics

U.S. Statistics

One in three Americans is a freelancer, making the sector a critical part of the labor market.

- Nearly 54 million Americans participated in some form of independent work in 2015. That’s more than 33 percent of the entire U.S. workforce and is an increase of 700,000 workers over the previous year.

- Some researchers project that half of the working U.S. population will move into the gig economy within the next five years.

- About 1 in 12 U.S. households — more than 10 million people — rely on independent work for more than half of their income.

Global Statistics

The U.S. isn’t the only place where the gig economy is thriving; the same phenomena is occurring across the globe.

- Half of the United Kingdom’s working population will be self-employed in the next five years, estimates say.

- The European Union saw a 45 percent increase in the number of independent workers from 2012 to 2013.

- Independent workers comprise the fastest growing group in the European Union labor market.

- India’s independent workforce, the second largest in the world at 15 million, fills about 40 percent of the world’s freelance jobs.

Economic Impact of Independent Workforce

Not only is the size of the independent workforce growing, but so is its contribution to the economy.

According to the report, in 2014, online freelance marketplaces helped independent workers generate more than $1.1 trillion in total revenue in the United States alone.

Millennials in the Gig Economy

Although the gig economy spans all age groups, Millennials make up the largest portion.

- More than one-third of Millennials are independent workers.

- In 2015, Millennials became the largest demographic age group in the workforce.

- 32 percent of Millennials believe they will be working “mainly flexible hours” in the future.

Technology as the Driving Force

Technology has made it easier than ever before to enter the gig economy.

Mobile devices have untethered workers from their desks; social media now connects people across borders, and online freelance marketplaces make finding work easier.

- 87 percent of Millennials say their smartphone never leaves their side, night or day.
Nearly half (45 percent) use personal smartphones for work (vs. 18 percent for older generations).

Some 41 percent are likely to download applications to use for work purposes in the next 12 months and use their own money to pay for them.

80 percent use social media as a means of finding work.

**Challenges Freelancers Face**

As appealing as the “freedom economy” sounds, significant challenges have to be faced that include marketing, cash flow, business management and healthcare costs.

63 percent of those interviewed in the report say marketing is the most important expense to grow their business.

57 percent report experiencing cash flow issues at times during the year.

64 percent use some form of project management software.

70 percent use software to track finances.

40 percent prefer to get paid via direct deposit versus other forms (e.g., check, PayPal).

**Conclusion**

Millions of people around the globe are opting for greater independence in their work lives. As a result, they are joining the growing movement that is the gig economy. Advances in technology have made it easier to accomplish than ever before.

Though it is not without challenges, more and more people are finding that the rewards of the gig economy outweigh the risks and that the lifestyle it offers provides the kinds of freedom and independence they could never experience in the corporate world.

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Tax Breaks for Hiring

Payrolls are expected to expand this year, making it more challenging for employers to find good workers. The strong job market likely will pressure employers to offer higher wages and more benefits than in the recent past in order to attract and retain talented employees. This all adds to the cost of hiring. Fortunately, there is some tax help to ameliorate the cost, here are five new employee tax breaks.

New Employee Tax Breaks

Work Opportunity Credit

If you hire workers from certain targeted groups, you can claim a tax credit for a portion of their wages. The amount of the credit varies with the group to which a new employee belongs. In effect, claiming the credit reduces your out-of-pocket costs for these workers. Targeted groups include:

- Certain veterans
- Ex-felons
- Food stamp recipients
To claim the credit, you must submit IRS Form 8850 to your state workforce agency within 28 days of the first day of the new worker’s employment. The agency will certify whether the worker is a member of a targeted group.

Empowerment Zone Credit
If you do business within an area that has a special designation as an empowerment zone, you can claim a tax credit of 20 percent of the wages paid to the new employee up to $15,000 (top credit of $3,000). There are urban and rural empowerment zones, which are distressed economic areas designated by the government. A qualified employee for purposes of the credit is someone who works full-time or part-time for a business located within an empowerment zone and who also lives within the empowerment zone.

The IRS maintains a list of designated areas for this credit. This list is available through the agency’s website.

Indian Employment Credit
For purposes of this employment-related credit, the tax law uses the term “Indian” and does not use the term “Native American.” If you do business on an Indian reservation and you hire a worker who is a member of a tribe and lives on or near the reservation, you can take a tax credit. The credit is 20 percent of the excess of the current qualified wages and qualified employee health insurance costs (not to exceed $20,000) over the sum of the corresponding amounts that were paid or incurred during the calendar year of 1993 (yes, this date is correct).

Payroll Tax Reduction for R&D Expenses
Small businesses engaged in research activities usually qualify for a research credit. However, until now a credit was beneficial only if companies were profitable. Start-ups and young businesses engaged in research activities may have little or no revenue and can’t benefit from the usual research credit. Starting in 2016, they can apply the credit against the employer’s Social Security taxes up to $250,000, rather than against income taxes. In other words, your payroll costs can be reduced by this credit offset.

Small businesses for purposes of the payroll offset are corporations (C and S) or partnerships with gross receipts of less than $5 million for the current year and no gross receipts for any of the preceding tax years. Sole proprietors can also qualify for the credit.

Caution: Excessive or bogus research credits are on the IRS’s radar, so expect the agency to look carefully at claims for the research credit.
State Income Tax Credits

Don’t overlook tax breaks available on the state level. For example, California also has a work opportunity credit and an empowerment zone credit. New York offers an Empire Zone credit, an employee training incentive program credit, an employment of persons with disabilities credit, and qualified emerging technology employment credit.

Conclusion

As the cliché goes, “take credit where credit is due” by exploring your employment-related options. While you likely won’t hire a worker solely because it entitles you to a tax credit, if you have a choice between workers, the credit may be the tipping point in your decision.

Barbara Weltman
Columnist
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President Donald Trump has suggested changes to H1B visas that could impact some small businesses and their employees.

But if you’re busy running every other aspect of your small business, you probably don’t have time to keep up with all the country’s complex immigration laws.

Here’s a simple explanation of the H1B visa program and what proposed changes could mean for small businesses.

What is an H1B Visa?
An H1B visa is a program for businesses hiring foreign workers for specific positions in the U.S. But it’s a bit more complicated than that.

Immigration Attorney Paul Goldstein explained in an email to Small Business Trends, “The H1B visas are non-immigrant visas for foreign workers in ‘specialty occupations.’ While there is no set definition for what … a ‘specialty occupation’ [is], the position must meet one of the following criteria.”

Any business that hires people for positions that require a college degree could apply for H1B visas.
Goldstein explains that:

- The position must require a baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent;
- Or it must have a degree requirement that is common in the industry for similar positions, or be a position that is so specialized that it can only be performed by a person with a degree;
- Or it must be a position for which the employer normally requires a degree or equivalent;
- Or the nature of the job or its duties are so complex that the knowledge required to perform those duties would normally be associated with a baccalaureate or higher degree.

The job should be something that requires or would normally require a college degree.

What Types of Employees Do H1B Visas Cover?

Essentially, any business that hires people for positions that require a college degree could apply for H1B visas.

However, there are certain types of businesses that tend to use them more than others. For instance, tech companies like IBM tend to apply for a good portion of the allotted visas.

In addition, certain physicians and non-profit and government researchers can also fit within the program. But some of those positions aren’t restricted by the annual cap on H1B visas.

What Might Changes to H1B Visas Mean for Businesses?

President Trump’s suggested changes involve investigating “abuse” of H1B and other visas.

Goldstein says, “Congress has placed a cap on the number of visas that will be issued for a fiscal year starting on Oct. 1 at 65,000.

“There are an additional 20,000 visas for foreign workers who have earned a master’s degree or higher from a United States institution of higher learning. The USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) will accept H1B petitions for the fiscal year beginning April 1 with employment start date of Oct. 1.”

However, there aren’t any other specific changes that are already in the works as far as H1B visas are concerned. There may very well be new restrictions in the coming years, potentially including a smaller cap or increased fees for applicants. But Goldstein says it’s too early to anticipate what those changes might actually entail.

However, applying as early as possible is the best route for businesses looking to utilize the program.

Goldstein says, “President Trump has promised changes in the immigration laws. We would have to wait and see what is proposed for H1B visas and voted on by Congress. I can tell you that if a business wants to file an H1B, they should start early to have the submission ready to be filed by April 1.”

If a business wants to file an H1B, they should start early.

Annie Pilon
Columnist
@AnnieHP

TRUMP IMPACT
The rise of the gig economy offers attractive benefits for workers and businesses alike. Freelancers get to enjoy the flexibility that comes with the lifestyle while companies get to hire talented people without incurring the costs associated with a full-time employee.

Hiring freelance workers also presents a dilemma: Businesses are often confused about how to classify whether a worker is a 1099 independent contractor or a W-2 employee.

An estimated 3.4 million employees are classified as independent contractors when companies should report them as employees, according to JustWorks, an HR management software provider.

Misclassification Affects All Parties

Misclassification of workers is a problem that affects three parties: the worker, the business and governmental agencies.

If improperly classified, workers could miss out on benefits such as insurance, 401K and paid vacation. Business owners might incur stiff fines and penalties, lawsuits and even jail time.
According to a report from SIA, a global staffing and workforce solutions advisor, more than one-third of midsize businesses have been fined or penalized for not complying with laws about how they manage their workforces.

Not only that, but federal and state governments miss out on money that would otherwise fill their coffers. The federal government alone loses between $2.7 to $4.3 billion in tax revenue annually, studies estimate.

The loss of income is not something the Obama administration is taking lightly. According to a webinar hosted by Work Market, a freelance workforce management software provider, independent contractor misclassification was the Department of Labor’s (DOL) single most important enforcement priority in 2016.

The department assigned 300 new investigators to track down offenders, and added $31.7 million to its budget for that reason.

**Employee Classification is Difficult**

It may seem surprising that confusion exists over worker classification. After all, an independent contractor is someone who works for himself while an employee works for another party.

Unfortunately, things aren’t that simple. Lots of uncertainty exists in the regulatory environment.

“Where worker classification is concerned, no hard-and-fast criteria exists, despite the fact that the Department of Labor, National Labor Relations Board, IRS and a host of state labor-related agencies have their various interpretations,” said Jeff Wald, Work Market co-founder and president, in a telephone interview with Small Business Trends.

According to Wald, businesses need to be prepared in the event one of these agencies comes calling. And it’s not a matter of “if” the government will come calling, but “when,” he added.

“The IRS, DOL, worker’s comp or unemployment insurance boards, or even your insurance company could knock on your door wanting to understand how you engage the freelance workforce,” he said. “Should that happen, the burden lies on the back of the business owner to interpret the complex sets of rules and regulations and make the determination as to how his business will address it.”

Any way you look at it, misclassification of employees is a problem, and the burden of compliance falls to the business owner.

**Consequences of Misclassifying Workers**

The consequences of non-compliance can be tough and include fines, penalties, lawsuits and even jail time.

“Fines levied by the U.S. Department of Labor, IRS and state agencies for worker misclassification can exceed millions depending on the severity of the infractions,” Wald said in a post on TLNT, an HR industry blog. “The threat of class action lawsuits should also serve as a further deterrent for companies straddling the boundaries of improper classification.”

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**Misclassification of workers is a problem that affects three parties: the worker, the business and the government.**
He added that trouble could come in many forms: Wage law violations, trouble with the IRS, I-9 violations, unemployment insurance shortfalls, worker’s comp violations, improper exclusion from benefits, anti-discrimination violations, FMLA violations, and much more.

### Fines and Penalties for Worker Misclassification

Even if the misclassification is unintentional, the employer could still face the following penalties:

- $50 for each Form W-2 that the employer failed to file because of classifying workers as an independent contractor;
- 5 percent of the wages for failure to withhold income taxes;
- 40 percent of FICA taxes that not withheld from the employee;
- 100 percent of matching FICA taxes the employer should have paid.

Interest can also accrue on these penalties daily from the date they should have been deposited. The IRS can also impose additional fines and penalties if it suspects fraud or intentional misconduct.

The bottom line: Businesses can’t afford to misclassify.

### Worker Classification Compliance Tests

The government has several tests for compliance (e.g., Economic Reality, IRS 20-Factor, Common Law, “ABC”) but there is little standardization among them. In fact, one test may qualify the worker as an employee while another will classify the same person as an independent contractor.

The IRS 20-Factor test, for example, uses the degree of behavioral and financial control the employer exercises, as well as the type of relationship that exists between the two parties (written contracts or employee-type benefits), to determine whether or not a worker is an employee or independent contractor.

The Economic Reality test, on the other hand, places emphasis on the economic dependence of a person on the employer as its litmus.

The New York Times reports that under federal tax and labor law, contractors must have greater independence than employees, which limits their use. “Simply put, if you tell someone when, where and how to work, you do not have a contractor relationship,” the Times said.

### Steps Small Businesses Can Take to Ensure Compliance

Wald and Work Market recommend that small businesses take the following steps to ensure compliance:

**Have a Plan in Place**

“Have a documented plan of action that you can back up with facts,” Wald said. “If a representative from your state’s unemployment office were to pay a visit, would you be able to defend why you classified a person as a contractor rather than as an employee?”

He added that, due to the lack of uniformity, the business owner has to determine what the rules are and document them.

“Get what your interpretation is for your business and document that as your point of view,” Wald said. “Have audit trails, so you can show someone your interpretation based on
what you’ve read, backed up by facts. If you have established rules and documentation, trained your people and set up processes and audit trails, it will bode better for you than for those who haven’t.”

Exert Limited Control

Exert limited control over independent contractors.

According to Wald, it’s okay to have generalized rules of governance but don’t give them an employee handbook. “That makes them look like employees,” he said.

Also, don’t give freelancers full-time work. Short-term projects that are encompassing from time to time is fine, however.

Compliance ‘Dos’ and ‘Don’ts’

Though not exhaustive, here are some general guidelines, in the form of “dos” and “don’ts.”

Do

• Conduct a systematic review of compliance policies in light of new DOL standard (whether the person is “economically dependent on the employer or truly in business for him or herself”);
• Establish a formal and centralized approval, governance and monitoring process for all contractors;
• Require contractors to submit invoices for payment, rather than paying them on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis;
• Follow the terms of the agreement, including termination provisions.

Don’t

• Supervise the independent contractor or his assistants. He should perform his duties without direction;
• Allow the contractor to work on-premise unless necessary;
• Establish particular working hours;
• Provide ongoing training or instruction;
• Invite the contractor to company meetings or functions;
• Give the contractor a title or provide equipment unless necessary;
• Pay travel or other expenses directly;
• Give the contractor new work after the original project is completing without requiring a new agreement.

Conclusion

Classifying workers as employees or independent contractors is more complicated than it may first appear. And it doesn’t help that the government has no single standard that companies can use to make that determination.

However, due to the adverse fines and penalties a company could accrue as the result of a misclassification, the savvy business owner will take the steps necessary to ensure compliance.

Paul Chaney
Staff Writer
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Building Your Dream Team for a Cloud-based Business

Cloud computing is taking off on a massive scale. IT companies transitioning to become cloud-friendly that serve small businesses have to rethink the way their business is structured where employee roles are concerned.

Here is the list of roles, broken down by category, that you will need to build a successful cloud business. Depending on the size of your company, you can assign more than one role to an individual employee.

Companies with 25 or fewer employees may need to outsource some of the roles to a partner who, like you, has the client’s interest at heart and can match the right internal or external cloud options.
Decision Maker
Leader. Every business needs to identify a decision maker who focuses his energy on building a successful cloud business. This role concentrates on identifying opportunities, establishing cloud capacity and allocating right investments to achieve the cloud financial goals.

Attorney
Every cloud-based IT business needs an attorney who understands and approves all cloud service contracts. This person will help you establish contractual commitments, identify risks and provide win-win solutions between the various cloud service provider partners and your organization.

Accountant
The key to building a successful cloud business is generating recurring revenue from multiple sources. A cloud accountant should be proficient in understanding cloud revenue models, provide guidance around tracking solutions and prepare the right tax report for your business.

Chief Information Officer
This position plays a key role in implementing cloud solutions with customers, enhance automation, and run cloud solutions closely with all teams such as product, product management and sales & marketing teams. Furthermore, they coordinate with customer support team and ensure legal sign off.

Cloud Security, Compliance & Privacy
This role is responsible for defining cloud security, compliance and privacy policy, and signing off on the cloud-ready plan.
### Business Development
Cloud companies need to invest in business development managers as they collaborate with cloud vendors, channel partners and distributors to identify new market opportunities.

### Cloud Solution Sales
Cloud Solution Sales role focuses on selling cloud solutions directly to customers.

### Marketing
Marketing team focuses on driving customer leads through all marketing channels such as events, social, email and advertising.

### Cloud Architects
They are responsible for overseeing a company’s cloud computing strategy. This includes cloud adoption plans, cloud application design, and cloud management and monitoring.

### Product Managers
They define, prioritize and plan product specifications of the cloud solutions.

### Developers
They spearhead the development and implementation of cloud solutions.

### Designers
This role focuses on creating the right experience using UI/UX for a cloud solution.

### Tier 1 – Support Engineers
They work directly with customers and with Tier2/3 to resolve any issues or challenges faced.

### Tier2/3 – DevOps
They work internally with all the right teams to find a resolution.

While some SMBs need your expert help from the scratch, some may need your intervention at different levels. A right mix of these roles in your company holds you in good stead to offer cloud services to SMBs and meet their specific requirements.

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**Chaitra Vedullapalli**
@cvedulla

**PTO Manager Excel Template**
- Calculate Employees' PTO balances & manage their vacation days using this Excel template.

**Recruitment Manager Excel Template**
- Visualize recruitment funnel. Identify decline reasons & application sources.
- View active pipeline.

**Script Certificate Template**
- Looking for a fancy and creative certificate template for your events?

**2-in-1 Left Bar Circle Simple Resume**
- Curated resume template to help you produce a resume that will attract readers' attention.
Forget The Perks: Generation Z Will Want Benefits — and Money!

A majority of the new crop of “digital natives” heading into the workforce soon value high salaries and health insurance over trendy Millennial office perks, a new survey has found.

But as the first-ever generation that has enjoyed ubiquitous internet technology since birth, members of so-called Generation Z, those currently aged 15 to 20, place unprecedented value on the presence of technology in the workplace too, the survey said.

Generation Z Statistics

According to a multi-generational survey conducted recently, 39 percent of Generation Z now perceive smartphones as office essentials — compared to just 25 percent of Baby Boomers, Millennials and members of Generation X.

Research also suggests that members of Generation Z are more attracted to careers that carry purpose and pragmatism, with 74 percent of those surveyed arguing that jobs should have greater meaning than “just bringing home the bacon”. By comparison, 70 percent of Millennials and 69 percent of all older generations examined all together said they believed work should be guided by a meaningful purpose.

Yet unlike Millennials, this week’s survey revealed that Generation Z appears to be
more ambitious and far more interested in traditional work motivations than office perks like free gym memberships and Friday cocktails.

While 41 percent of all workers told surveyors that they’re willing to work nights and weekend for a better salary, a whopping 58 percent of Generation Z members said they were more than happy to work unsociable hours. Likewise, 74 percent of new workers surveyed said they were willing to relocate for a decent job — versus just 45 percent of Millennials, and 33 percent of Baby Boomers.

74% of Gen Z Workers say jobs should have greater meaning than “just bringing home the bacon.”

When asked their top “must haves” for their first job, 70 percent of this new demographic said health insurance, while 70 percent said they were motivated by money. By contrast, only 63 percent of Millennials said salary played a huge role in their career decisions.

For members of Generation Z, pay was followed closely by the desire to have a boss they deemed worthy of their respect.

“As I talk to many employers, the focus is still on Millennials, with a lot of questions about perks like nap pods and free lunches,” said Seth Matheson, Director of Talent Fusion by Monster. “However, a common theme we saw in the report is Gen Z’s emphasis on some of the more ‘traditional’ benefits like health insurance and a quality, two-way relationship with their potential manager.”

Bearing that in mind, Matheson was quick to add that one strategy small business owners may want to deploy in order to attract tech-savvy Generation Z workers will be to conduct more regular check-ins between managers and employees.

Other potential hiring strategies include the implementation of strong employer branding exercises via social media in order to demonstrate a discernible brand identity online. By painting a clear narrative of what your company does and why it is meaningful, it should theoretically appeal to Generation Z’s desire for more altruistic work.

“The key to successfully attracting and engaging Gen Z throughout their candidate journey will be a strong employer brand that is consistent across technologies,” said Matheson. “Organizational brands will need to be transparent, adaptable, personable and memorable, targeting the brand’s ideal Gen Z employees through tools like social recruiting and talent CRM targeted emails.”

It’s also worth pointing out that members of Generation Z are far more interested in entrepreneurship, with 49 percent telling researchers they’d like to start their own businesses in the future. By contrast, only 32 percent of all other workers said they wanted to own a business.

The survey was carried out by global research agency TNS earlier this year, and surveyed more than 2,000 individuals across the Boomer, X, Y and Z generations.
Your Business, Cloud-Ready In 100 Days

The cloud market is expected to grow to $500B by 2020. Aren't you there? What is your action plan to capture revenue and transform your business? With Meylah, adopt cloud solutions that will help you capitalize on the booming cloud opportunity.

TAKE FREE ASSESSMENT
Renting your first office space can be an exciting turning point for your business. But choosing just any office would be a mistake. You need to make sure that your office is one that will support your team and allow you to grow and thrive.

Here are things to consider before renting your first office space.

Decide If You Really Need One

Businesses used to need dedicated offices in order to survive. But plenty of entrepreneurs today do just fine working from home offices or even co-working spaces. If your business could function in one of these alternative environments, you could save yourself a lot of time and money.

Choose a Location Near Your Team

If it is absolutely essential for you to have a dedicated office space, then the location is likely your most important consideration when renting your first office space. You first need to ensure that the office will be close enough for your team members to commute. Or if you don’t have a team just yet, choose an office that close enough to an area that’s populated with potential talent.
Ensure That it is Easily Accessible for Others

You also have to keep clients in mind when choosing a location. Is the office building you’re considering easily accessible from freeways or public transportation? Will they be able to find it easily?

Think About What Amenities You Want Nearby

Another factor when renting your first office space that could impact your location decision is the nearby amenities. Your team will likely appreciate an office that’s at least somewhat close to restaurants and coffee shops. And if there are certain places you need to visit regularly for business purposes, like meeting spaces or banks, you’ll want those to be nearby as well.

Have a Strict Budget in Mind

After location, cost is likely your next big concern. Don’t choose an office that is going to put your business too far into debt and stunt its growth. Crunch the numbers before you even start looking to find a budget that will allow you to operate comfortably.

Account for Extra Expenses

There are a lot of expenses that go into renting an office space. The actual rent is just part of it, when it comes to most properties. And those extra expenses can really add up if you don’t account for them in your original budget.

Make Sure the Lease is Clear

Just knowing what’s included is one thing when renting your first office space. You need to also make sure that all of those provisions are clearly spelled out in the lease. You don’t want to just take your landlord’s word that some utilities are included only to be charged for them later since that wasn’t officially stated in your lease.

Find Out Who is Responsible for Repairs

Repairs for your space can also represent a significant expense. If your landlord is responsible for those expenses, make sure they are willing to take care of them in a timely manner. But if you are, make sure there’s some wiggle room into your budget.

Get Help From an Expert

The process of looking for office space can be overwhelming for a newbie. But if you find a commercial real estate agent or broker who is familiar with the properties in the area, they can make the whole process a lot easier.

Find a Secure Building

The building itself should offer some amenities as well. To keep you, your employees and your equipment safe and secure, find out if the building has a security guard, manned entry way and after-hours security.

Once you have assessed the need to have a dedicated office space, make sure you get everything right to have an office that suits all the needs of your business.
Choose a Space That Fits Your Team

Of course, you will need a large enough space for the members of your team to each have a desk or place to sit. But you don’t want something so large that you’re paying for entire rooms that you never use.

But Leave Some Room to Grow

However, a bit of extra space can be a good thing, especially if you plan to grow within the length of your lease. Even a few extra cubicle spaces or some room to add a few desks can be helpful.

Decide How You Want the Office Laid Out

Do you want an open concept or more closed-off work spaces? Different bosses and teams have different preferences. So think about what style would suit your team best and choose an office that lends itself to your preferred layout.

Know Exactly in What Condition You’ll Receive the Space

Some offices don’t always come as advertised. And some might require a bit of work before you actually move your things in. If you want to know exactly what the space will look like if you actually decide to rent it, you have to ask those questions.

Consider Parking and Bike Storage

Parking is another important factor that might be overlooked when renting your first office space. You need to make sure there are enough parking spaces nearby so that your team can actually get to work on time without much hassle. A secure parking lot or dedicated area is a plus. Or if you're in an area where there are more bikers, make sure there's a rack or enough space somewhere in the building for employees to store their bikes.

Think About How the Office Will Appear to Others

Like it or not, your office sends a message to others about your business. If you choose a building that’s falling apart, that could tell clients that you’re struggling. But if you overextend your budget with a lavish space for your first office, they could think that they’re paying you too much.

Have a Place to Meet

Aside from just desks or cubicles, you’ll need to think about some other spaces that could be useful to your team. Do you need a dedicated conference room or a few smaller meeting rooms? Do you need a kitchen or any other specific types of spaces?
Know What You’re Allowed to Customize

You likely want to make your first office your own. But most landlords probably don’t want you knocking down walls and completely changing their buildings. So before you sign anything, see what you’re allowed to do to the space without them charging you for damages.

Consider the Lease Length

The length of your lease can be another important factor in your decision when renting your first office space. For your first office, you might not want to get tied into a really long-term commitment. You don’t want to be stuck with an office space if your business folds, sells or outgrows the space.

Have Confidence in Your Business Moving Forward

For that reason, you really have to think about where you see your business at the end of that time period. If it’s a five-year lease, where do you see your business in five years? And do you have an actual plan to get there?

Have Provisions in Place for an Early Exit

Just in case, you should know what might happen if you have to break your lease. Make sure that you’re comfortable with any fees or other penalties just in case something changes throughout the course of your lease.

Annie Pilon
Columnist
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Generate Leads and Sales All-In-One Place

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Get Started
Social media has transformed how businesses recruit today. Consider that, on a monthly basis, more than 317 million people use Twitter and 600 million use Instagram. Even more, about 1.13 billion people use Facebook every day!

Social platforms are marketing platforms, but hiring managers and recruiters are increasingly turning to them to find talent, too. You, the small business owner, should be using social media to find employees as well.

It’s one solution to cutting costs associated with more traditional methods of finding and hiring candidates. If you visit campuses and career fairs, you, of course, will need to pay for your travel and other expenses. Also, the price of advertising -- via digital and print vehicles -- keeps increasing.

In addition, you can spend an enormous amount of it screening people via phone and in-person interviews. So, social media recruiting can help you reduce those costs and also save lots of time — provided you do it right.

To help you save money as you search online for job candidates, you might consider the following when it comes to using social media to find employees.
Find Where Potential Employees Are

Find out which social media sites are the ones used by your potential hires. This requires doing some research. Maybe you should consider asking your own employees, formally or informally, which social media sites they prefer. Focus on the larger sites like LinkedIn as well as industry-specific social networks.

Don’t Forget Your Own Social Media Accounts

Social media is all about staying in touch with friends, as well as meeting new people. Remember to share with your own personal network that you are looking for candidates.

The larger your personal network is the better. Be sure to connect with the proper influencers to expand your reach.

Social Media is a Two-Way Street

When using social media to find employees, don’t sit back and wait for job seekers to knock on your online door. Instead, make sure your profiles are updated and fresh. Also remember, corporate culture is what the new generation of employees wants to know about — so give them their fill. Communicate in a clear, honest way what it’s like to work at your company. Furthermore, the best approach is to constantly work on building relationships so you can access a pool of great candidates.

Create Social Media Value

Create a robust company profile and systematically tweet and post new job openings, as well as news about your company and industry. If you make your tweets and posts of genuine value to players in your industry, more people will follow you — and apply to openings about which you tweet.

Enlist Your Workforce

Allow your employees to share their experiences at your company with their friends via social media. Your employees can aid your recruiting efforts and help spread the word you’re your company is a great place to work. Insight into the organization provided by your actual employees tends to be a powerful way to reach job seekers.

LinkedIn is the Most Professional-Oriented of the Big Three

At LinkedIn you can find and meet and collaborate with qualified professionals. The site boasts more than 380 million members in over 200 countries and territories and claims that two new members join per second.

Facebook is the Largest

Of the social networking sites, Facebook is the biggest, with more than 1.5 billion users. It is intended to connect friends, family, and business associates. The model has expanded to include connections to organizations, businesses, and interests, which is worth noting. You can find where the passion resides for your
business by spending time on Facebook. Once you gather some names, maybe a closer look at their LinkedIn profile would help you to better evaluate potential hires.

**The Strength of the Tweet**

Twitter, the “microblogging” social networking service, is known for its 140-character tweets. Twitter is a handy way to spread the word in a multitude of ways. Tweeting needs to be done frequently, and the tweets need to be engaging enough to attract attention.

Now that you have the basics, the next step is how to better leverage each channel.

**The Most Obvious Ways to Use LinkedIn**

You can post job openings and search for candidates. You also can purchase job credits and pay less per job posting. You can sign up for LinkedIn Talent Advantage, which will provide you with tools specific for recruiting on LinkedIn, and you can use the LinkedIn Job feature. If you don’t have the budget to pay for job postings or join the Talent Advantage, you can still use the free services.

**Join a Social Group**

Aside from constantly building your LinkedIn connections, you can join groups that will expose you to potential candidates. For example, if you are always looking for writers, find a group that would have professional writers as members. Once you join relevant groups find ways to reach out to others by posting content or responding to what others post. Also try to watch people active in the group. They will usually ask interesting questions, as well as provide their answers to questions posted by others. Doing this could help you find good candidates.

**Use Your Status Box**

If you use your network activity box (or status box) to craft a post that says you are looking to hire people, you have yourself a free ad. Don’t forget to include contact info so interested parties can follow through.

**Once You Find Someone Who Looks Promising**

Once you find someone who looks promising, then you should review their profile, paying attention to how complete it is, for example. Also see if they have recommendations, noting how recent some of them are and whether they have reviews from peers, managers and colleagues versus only friends. Do they belong to the right groups — or do they belong to some that you weren’t aware of?

**On Facebook, Consider a Targeted Ad**

You can post job ads at a range of prices based on how long you want the ad to run, among other things. You need to provide basic information such as location, job category, subcategory, title, and description.
Facebook Pages: Free and Effective

A Facebook Page is a public platform that enables you to share your business and products with Facebook users. You can share that you are seeking to fill a position right on the page and then analyze those who reply to you.

Post a Facebook Ad

In creating such an ad, you can choose the exact audience to target. You can set the characteristics required of the people who will view your ad. This can be based on group’s age, sex and specific keywords. Facebook will then calculate different options for you, as well as a range of prices based on duration and ultimate reach. As an example of how to benefit from Facebook’s fine-tuning, if you seek to fill an entry-level position, you can target the ad to a younger age demographic. Just don’t make the criteria too specific or you may not get the applicants you want.

Tweet Your Job Openings

For example: “Seeking a Sales Rep in NYC. Salary is very competitive, apply at (your shortened url).”

You also can run a quick search on Twitter (search.twitter.com) to find if someone is discussing a keyword of interest. Searches also can be conducted by location, by industry or interest and more.

Use #Hashtags to Filter Searches

When using social media to find employees, include the hashtag with a keyword in your tweet and it will be instantly searchable. Examples of hashtags you might consider using: #job, #jobpost, #employment,

#recruiting, #hiring, #career, #staffing, #salesjob, #NAJ (that is Twitter lingo for ‘Need A Job?’) Remember you are limited to 140 characters. Use as many hashtags as you want, but remember to be concise and engaging, too.

Analyze a Candidate’s Twitter History

When analyzing candidates on Twitter, you’d want to evaluate their activity to see how often they tweet, and what they tweet. Also worth considering is whether they fully utilize Twitter by retweeting tweets, say, versus tweeting about their own content only.

If you are seeking entry-level candidates, here are some tips to help you engage the college-graduate demographic on social media.

Be Specific and Informative

College students tend to focus on jobs that meet specific qualifications—and they tend to want to be truly interested in the specific job itself. The best way to engage them is to provide the most information you can about the position. You may want to focus on firing them up by telling “success stories”
related to in-house promotions. Or maybe highlighting work-life balance is a strong way to go.

**Cut Through the Noise**
You need to be informative, but not wordy. And you need to pique their interest as well. Use pictures, video, even bright colors to grab their eye.

**Avoid the Trite**
Long lists of qualifications can be tiresome to read. You need to be creative when targeting college graduates. Use humor, maybe a more conversational tone as well. Talk to them on their level—but don’t talk down to them.

**Engage in Hand-holding**
Encourage them to ask questions. Let them know you are there to address any concerns they may have about taking the plunge. Here it’s very important to be responsive to them. This group needs to be cultivated carefully. They’ll turn away from anyone who tried to give them orders or is too harshly critical. You don’t want to seem too demanding, either.

There are countless ways to use social media to find new candidates. These tips can be used as your jumping off point. Shape them to fit your needs as well. Maybe concentrate on one platform, for example. And don’t forget that recruiting people will take time and may cost some money as well.

Social media is a difficult channel to master but can be highly rewarding in terms of helping you people your operation with the right professionals who enjoy working with you.

And for as many ways as there are to use social media to find the next member of your team, there are definitely some things not to do.

Using social media to recruit has two sides to it. We’ve mentioned the benefits. Now, here are the hiring mistakes to avoid:

**Discriminate**
State and Federal laws prohibit discriminatory hiring decisions based on color, religion, race, and more. Then, you need to be mindful of the hot-button issues like sexual harassment. Don’t inadvertently generate a problem, and do all you can to not discriminate.

**Believe Everything**
How do you know if what you read about someone on social media is true? Maybe the information is fraudulent or incorrect on some level, and this could be either intentionally or unintentionally on the poster’s part. Remember to check references, call past employers, even if only to confirm work history.

**Forget a Hard Copy**
It is wise to print out all the pages of social media content related to a hiring decision. In case of rejection, you also should print out that page as well in the event that your decision is challenged in some way.
Ignore Laws
Laws linked to social media recruiting processes are on the books. Even on social media, for example, companies that provide credit reports to employers — and employers using these reports also must comply with the Fair Credit Reporting Act. Be familiar with all the laws governing social media hiring so you can defend yourself if you have to.

Get Too Much Information
There is a lot of good information out there that will help you get to know your candidates. There is a double-pronged meaning to the word “good” in this sense. As a rule of thumb, it’s better not to sift too deeply through someone’s social media account, as you may learn answers to questions that would never arise during the typical hiring process.

What you know can hurt you. Many sites advise that you stay away from social media sites that provide more data than is needed to make a hiring decision. This will reduce, if not eliminate, the risk of a discrimination lawsuit.

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When Sizing Up Job Candidates, Always Dig Deeper

It’s been years since I applied or interviewed for a job and, frankly, I’m not sure I’d know if I have a resume, where it is, or if anyone even asks for them anymore.

So, when I do a cartoon like this I always wonder if I’m showing my age and out-of-touch’edness with the current job market.

I’d like to think, though, that I’m a little more clued in than this guy.

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