



# 11 STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER WHEN RECRUITING DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

# 11 STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER WHEN RECRUITING DURING A NATIONAL PANDEMIC



Coronavirus (COVID-19) has swiftly turned everyone's world completely upside-down and the workplace is no exception. With face-to-face interaction considered to be unsafe, companies have been forced to quickly adapt in order to continue meeting their recruiting needs. It is critical during this period for each company to tailor its strategies to its current goals and economic outlook.

Companies are making adjustments to keep their employees and clients safe and slow the spread of the virus. From a hiring standpoint, this means that many recruiters and hiring managers are changing the way they conduct job interviews, building a social presence, realigning to off-campus recruitment plans like virtual open houses and job fairs, getting comfortable in front of the camera, and preparing for remote onboarding for a whole class of new employees.

This pandemic has placed many of our companies in a unique circumstance and we understand you may be struggling with this new way of doing business and could probably use a resource to turn to for answers. Carter Isiaq Consulting and our

team of professionals have expertise to help you and your team navigate this time through our HR expertise, Recruitment/Talent Acquisition Strategy, or our Employee Engagement and Retention Resources for businesses of all sizes.

Whether your business is in a recruitment hold, surge, or employee retention pattern, having a clear and concise plan will be helpful as your candidates' needs will change in a post-COVID-19 workplace. The Human Resources and Recruitment Consultants at Carter Isiaq Consulting have created a list of 11 strategies your Talent Acquisition team should consider in a post-Coronavirus workplace that can assist your company in creating a tailored recruitment plan to attract new employees during this pandemic.

## THE CHALLENGE

Due to the global Coronavirus pandemic, companies are required to modernize and adapt to the new virtual climate to navigate their recruiting processes to include social distancing measures, increase digital presence, and a stronger employer brand.

## THE STRATEGIC RESOLUTIONS

1. Ensure that your team has a plan in place that engages new employees from their initial interaction through their first year of employment (onboarding).
2. If your benefits have changed due to this pandemic, whether for the better or the worse, consider how you "sell" these opportunities to your candidates and employees.
3. No one knows what to expect in this environment; however, operating in a cloud creates unnecessary stress for all team members. Make sure you communicate with transparency, and realistic expectations so your team can make healthy decisions for themselves too.
4. College campuses are currently working to determine if and how they will reopen amidst the Coronavirus concerns. Create alternative plans for virtual on-campus opportunities for your new-hire recruitment including videos, online- seminars, and participating in virtual career fairs.
5. If you have not taken ownership of your employer brand employee/candidate feedback websites, now is the time to implement this critical step. Creating a positive candidate experience and employer brand takes time and effort.
6. During social distancing measures, the photos of your holiday parties and happy hours will be harder to come by, still creating relevant content for potential employees by highlighting benefits and employee experience.
7. As candidates flood the job market, consider the attributes related to the ideal candidate's soft skills and technical abilities before you begin your hiring process. This step will mitigate wasted time with candidates that are not bringing everything you need to the forefront of your recruitment process.
8. Employers must consider the non-verbal messaging they are presenting to their candidates and ensure that they are introducing their prospective employees to their best messaging and representatives of that messaging.
9. As candidates interview via Video Conferencing platforms ensure your interviewers do not sacrifice the candidate experience by interacting as your company's cheerleader, not just investigators. You can extend the in-office experience with a number of remote opportunities including shadowing and tours.
10. Bad Hires can create a deep financial impact upon a company bottom-line. Although some turnovers are unavoidable, consider and create a remote- offboarding strategy for employees to smoothly transition from the company so they can still have positive memories of your place of employment.
11. Do not retire all of the old strategies of recruiting. Many of the strategies we have traditionally used simply require modernization for this current socially-distant environment.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

The team at Carter Isiaq Consulting has compiled a list of 11 Recruitment-Focused Strategies that business leaders, Human Resources Managers, and Talent Acquisition teams can consider to improve their current recruitment initiatives while working during a global pandemic.

## THE AUTHORS



Chief Executive Officer and Lead Recruitment Consultant, Tara D. Isiaq brings over 10 years of recruiting and recruitment strategy experience to the Carter Isiaq Consulting team. She and the CI Consulting team understand the challenges that come with finding highly qualified talent and support their clients in

developing a repeatable talent strategy. Our experts have been able to help small businesses with fixed recruitment budgets find creative solutions to their niche recruiting needs that maintain compliance, utilize best practices and allow for graduated growth. Tara is an active member of the Society for Human Resource Management, has been published in the Journal for Government Financial Management and has been featured as an expert on articles in the online publications: Reader's Digest, UpJourney, and Fupping.com.

Donald Walker has a career that spans human resources, education, and leadership development. After serving in progressive leadership roles in higher education at the University of Delaware, Virginia Tech, and Towson University, Donald stepped into the staffing industry where he managed teams at Kelly Services, Profiles, and Lucas Group. He is



known for his holistic leadership strategy and overall care and compassion for his teams. Donald drives his teams to be innovative in order to be the best in their industry. Additionally, Donald is an adjunct faculty member in the College of Business and Economics at Towson University, where he teaches Organizational Leadership, Leadership & Management, and Strategic Management.



Carter Isiaq Consulting is a boutique recruitment and human resources consulting firm who prides itself on connecting talented individuals to talented organizations to elevate the quality of culture and talent acquisition initiatives for an ever-changing generational market. With consultants based in both Washington, DC and Chicago, IL; CI Consulting and their team of industry leaders offers companies and organizations tailored talent acquisition support to provide supplemental recruitment services, process analysis and implementation, recruitment marketing support, and in-house training and facilitation.



# 1

## HAVE A PLAN FOR AN ENGAGED EMPLOYEE ON-BOARDING PROCESS

Potential employees are concerned more than ever about how social distancing will affect their ability to build relationships and positive rapport within the workplace. It is hard enough being the newbie in the office without that office requiring employees to stand six feet apart from each other. Companies which are accustomed to having orientation and welcome gifts set up for new employees when they arrive on their first day should consider a strategic and elongated process that allows new employees a chance to meet members of the team through remote circumstances.

However, in a post-Coronavirus workplace, consider setting up individual meet-and-greets with team members to facilitate their needs and foster new relationships. Instead of just sending a gift card for office supplies or having HR explain the reimbursement benefits, you may want to set up a meeting with the office administrator to discuss supply needs and learn the protocol for troubleshooting technical and internal clerical issues in the future (Is there a code to Ship this back to you? Next-Day? 3-Day?). This creates an opportunity for the new team member to both learn and engage with other employees.

With large group lunches being frowned upon at the moment, it may be more advantageous to provide a small stipend for a local eatery and then invite employees to a virtual meeting to meet any new colleagues.

Consider sending a care package or swag bag to employees completing their first week. A swag bag of small items with the company's name inscribed on it is always a great welcome option. For companies with larger budgets or more traditional giveaways on hand, consider using this incentive with your finalists who are interviewing. A small care package of promotional items from your company (a mug, lens cloth, t-shirt, a reusable shopping bag or a chapstick) is guaranteed to make a memorable impression. After all, how often is it that job applicants go to an interview and leave with a gift?

To include the current team into the welcome of their new teammate, you may also consider providing him or her with a few of your team's "must-have" items such as favorite work snacks, magazines, helpful advice cards, or welcome notes.

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<sup>1</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, New Employee Onboarding Guide: Proper onboarding is key to retaining, engaging talent







“ It is hard enough being the newbie in the office without that office requiring employees to stand six feet apart from each other. ”



## 2 CONSIDER AND SELL ANY BENEFITS CHANGES

Even as many states begin to slowly reopen, businesses with the option to work remotely are reconsidering the need to be present in an office setting simply due to the liability of an employee becoming ill. With these minor changes, in many cases, benefit packages are going to begin to shift and be customized to the current work status – whether remote or partially remote. These packages may include additional vacation time, personal/mental health days, or even extended sick leave.

As companies consider revising their benefits for new or decreased plans, they should consider their employees' needs with office parking, public transit usage, virtual medical coverage, wellness/mental health, 401k and retirement, obtained employee discount services, and flexible scheduling. No matter the benefit changes, communicating these benefits to your potential employees is critical to attracting the best talent to your organization.

After making your formal offer of employment to a candidate, consider following up with a polished information packet that describes what he or she can expect during his or her first few months with your company; outlining compensation information, benefits, annual training plans, any known individualized training plans, and unique offers like employee discounts, incorporates a pleasant surprise into your recruitment strategy. Moreover, with the concerns of Coronavirus being paramount for many employees and potential employees, an intangible benefit you may be able to insert into your package is information about your business's current workflow and any plans your company has of returning to work once Covid-19 is under control. Will everyone return to a designated workspace? Will meetings still take place in the bullpen? Will plexiglass and one-way signs be new permanent staples? Maybe even provide a secret link to a frequently asked questions section. No matter what, communicating how your company is addressing your benefit plans with transparency creates a lasting impression that continues into their experience as an employee.

Not Sure if You Can Afford to Add Any Benefits to Your Compensation Package? Here are some low-cost options:

- Consider Offering More Flexibility to Your Team's Schedule. This could look like adjusted hours – starting later, shorter weekdays with some work on the weekends, or four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days. Think about how you can offer your employee more time to enjoy with their family, or just some down time to relax and take it easy at home.
- Company-Wide Care Packages. We are huge fans of care packages primarily because you are supporting other small businesses while providing something to the employee's home the whole house can enjoy and surprisingly they are a lot more affordable and budget conscious than your average company happy hour.
- Half-Day or Summer Fridays. When the weather starts to beam bright, allow your employees a little bit of extra time off by giving them four hours back on Fridays between June and September.
- Create an Entertainment Stipend. As companies are spending less on courting clients and entertainment expenses, consider reallocating some of that budget to your employees with an entertainment stipend which could subsidize TV streaming, kids' entertainment, crafts, puzzles – anything to help your employees decompress at the end of a long work day, especially while they are still stuck in quarantine. This could also extend to online classes or one-off virtual workshops or seminars.

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# 3

## COMMUNICATE WITH TRANSPARENCY & REALISTIC EXPECTATION

Communication is going to be one of the greatest challenges companies face during the reopening of our country after COVID-19 subsides. Through video conferencing and one-on-one sessions, recruiting and human resource teams will need to ensure that they are communicating with transparency and setting realistic expectations to help everyone manage their anxiety during this time.

Whether businesses are hiring for a new role or hiring for turnover, candidates may need a certain feeling of security to feel confident when transitioning from a company they know to a new one. It can be difficult for your talent acquisition team to communicate the security and solvency of the company to a candidate, but you can communicate with transparency throughout the candidate process. For instance, when backfilling a position, it is a good idea to convey when employees have found another great opportunity elsewhere or present some of the key challenges the role has faced. Transparency can ease the minds of professionals who may attribute employee separation to bad turnover and burnout as people become more and more concerned about job stability. This transparency should also extend to the interview process. Convey to your candidates any hiring timelines, delays, and vacancies. Candidates find comfort in knowing that they have all the necessary information as they are making serious decisions about their future.

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# 4

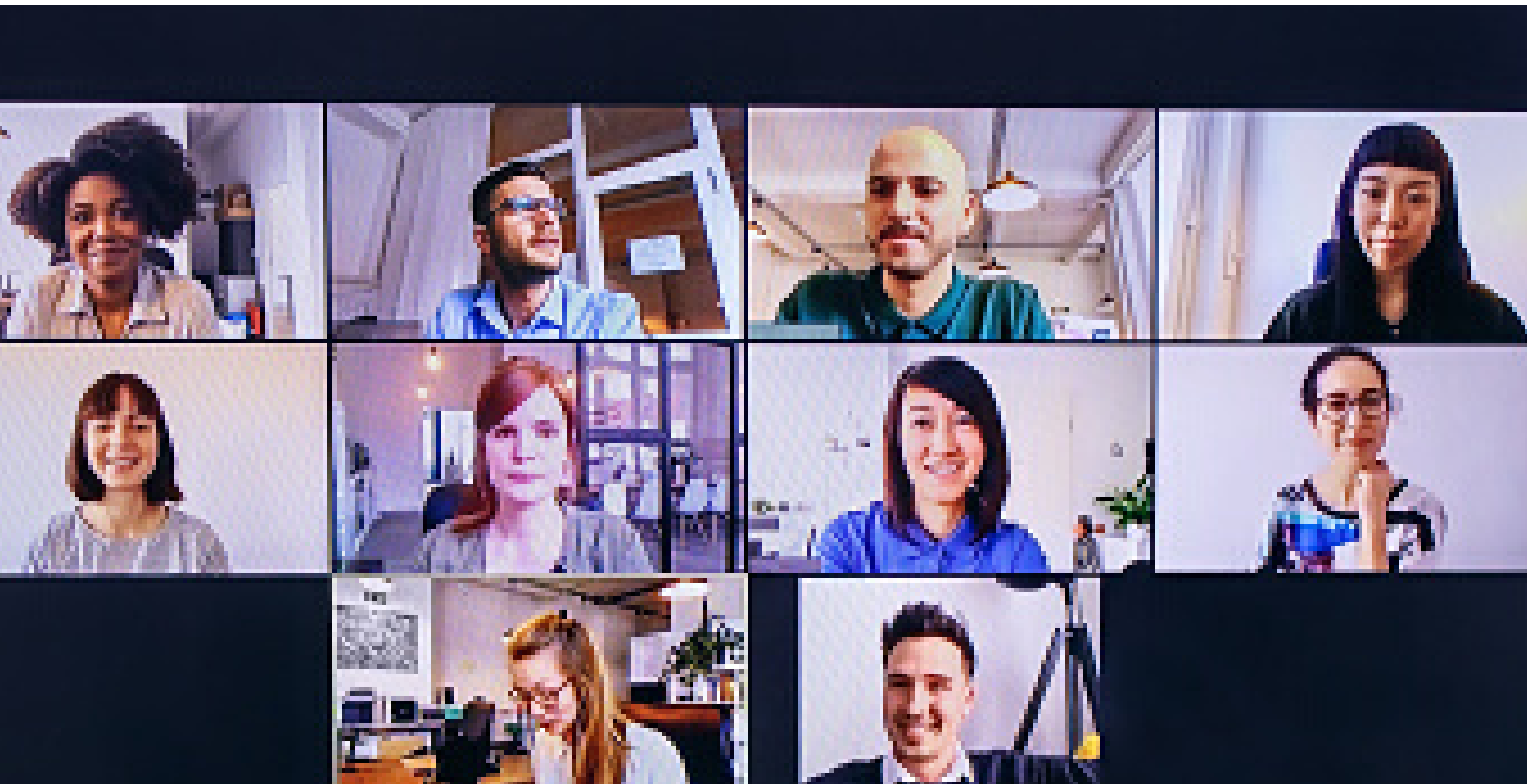
## VIDEO INTERVIEWING IS THE FUTURE.

In many ways, interviewing is the most integral part of the hiring process. This is where you have a chance to assess what it is your company needs and try to match those qualities with your candidates. Interviewing allows you to get to know your candidate on a more personal level, and to make sure that their knowledge and resume sync.

Just because candidates are interviewing remotely does not mean the candidate experience has to be sacrificed. Make sure your interviewers and employees who they would interact with are your company's cheerleader, not just investigators. Being conscious of the issues that can arise during the interviewing process, allowing awkward moments, and being gracious of technical issues will help ease the tension during the interviewing process and can help set everyone at ease.

Since candidates cannot come into the office to meet your team, consider offering a shadow session. Applicants may be thrilled with everything they hear about your business and the role, but they may be left wondering — what's it really like working there? If you have a team that represents the quality of your work environment, consider offering the most promising applicants a "shadow session" with an existing employee who is already doing the job. This opportunity for a 1:1 with a peer or group of peers may help them feel like this is a great place to grow!

Even if it's just for one hour, it gives applicants an unvarnished look at the role they have applied for, and an opportunity to pepper a future potential colleague with questions. It is a pleasant surprise for the applicant because it reflects uncommon transparency, and a genuine effort by the employer to ensure a good mutual fit. As we adapt to this new environment of video interviewing as the norm, we want to make sure that people can hear and see your love for your company so that your virtual interview process is a success.



# 5

## YOU'RE NO LONGER GOING ON CAMPUS ANYMORE. HAVE A PLAN.

Traditionally, talent acquisition teams have clamored onto college campuses for career fairs and into lecture halls for presentations in hopes of attracting emerging talent to their agencies. They have hosted resume preparation seminars and networking opportunities to groom future graduates for positions within their organizations. The opportunity to facilitate this kind of outreach may come again, but not immediately. As you read this, colleges and universities are notifying students that they won't be able to arrive on campuses this fall, some are stating that schedules will be severely truncated or modified. Because of these challenges, we need to revamp our approach to talent acquisition.

This does not mean that we have to completely disregard every method that has worked for us in the past. However, as we transition into a post-COVID workplace it is imperative to foster relationships with on-campus officials, professors, and other campus leadership so that they can engage with students in the most sensible way. We will need to provide students with virtual recruiting, networking, and campus engagement opportunities that they want to engage in. This may mean leaning on college interns and young staff for possible suggestions. Meet them where they are and provide them the answers that they are seeking.

Career fairs are likely to operate virtually, and students will still be craving resources that will help them navigate the delicate new workforce. One skill that will be valuable will be online interviewing. Students will need guidance on understanding realistic hiring timelines, resume and cover letter structuring, and interview follow-up protocols. Fortunately, this information can be provided by talent acquisition teams while simultaneously providing more information about your company.





# 6

## RECALIBRATE YOUR RECRUITMENT & EMPLOYER BRAND STRATEGIES

For years we have spent lots of money on our merchandise and giveaways for conferences and events. With large gatherings being unsafe at this time, it would be more practical if those funds were reallocated to meet the new remote needs of a company. However, GenZ, born between 1995- and 2015, are beginning to join the professional world and they are at the base of the new-hire job market. According to a recent Randstad technology survey, Gen Z is forecasted to comprise 37% of the global workforce this year. This means that your company must position itself to attract their talent in a way that relates to them directly.

If your employer brand strategy encompasses things like your career site, social media, a couple of corporate videos, and perhaps some photos to highlight corporate culture – you are on the right track, but you will need to adopt more tactics to meet this new demand. Recalibrating your employer branding strategy means that you will have to be more transparent during the job search process itself and figure out how to instill confidence that the job and culture you're selling is authentic.

The good news is that your employer brand is already ingrained in the work your company is doing; however, the bad news is that your brand may be rippled into feedback channels like Glassdoor, Indeed, and Google. Nevertheless, take time to define your story and then begin to share it with others. Take hold of those feedback channels and work across platforms to ensure your brand is succinct. Employer brands are not created, they are revealed, and your goal will always be to convey to candidates the following message: Why is it going to be more meaningful for them to do their best work within your culture versus someone else's?

Lastly, ensure that everyone from the bottom up has bought into the employer brand. Use your technology, job descriptions, candidate communications, and every single person (or both!) who interacts with a candidate to ensure the messaging stays consistent. For a company whose employer brand may include a place of choice, you may want to focus on how job applicants are treated throughout the process (e.g., unreturned phone calls) and begin treating candidates like valued guests. Mention how excited everyone is to meet them and focus on making them feel welcome.

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<sup>2</sup> Randstad Technology Survey, Future Workplace Trends

Some other areas of consideration within your Recruitment and Employer Brand:

- Considering User Experience on your Company Website and Careers Site
- Training and Professional Development Offered to Employees
- Virtual Tours of Company Offices During Welcomes
- Virtual Open Houses During Candidate Interview Processes
- Shadowing Opportunities for Applied Roles
- Video Welcomes from the CEO
- Mobile-Friendly User Experience
- Easy to Apply Options
- High-Resolution Imagery



# 7

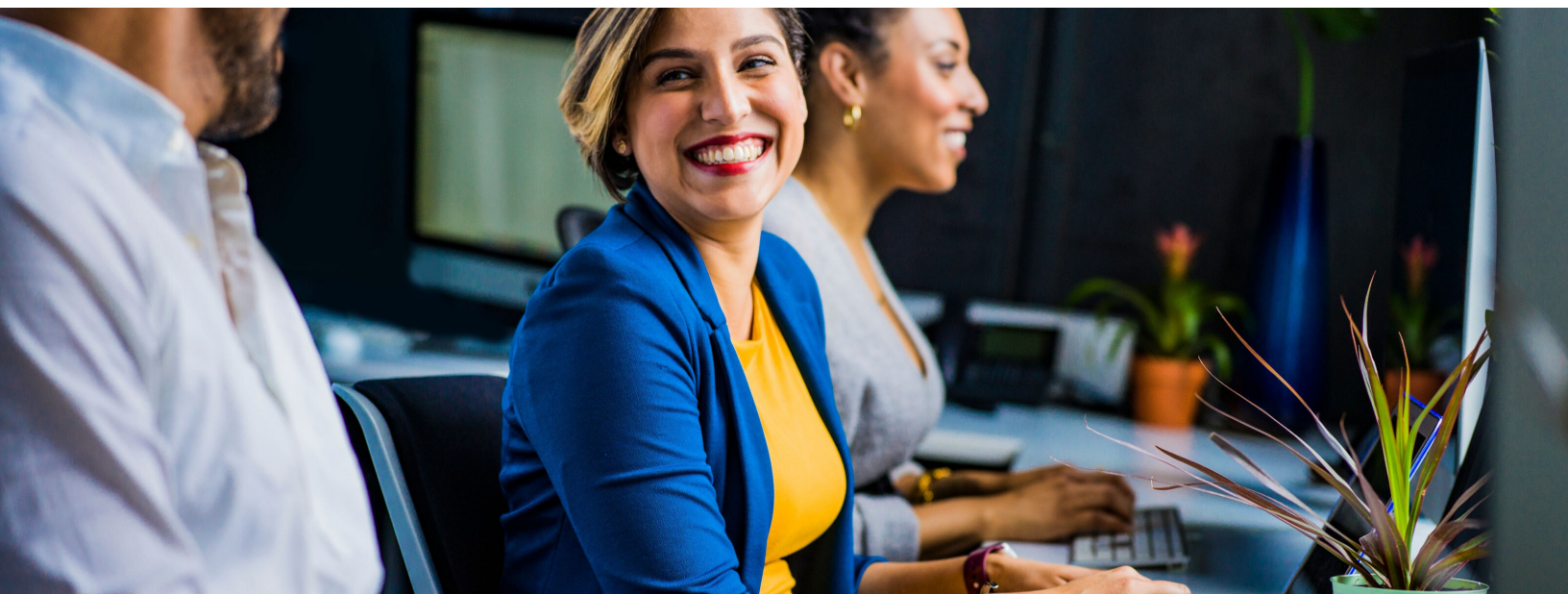
## CONCEPTUALIZE THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Before extending your resources recruiting candidates, it is important to know exactly what you want and need in an ideal candidate. Having honest conversations with department leads is a necessity in coming up with a list of skills and attributes needed to succeed in the role. These can include soft skills like leadership and motivation or management skills like budget and performance coaching.

With so many people out of work at one time, the market is saturated with great potential employees eager to get rehired. Recruitment teams may see an influx of applications and phone calls inquiring about the positions being posted. To not waste time, knowing beforehand which skills you desire will allow you to weed out a large number of applicants early on.

If you are working within an industry that has not seen major turnover during this pandemic and social unrest, consider your market's transferable skills and your willingness to train during this time. The ideal candidate could easily be a diamond in the rough. Employers who are in a recruitment pause will need to focus on who can become a very valuable player on your team. Don't just fall for the "bells and whistles" in someone's experience or on a resume. Take this time to dive deep into candidates, prioritize skills, understand how their professional development can benefit your team, and make your company as appealing as possible.

As the post-Coronavirus workplace, we may have not seen the end of the layoffs and turnovers that may come with high-unemployment rates. It is still a competitive labor market. While things are a little bit slower and budgets are somewhat on hold, focusing on your ideal candidate will help you make sure you and your team are addressing critical needs first. You don't want to lose valuable time chasing the wrong person while the candidate you really need is slipping through the cracks. Be intentional with who you choose to enter in your hiring process and knowing what you are looking for will help you avoid wasting too much time in the hiring process.



## 8 PRESENT YOUR BEST SELF

Whether on a video conference platform for a candidate interview or enjoying a virtual happy hour with your team, you have to remember that you are always a representation of your organization. Though many of us are working remote from our couch, it is important to remain professional as if we are all still meeting in an office setting.

For more formal meetings, an agenda should be created ahead of time so that everyone knows who will be leading conversations and what is expected. Just because everyone may not physically be in the same conference room doesn't mean that meetings have to become disjointed.

As new employees are being onboarded, it is a great opportunity for your organization to showcase their values and missions. Many are now choosing to include their preferred pronouns and providing information about why pronouns matter. This may seem like a small gesture, but it makes a clear statement about the respect that an organization has for their diverse employees. Creating a diversity and equity team is a great way to encourage positive interactions between departments.

Presenting your best self, whether as a firm or an individual contributor, helps reaffirm your commitment to the employer brand and helps others commit to it too!



## 9 DON'T BE AFRAID OF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

The way we communicate today looks very different from the way we communicated 15 years ago. With the way technology has progressed, just about everyone owns a smartphone which can also be classified as a miniature computer. With so many people having instant access to the world wide web, social media has flourished, and many people use it to communicate daily. Your company may not have used social media much in the past, but it would be smart to invest more in it now. Potential employees view social media pages of organizations they have interest in. Their goal is to try to get an idea of the culture and to find out if it is a good fit. Additionally, becoming more active on LinkedIn and Glassdoor are essential. So many more people are headed for those two platforms to post resumes, and to apply for positions based on reviews.

An easy way to help during this remote experience is to consider allowing an employee to own the access to the social media site for the day, sharing articles, videos, meetings, and jokes, from his or her day on your platform. They can give a first-person experience of their role with your organization, their team, and provide a perspective often overlooked when a sole person runs these accounts.



# 10

## BAD HIRES STILL COST YOU AT LEAST 30% OF THEIR ANNUAL SALARY!

Taking the time to pick the best quality candidate is imperative. Bad hires cost companies three times their salary which can be very expensive for a company in this economy. Even while many people are working remotely, once you have invested money into employee benefits, laptops, professional development training, and devoted time to getting a new person up to speed, you do not want to lose them before you can see a return on your investment.

However, some terminations are unavoidable. No matter how thorough the interviewing process may be, bad hires may still slip through the cracks and voluntary turnover happens. Developing a strategy early on for how to handle remote terminations will save you a major headache later. Make sure your departments know what the protocol is so that everyone is on the same page.

# 11

## DON'T THROW OUT ALL THE OLD WAYS OF DOING RECRUITMENT

While the business world is adapting to the post- Coronavirus workplace, companies do not need to reinvent the figurative recruitment strategy wheel. There are many aspects of the recruiting process that we will keep the same. For instance, we know that building positive candidate experiences is important. It does not matter whether a new employee is physically in the office or reporting from their living room. New employees still want to feel valued and engaged. So the goal should be to take the things we know work in recruitment and transition them to fit the climate we are working in.

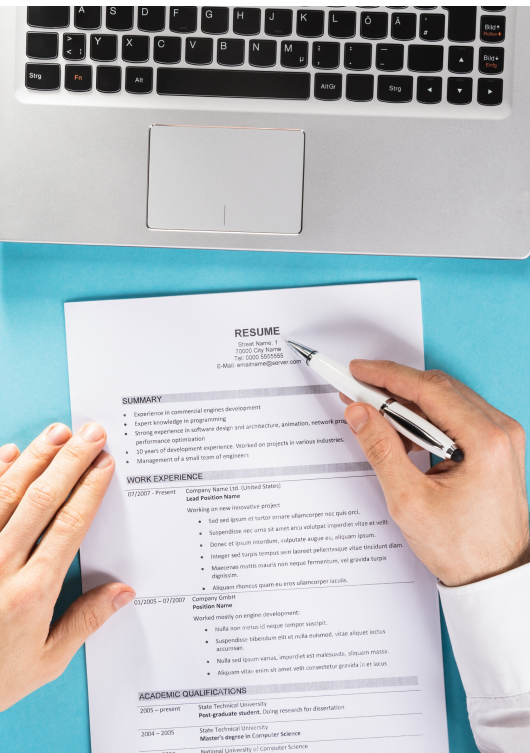
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<sup>3</sup> The True Cost of a Bad Hire is More than You Think, Forbes





# ACTIONABLE STEPS



- ☐ Establish Remote Onboarding Plan
- ☐ Consider New & Alternative Benefits
- ☐ Send Employee Care Packages
- ☐ Provide an Office Supply Reimbursement or Allowance
- ☐ Consider Flexible Scheduling
- ☐ Encourage Work/Life Integration
- ☐ Send Out a Weekly Update from the Senior Leadership
- ☐ Provide a Weekly Update to your team and supervisors
- ☐ Identify Your Virtual Interviewing Software
- ☐ Keep the Candidate Experience in Your Mind
- ☐ Schedule and Advertise Remote Office Hours for Candidates
- ☐ Prepare Marketing Materials about Return to Office Plans and health/safety measures for distribution
- ☐ Create Sessions that are Student Driven for a captivated audience, ex. How to Negotiate your offer.
- ☐ Spend time upgrading your Social and web presence
- ☐ Have a virtual tour created for your office!
- ☐ Consider Transferable Skills
- ☐ Encourage participation and professionalism!
- ☐ Have a Remote Separation Plan
- ☐ Strive to Retain Top Talent by assessing their needs

## CONCLUSION

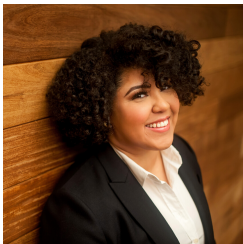
When we are competing for top talent, assume that major competitors already know these challenges and are positioning to win the competition simply because of their exposure. The gap between small businesses and large businesses will continue to get wider if businesses do not take action to make sure you attract the right talent to your team.

These strategies are simple steps to get your Talent Acquisition team thinking about unique ways to position yourself as a leader as the business world adapts to the coronavirus pandemic but Carter Isiaq Consulting and its team of HR and Recruitment Strategy Consultants are here to help and support you in creating a tailored approach that is right for your business and budget!

For a consultation, feel free to reach out to us at [info@carterisiaq.com](mailto:info@carterisiaq.com).

## ABOUT US

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TALENT ACQUISITION | RECRUITMENT STRATEGY | HUMAN RESOURCES

