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venture

CAN'T FIND EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE?

BECOME A GOOD SPY AND SEND MASH NOTES TO YOUR RIVALS' TOP EMPLOYEES.



1

BUILD YOUR BENCH

View scouting for talent the same way you do customer acquisition so you always have top people in the pipeline. Keep an ongoing list of potential hires and stay in touch regularly by, for instance, e-mailing articles that will educate them about your company. That's the advice of Brad Smart, author of *Topgrading* and president of the consultancy Smart & Associates. Also: Ask your key executives to suggest candidates every month.

2

PLAY IN THE RIGHT SANDBOXES

"Hang out where the people you're looking for hang out," says Mark Lancaster, CEO of recruiter Employment-Group in Battle Creek, Mich. For instance, to find an executive who can handle a merger, attend meetings of the Association for Corporate Growth. Or advertise in publications your targets like to read. One CEO friend hired a great CFO for his organic market after attracting 40 great applicants in one week through an ad on Treehugger.com.

3

TRY GUERRILLA TACTICS

Of course, the best talent is working for someone else. Steve Hall, founder of online auto marketplace Driversselect in Dallas, finds out who's winning industry awards by reading trade publications—then phones the winners to ask for their professional advice. That's how he found a great services manager. For entry-level gigs, he leaves notes on cars parked in restaurants' employee-of-the-month spots suggesting that the workers contact him about a new opportunity.

4

TWEAK THE JOB DESCRIPTION

Struggling to find the right systems engineer, Jennifer Walzer, CEO of tech firm BUMI, rewrote the job description she was circulating to draw those with the right cultural fit for her New York City tech firm. She added "highly developed sense of irony and a touch of snark," and got 125 applications with five great candidates, one of whom she hired. That's up from the 120 applications—with zero strong candidates—she received with a standard, HR-style job summary.

5

BECOME A CELEBRITY

Not every executive can be a Richard Branson, but if you want top people to approach your company for jobs, it helps to become your industry's version of a rock-star CEO. How big? Write a book or speak at key events. Shortcut: Hire a ghostwriter through a site like MediaBistro.com or use Advantage Media's "Talk Your Book" program, where you can actually dictate a book in a single day. View it as an investment in shrinking your recruiting budget!