

# **Aventus Knowledge**

## **Series**

**Attracting critical talent for  
evolving Brands**



## Attracting critical talent for evolving Brands

This paper looks at ways in which an organization which is poised for growth and which does not have a strong employer brand, can attract critical professional talent at senior levels.

How closely do you identify with the below described situation?

You had a strong business model, developed a successful business, built a robust platform and are gearing up for the next phase of your growth in an emerging industry that has fairly large players. You realize that the successful leap is possible only with the addition of critical talent base to your existing team. You also have scoped the current skill gaps in the business and expect them to be met by the next round of talent acquisition

You are also cognizant of the challenges that you face in this effort. Some of these are:

- 1) You have established a sound reputation with your customers; People who have experienced your products/services have good things to say about you. However, you are not well known beyond that circle.
- 2) Your organization having evolved the typical entrepreneurial way, has

added people on a current 'need basis' as it evolved in an organic fashion, with people being hired primarily through references, contacts, etc. This group has strengths as well as limitations.

- 3) All people management processes have evolved with the organization and cannot be categorized in any as appropriate for the next phase of growth. Be it in the areas of compensating /rewarding employees, managing their skills and career, etc
- 4) You have strong belief that the organization is poised for great things but many in the organization might not share your vision ( or may not be completely aware of it)

We at Aventus have over the last few years been privileged to partner organizations in addressing similar challenges and these have been our collective learning's.

*(Please note that all the below mentioned methods are not in any sequential order, and can be used at any point of time depending on the specific situation).*

*Your employer brand is at its most powerful when wielded in the recruitment process, and should reflect the image and facets of your company that you want potential employees to see.*



## 1. Treat each individual (prospective employee) as unique, and clearly articulate what you can offer him

Employees are not always attracted to you by the compensation alone. Infact fixed compensation is a hygiene factor and not an attractor.

Use all the means available to find out what the individual's drivers are at this stage of the prospects life and career.

These could be a:

- Need to make an impact
- Need to Influence the organizations course
- Need for recognition
- Desire to earn wealth
- Need for greater levels of personal time and family responsibility etc

See what you can offer him realistically, that meshes with your organizational goals and plans.

These could take the shape of:

Offering a larger /broader role than he can currently aspire for in other organizations

Giving more autonomy /authority and power, including quick decision making

Opportunity for sharply visible individual contribution & achievements – leading to

greater recognition & ownership of achievements

Equity share, through ESOPs or similar schemes, or ability to earn rewards commensurate with performance in the form of high variable pays phantom stocks etc

International posting/ posting at a location of choice

Shorter time to the reach a desired level etc.

These cannot be organizational level differentiators or attributes. Rather, these are individual level commitments made (& honored) to role seekers/ prospective employees. Most of the above is best utilized for senior leadership hiring.

While doing this ensure that expectations are shared clearly and understood by all parties involved.

Also be prepared to address reactions from existing employees who might resent some of these actions. That is inevitable in these change efforts and needs to be addressed as such.



## 2. Hire the top guys first

The Leader's brand equity can do wonders in endorsing your organizational brand (and vision). As a practice it is good to hire the senior most people first. This

sends across a strong message to other potential employees and new joiners on the long term prospects of the organization as well as its potential.

## 3. Allow access to other stake holders

Be flexible and creative in your recruitment process .Proactively leverage the resources that you have.

Facilitate and encourage some of these interactions during the evaluation process.

Who all can a prospective CEO candidate meet before he is convinced about your organization?

This does three things:

-Chairman

1. It gives the prospect the comfort that he is making a more informed choice
2. It conveys the impressions that the organization is serious and is willing to open itself up
3. It will give you a broader perspective of the individual, more than what a normal interview process might throw up ( 360 degrees approach from both sides)

-Managing Director

-Key members of the existing management team

-Independent Directors & members of the Board

-Bankers/ Private Equity Fund Partners/ Investment Bankers

Be judicious in your use of these resources. Be cognizant that the process doesn't become too long giving the candidate the feeling that the organization is unsure of what it wants.

-Auditors

-Vendors/ Suppliers/ Business Partners

-Key customers

If you are the chairman or the CEO, be prepared to personally engage with prospective employees (senior level) post the formal interview stage too.

-Key Junior employees in your organization, who personify the organizational values and demonstrate the right competencies



#### 4. Don't rush the process

Though there might be genuine organization needs that require a quick turnaround in the selection process, don't visibly push the prospect. This will cause more damage than good. The most common result is the prospect developing cold feet after agreeing to come on board because he gets the wrong messages. You lose far more time looking for another person that what you tried saving.

Hiring appropriate talent requires that your marketing mix lets the candidate know that it is in his best interest to work for your organization. The prospective employee should be allowed enough time & interaction to convince him about this opportunity.

Be prepared for a long recruitment cycle time.

#### 5. Go beyond the normal levels of disclosure

Talk beyond the Vision mission. Talk about things that give the person confidence in your organization and its plans. Be upfront about the challenges that you face. Talk about the things that 'need a fix' within the organization.

strength of the business model, its scalability and sustainability, source of funds for executing the vision, support of other stake holders, good governance norms etc.

Key unarticulated concerns that potential employees have in this scenario are the

Be cognizant of these and address them proactively with data.

#### 6. Engage with recruitment /executive search consultants

The process of hiring critical talent (especially at the leadership level) in these situations is perhaps better executed when supported/done in tandem with a recruitment/search partner.

- Enhanced confidence levels in candidates
- Multiplied PR effect – viral marketing of your employer brand
- Assured external networking (within & outside industry)
- Unbiased assessment process,

Few key reasons being:



- Robust reference checks
- Project focus on assignment in hand
- Dedicated consultants & researchers for the assignment
- Timeline bound delivery

Choosing the right recruitment partner is critical. Professional firms irrespective of their size also need to be wooed to work with you. In the absence of an already established brand they might be hesitant to work with you. Give them the assurance of high level of engagement (preferably from the Head of the organization), quick decision making & commitment to compensate.

It is important to engage & spend time with consultants who will be representing the organization (including values, vision, business plan, financial data) within the industry and at times even across industry

The recruitment brief should be treated like a marketing brief that is given to an advertising agency. It is critical to get it right for the sake of the organization's positioning and it is equally critical to ensure absolute comprehension of it by the recruitment consultant.

Choose your recruitment partner carefully. They should be competent, credible & fit to be your Business Partner.

More importantly they need to add to your brand. The choice of a partner itself speaks a lot about your organization.

*You can attract the right talent, even without a strong brand if you go beyond the obvious and use the opportunities that your situation provides you to be ambitious, candid, creative and flexible.*



**Aventus Partners is an HR solutions firm that enables clients Acquire, Develop and Manage talent.**

**E- mail:**

- ❖ [sriram@aventus.in](mailto:sriram@aventus.in)
- ❖ [venkat.iyer@aventus.in](mailto:venkat.iyer@aventus.in)
- ❖ [tania.gooptu@aventus.in](mailto:tania.gooptu@aventus.in)

**Offices:**

- ❖ **Aventus Partners**  
40/48, Ground Floor, Pocket 40  
EPDP Road, CR Park, New Delhi-110019  
Phone +91 11 40561242-45  
Fax +91 11 40561241
  
- ❖ **Aventus Partners**  
919, 2nd Stage,  
Varthur Main Road, Tubrahalli,  
Bangalore- 560 066  
Phone +91 80 3253 7215, +91 80 2854 3089
  
- ❖ **Aventus Partners**  
Personal Chamber, Natham's House,  
Chittoor Road, Cochin- 682035  
Phone: +91 484 3248780

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[www.aventus.in](http://www.aventus.in)

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