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The Black Hole That Is The Applicant Tracking System

By: Jonathan Bogush- Director of Connectivity

Recently, I have been working with more and more clients in the manufacturing sector that have decided to adopt an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) as part of their talent recruiting process. Generally speaking, Applicant Tracking Systems are fashioned as a portal for individuals to submit their career credentials and express their interest in either a particular organization or a particular job that the organization is promoting. In theory, an ATS is a great idea. They are easily deployable software programs that remove the tedious aspects of sorting through resumes, screening out and dismissing unsuitable applicants, and distributing resumes to a particular department and a particular hiring manager. However, if any of the vendors who built the first Applicant Tracking Systems had spent ten seconds thinking about that process, they would have designed it intelligently, using normal human logic to create a funnel that would simplify the process of separating the wheat from chaff in the talent selection pipeline.

When you fill out an online job application, it asks where you worked, and your job title. Any reasonable person can extrapolate your major duties from the job title, but every ATS I've ever seen goes ahead and asks for the tasks and duties you performed anyway. Tasks and duties! It's nearly 2015, but you're asked what tasks and duties you performed, as though the list of items in a job description is more important for your next employer to understand than what you actually accomplished on the job.

If you think about the smartest, most switched-on person you've ever worked with, and then think about the biggest slacker and do-nothing person you've ever worked alongside, the contrast between those two people is obvious. Yet no ATS in the world could distinguish between them, as long as the two people worked at the

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same job in the same company at the same time. Applicant Tracking Systems don't inquire about what you learned at a job, what you left in your wake, or what you view as your greatest accomplishment. The selection mechanism most of my clients use is stuck in the past, interested only in the tasks and duties and tools you used, as though those things out of context could have any significance to the next hiring manager you work for.

Applicant Tracking Systems are Black Holes for job-seekers. You lob a resume in and nothing comes back. If you're lucky enough to get a response, it's likely to be a different (but still terse) auto-response demanding that you complete an aptitude test or an honesty test. The honesty tests employers use are actually intelligence tests, because if you're not smart enough to figure out the 'right' answer on those things ("If you saw an employee stealing, what would you do?") you're not smart enough to have a job. And it's not just the choice of fields in Applicant Tracking Systems that makes them so loathsome. They are built on bad logic at their core. They are based on the notion that the central problem in recruiting is to screen out and dismiss unsuitable candidates, making a business function of the vetting process, whereas, in fact, the problem in recruiting is that it's hard to find great people, and we should be selling them throughout the process if we want them to consider joining us.

Ask any CEO how s/he feels about the availability of talent. It's a global problem, and not only because job descriptions are so often fanciful-bordering-on-delusional. It's hard to find employees who are not only smart and plucky but also good communicators, flexible and reliable. When you're facing a shortage of talent - not job applicants, mind you, but the proactive and self-directed subset of those applicants who can make a difference for your firm and its customers - is your first thought "Let me make the job application process as off-putting as possible?" Not if you understand anything about human motivation.

The ATS vendors that will survive to 2020 and beyond will be the ones that figure out how to humanize the selection process. Luckily, it isn't complicated. An ATS that were oriented toward engaging job-seekers rather than intimidating and repelling them would be a good start.

Throughout 2015 I will continue to recount my toils with navigating my client's Applicant Tracking Systems and hopefully report a drastic improvement in not only the ease of use of these systems but also the way in which they engage the talent that endeavors to apply for a particular job through them.

ACTIVE JOB OPENINGS:

- Senior Project Engineer with 7+ years of experience as an automotive electromechanical design engineering background willing to move the greater Detroit area - Looking for a someone to work directly with my client's automotive OEM customer base to design electromechanical products such as switches, lead frames, plastic housings or copper terminals.
- Process Engineer with 5+ years of experience working within a wire/cable manufacturing plant; must relocate to the

greater Indianapolis area - Looking for an experience Process Engineer from a wire/cable manufacturing background that has a deep expertise in LEAN/Sigma practices, knowledge of extrusion, cabling, jacketing, etc.

- Manufacturing Technology Engineering Manager willing to relocate to the greater Louisville, KY area - Looking for someone with a strong connector tooling and fixture design background, knowledge of designing automated assembly equipment, and serving as a global project engineer.

Please note: I want to direct you to a blog that our firm started the first of 2014 - www.reinventingrecruiting.com. It deals with a multitude of topics and I encourage you to follow it and make comments or ask questions. All are welcome. To sign up / follow the blog, go to the blog website, www.reinventingrecruiting.com, and look to the lower right hand corner where you will see a tab "follow" - click on it and sign up. I hope you find the blog helpful and insightful and please give us feedback on topics you'd like our experts to discuss.

Should you be interested in learning more about any of our current job openings or Impact Players, please contact us at connectivity@tyges.com. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Good luck in your current ventures and you'll be hearing from us next month!

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