

HR MATTERS

PEOPLE LEADING BUSINESS

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RECRUITING AT THE SPEED OF A CLICK



TRULY PLANNING FOR SUCCESS!

THE IDEA BEHIND THE SUCCESSION PLAN IS TO
BE PREPARED, NOT TO GUARANTEE

THE POWER OF MENTORING

FOUR WAYS IN WHICH MENTORING TYPICALLY GOES WRONG

GET BUSY OR GET PRODUCTIVE?

BEING MINDFUL ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING



CRAIG SAPHIN

Desperate or willing to take any job?

Craig Saphin shares why you need to exhibit both strategic thinking and common sense in how you send out job applications, the kind of changes wrought by social media now and what you can do to be more effective in presenting and controlling your image online.

By **ISABELLA CHAN**

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With the proliferation of social media in the business environment and the pace at which companies have embraced this platform in order to connect, recruit and do business, what do you see as the biggest change this has brought about for employers today?

Craig : The physical world is being replicated in the digital world through digital communities, businesses and assets, fundamentally changing the way consumers engage with businesses and each other. However, especially for the recruitment process, it will be difficult to find a real A-player in a two dimensional world such as social media or virtual forums.

What we are doing now is maximising social media to find high potential people, engage them and then meet face to face to understand his/her insights. The digital platforms allow us to access people easily but the real challenge is how we find the best person from that pool. Cultural fit, depth of relevant experience, language capability and a consistent track record are some areas which are difficult to assess just from a social media aspect. Companies that are serious about business growth, meeting mid and long term business plans, are also serious about A-players and the time they invest in the process.

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What do you believe characterises the talent that makes up today's workforce? What motivates him and how should an organisation respond to his needs effectively?

Craig : Companies around the world are cutting back their financial incentive programmes, but few have used other ways of inspiring talent. I think they should. For people with satisfactory salaries, some non-financial motivators are more effective than extra cash in building long-term employee engagement in most sectors, job

functions and business contexts. Many financial rewards mainly generate short-term boosts of energy, which can have damaging unintended consequences. Indeed, the economic crisis, with its imperative to reduce costs and to balance short and long-term performance effectively, gave business leaders a great opportunity to reassess the combination of financial and non-financial incentives that will serve their companies best through and beyond the downturn.

To motivate their employees, organisations can use different kinds of non-cash motivators such as praise from immediate managers, leadership attention (for example, one-on-one conversations or coaching), training, a clear career path and a chance to lead projects or task forces. These can be just as effective, or even more effective motivators, than the financial incentives such as cash bonuses, increased base pay and stock or stock options. The non-financial motivators play a critical role in making employees feel that their company values them, takes their well-being seriously, and strives to create opportunities for their career growth. These themes recur constantly in most studies on ways to motivate and engage employees.

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In this technological era, jobseekers may find it either easier or more difficult to make themselves attractive to employers. For one thing, many platforms have opened up and made the process of branding oneself that much easier. These platforms also work for you around the clock and on a global basis. On the other hand however, your digital footprint may serve for or against you depending on how closely you monitor what you or others say of you online. How do you believe jobseekers can plan to be more effective in presenting and controlling their image online?

Craig : I believe jobseekers can more effectively present and control

their image online by paying attention to the following:

1. **Misleading information across networks:** Whatever you do, do not try to fake it on social networks. Employers and recruiters are very wise to the different tactics that job seekers use to try to paint themselves in a better light. The best course of action is to create an authentic brand for you. This includes highlighting your skills, achievements and credentials. Be truthful and never, ever, lie to look better.
2. **Bashing current employer's colleagues or clients:** This will reflect on both of you. There is no recruiter or employer out there who wants to see negative comments or complaints about a current or past employer. We all have bad days at work, but leave it off social feeds. This is especially true when writing anything negative about clients. Avoid this at all costs.
3. **Show you can network professionally:** Another mistake that job seekers continually make with their social network profiles is to avoid networking with other professionals in the industry. To a hiring manager, this looks like either a candidate is inexperienced or not entirely serious about their job search. Reach out and connect with colleagues to build your networks.



What are three of the biggest mistakes jobseekers make when searching for a new position?

Craig: Firstly, the **reasons for searching for a new job are unclear:** Write down your ideal professional goals and decide if any move will assist you in obtaining those goals. Sometimes, a 'sideways move' within your existing organisation can be more advantageous than applying for a more 'prestigious' position with another organisation, or a position which appears to be a stepping stone to achieving your professional goals. Sometimes, these big moves sound good but may actually be a 'step-too-far' at the current stage in your career. Be clear about why you are changing and its context in your longer career plan.

Secondly, **too desperate/willing to take anything:** You should be focused on finding a quality match for your background and expertise (or even a career advancement!). Blasting off resumes to inappropriate job openings shows desperation and a lack of both strategic thinking and common sense. If you're going to apply for a position below your level, or out of your field, be prepared to work on your resume to reflect skills related to the job opening – so you look like an ideal match when recruiters review it. Also, make a sincere effort to describe why you are genuinely interested in such a role.

Thirdly, **lack of research:** Find out not only the specific job description you wish to apply for but also more about these companies: its top management, branding, products and/or services, its vision, mission, major clients, current and past news, and any upcoming (or publicly announced prospective) projects. Such information can easily be obtained from the websites of the respective organisations. You can also get a lot of information through business directory resources available online.



What do you see that employers are looking for, in today's market?

Craig: Here are the key things that employers are looking for when they review job applicants:

1. **Do you seem like you can put up with the negatives of the job?** Every job has downsides, whether it's a difficult boss or a long commute or an office culture that makes it hard for new ideas to blossom. Employers want to make sure that you're going to have at least a reasonable 'immunity' level to the more difficult elements of the job.
2. **Will you fit in with the company culture?** Do you seem like you'd easily embrace the culture, or do you seem like you'd struggle to assimilate? Company culture matters because it's the invisible force that controls 'how we do things here.'
3. **How enthusiastic are you about the job?** Is this just one job of hundreds you're applying to, or do you have a special interest in this one? Employers would rather hire someone who will be excited to come to work than someone who sees it as 'just a job.'
4. **Do you have a truthful record of success?** What is your definition of success? Does it match with the employer?
5. **What mistakes have you made and what lessons were learned?** Failure is a stepping stone to success. Everyone makes mistakes but employers want to know how you recover and what you learnt from it. ■

Craig Saphin is the President, en world Group and Representative Director, en world Japan KK and Director, en-Japan Inc. en world is a leading professional recruitment agency in Asia Pacific focusing on managerial and senior-level career solutions. Prior to en world, Craig gained extensive sales and marketing experience in Asia Pacific with roles at EFL Japan as President and Senior Director of APAC as well as nine years experience at Fuji Xerox in Australia and Japan. Craig holds an MBA from the University of New South Wales.