

Avature

The Future of Talent Acquisition Has Arrived

Discover how global organizations Accenture and Siemens are recruiting strategically and leveraging HR tools to stay ahead.



This article originally appeared in the September 2017 edition of HR Performance.

For years, global talent acquisition leaders have discussed how digital platforms, automation, and other technological advancements would alter the world of recruitment. That imagined future is here.

TA leaders are implementing plans to better engage talent, involve key stakeholders, and tackle organizational problems. And as HR takes on a larger strategic role in organizations, technology is becoming an increasingly critical tool. According to a Bersin by Deloitte survey¹ released this year:

- 56 percent of companies are redesigning their HR programs to leverage digital and mobile tools.
- 51 percent of companies are currently in the process of redesigning their organizations for digital business models.
- 41 percent of companies are actively building mobile apps to deliver HR services.

Clearly, organizations must adapt their HR approach to an evolving digital environment. In order to advance in the right direction, leaders need to steer strategically.

“Technology doesn’t disrupt industries. People do,” says Dr. Sebastian Hubert, Head of Strategy and Technologies Talent Acquisition at Siemens. “I think technology doesn’t innovate – yet. People do.”

Siemens – a global powerhouse in electrical engineering, electronics, and automation – recruits in more than 80 countries and 20 different languages. In order to hire some 30,000 new employees annually, Hubert and his team rely on Avature CRM to manage candidate relationships.

“It’s not just a tool for us,” Hubert says. “It’s a different way of how you approach talent acquisition.”

And according to Accenture’s Emma Gibbons, human-centered strategy must remain at the core of recruitment.

“We need to be a workforce of the future,” says Gibbons, a consultant in global TA strategy and recruitment innovation tools.

Accenture provides global management consulting and professional services for strategy, digital, and technology operations. In working with Accenture’s clients, Gibbons combines the power of technology with the methodology of design thinking. This approach keeps the focus on each client organization’s greatest asset: its people.

Leading a Workforce of the Future

Gibbons recently hosted a workshop at HR Vision Amsterdam and conducted an activity with surprising results. She asked attendees to organize themselves on a strategy spectrum, ranging from the old “post and pray” approach to CRM-driven talent pooling to maximized AI automation. The majority of the 30 attendees admitted to operating somewhere between post-and-pray and talent pooling. The number of attendees exploring AI? Only two.

“When Accenture partners with clients, we need to consider where each individual company is on the TA journey,” Gibbons says. “What is their appetite for change? Are their HR systems able to adapt? Ultimately this helps us to shape the key strategies and technologies to help our clients progress further along the TA spectrum.”

Participants from the workshop indicated that budget constraints and internal capabilities prohibit many companies from forward progress.

“Given that a lot of people are still at that side of post-and-pray, Avature has been one of those instrumental tools in actually implementing a proactive recruiting process,” she says. “Avature is our go-to tool for building that engaged talent community.”

Partnered with Avature CRM, Accenture designs TA strategy to great effect. One of Accenture’s clients reported:

- 40 percent reduction in time to fill
- 51 percent reduction in the average cost to source
- 39 percent reduction in overall recruitment spend
- 47 percent reduction in agency spend

Leveraging the new proactive strategy and Avature CRM, the team saw remarkable results – including one case of an offer being made in under two days.

“When you implement something like proactive recruiting and combine it with Avature, these are the consistent results we see,” Gibbons says.

Approaching Global Challenges

Managing TA operations at scale and across a global footprint poses a multitude of challenges. TA leaders have to balance regional requirements, respond to the changing needs of their business, and – all the while – deliver a consistent user experience.

“At Siemens we leverage the power of our global scale to embrace disruptive technologies,” Hubert says. “One of our most repeated phrases is that we lead globally and act locally.”

The company is exploring gamification in the UK, AI in Singapore, and machine learning in the US. Technology enables the team to move closer to its aspiration: a seamless, consumer-level experience for candidates, recruiters, and hiring managers.

Hubert says that Siemens refuses to relegate innovation to a single department or individual within the organization. Staying ahead of the curve requires what he calls a “viral approach to innovation,” in which recruiters, hiring managers, and other employees take part in transforming the sourcing and recruiting processes. With these groups working together, the role of a TA leader becomes clear: “Our job is to make sure the TA proposition works as a whole: ensuring that we invest in the right technology, developing our portfolio of tailored TA solutions, and making sure that we don’t have disparate technologies on the table of our stakeholders,” Hubert says.

“It’s not just a tool for us. It’s a different way of how you approach talent acquisition.”

Sebastian Hubert
Siemens, on Avature

Siemens leverages digital tools in two important ways. Primarily, technology helps the company evolve its TA approach from reactive to proactive. Secondly, it enables recruiters to spend their time where it counts most.

“We want to deliver a technology that gets our recruiters home earlier,” Hubert says. “We recognize that our TA colleagues are under significant operational pressure on a daily basis, so we’re only interested in implementing technology that won’t be a burden on the desks of our recruiters.”

The Siemens TA team takes a horizontal approach to designing its TA technology landscape by involving all relevant users and stakeholders. On an ongoing basis, the team holds adoption workshops to help recruiters learn new techniques for leveraging Avature. The company’s recruiters report that it is often the little conveniences that add up to make a big impact. For instance, Siemens is introducing video interviewing, which not only helps to minimize recruiters’ physical travel but also equips them to much more efficiently and effectively prescreen candidates.

“Whenever we introduce a new technology, it’s really super important to our whole organization to recognize that a tool that’s not utilized will have no impact,” Hubert says.

Recruiting Proactively

In the past, a global TA leader’s problem may have been how to best fill a particular role. Now leaders have to consider how to engage an agile and in-demand talent pool.

Before identifying the best method of sourcing, Accenture ensures a clear demand plan: where they hire, who they hire, and what major projects they have coming. The team also factors in the rarer, harder-to-fill roles, as well

as high-volume positions. Then the sourcing team breaks down the efforts into three activities: attract, search, and cultivate.

“All of that we can track in Avature, so any recruiter that needs to pick up a pipeline area, they can see the journey and interactions so far for those candidates,” Gibbons said.

“Given that a lot of people are still at that side of post-and-pray, Avature is our go-to tool for building that engaged talent community.”

Emma Gibbons
Accenture

Employer Branding

In order to attract the right talent, organizations must first present themselves as an employer of choice to their target audience. More than 80 percent of talent leaders believe that employer branding has a significant impact on their ability to hire talent. If budget weren’t a constraint, 53 percent of leaders say that they would invest more in employer branding.²

Within the past year, Siemens has relaunched its employer brand on a global scale and developed a content engine to deliver personalized stories about employees around the world. The company harnessed employee brand ambassadors across its geographical span in order to produce content from different cultural and language backgrounds.

“That’s to ensure that our corporate positions and content is tailored to the markets we operate in,” Hubert says. “The theme of personalization is big.”

As part of this more intimate approach, Siemens has expanded its job descriptions, now posting videos along with the write-ups. Hubert says, “What we’re aiming to achieve is to bring our recruiters closer to our candidate pools by enabling them to verbally pitch and post socially.”

Talent Pools

Recruiters can use pipelines to build relationships with top talent over time – and ahead of business demand. Through email campaigns, newsletters, Google Hangouts, and one-to-one touch points, candidates become well acquainted with an organization and feel more inclined to work for it.

Hubert says that Avature supports these efforts by enabling recruiters to search for global talent and then stay in contact – rather than simply identify individuals for a fixed position in a particular location.

“Talent has become truly global,” he adds. “If we want to find the best talent for a certain business problem, we also have to be truly global in terms of how we search and stay in contact with that talent.”

In addition to going global, some in-demand talent favors temporary or freelance work. In order to engage this pool of individuals, Accenture created a contractor-specific portal and encourages employees to refer contract talent. Using this approach, the company is able to broaden its talent community population and help reduce its reliance on agencies. “Accenture realizes that a talent pool is not just for fixed or permanent positions,” Gibbons says. “We need to also cater to the agile talent marketplace.”

Employee Referrals

Gibbons says referrals account for one of Accenture’s “highest quality sources of talent.” She’s not alone: 48 percent of TA leaders consider employee referrals to be their top channel for quality hires.³

“We made a good effort putting an emphasis on our referral program,” Gibbons explains. “What we needed was a quality employee experience when referring, not just a good platform.”

For open positions, Accenture utilizes an AI tool to help employees match their referral to the most aligned role. The company also deploys a recommendation engine that can tap into employees’ social networks and identify people who may be a good fit for a given position. If there is no open role for candidates, employees can invite prospects to join the talent community. Using Avature, the TA team has visibility of the referral source.

When Siemens started rolling out its global employee referral program, the company already had various referral programs operating in different locations – with very little knowledge of how many of the programs were actually successful. Now with the international program managed through Avature, employees can refer their contacts for any role around the world.

“We want to activate our employees to work on our behalf – kind of like 350,000 recruiters rather than just a couple hundred of them,” Hubert points out.

Graduate Recruiting

Millennials have passed up Generation X as the largest share of the workforce.⁴ Also known as the smartphone generation, these candidates want to be connected and informed – and they are.

“They grew up as digital natives,” Gibbons says. “They want everything now, 24/7 access to information.”

In recruiting, this means delivering a connected, consumer-level experience. Siemens recently reconfigured its global graduate program for the roles it will need to fill in the future.

“We’re trying to attract the best digital talent, so our candidate experience needs to reflect this,” Hubert explains. “The first person interaction point is our recruiting events, so that’s where we need to be digitally present.”

Instead of simply presenting the overall brand and interacting with candidates, Avature enables recruiters to place prospects directly into the correct talent pipeline. After events, recruiters can follow up with personalized communications, increasing the likelihood that events lead to hires.

Delivering an Exceptional Service

As a consultant, Gibbons considers internal stakeholders to be not only hiring managers but also recruiters. She asks both parties what they expect from each touch point of the recruitment process. By including recruiters in the overall design of a new tool or a new process, Accenture earns their buy-in.

In this way, recruiters become empowered in the delivery of a service to hiring managers. This is invaluable as the two parties collaborate on hiring decisions. In initial conversations, for instance, a recruiter can present the hiring manager with a demand plan, hiring strategy, and competitor market mapping. This high level of service positions the recruiter – and TA in general – as a strategic business partner.

For example, one Siemens recruiter was searching for a hard-to-fill role – a mechanical design engineer – and utilized a key-role pipeline. Within two weeks of the role going live, the company made an offer. Hubert says prior to implementing Avature CRM, the process may have taken five times longer. And although making the right hire is the most important end result, speed certainly doesn’t hurt.

“There’s a huge difference in how the business perceives you as a service,” Hubert explains. “If you think about service delivery, what’s really important for our hiring managers? They get the right talent, they get it fast, and they have transparency about the process.”

In order to collect hiring managers’ feedback, Siemens has implemented a mobile capability that enables managers to rank key experience indicators. The feedback drills down to provide regional leaders with meaningful information in order to discuss and improve team performance. The feedback also impacts recruiters’ immediate behavior.

“They get notified immediately if there is bad or mediocre feedback,” Hubert says. “I think what really matters is that they reach out just in time to their hiring managers and say, ‘OK, let me understand what went wrong and what we can do better.’”

Leveraging a Technology Ecosystem

In its recruiting processes and beyond, Accenture places a strong emphasis on agility, speed, and open collaboration.

“We see that mirrored in Avature as a vendor partner,” Gibbons says. “What I personally have always loved about Avature is that the very core design philosophy is exactly what

we value – it is agile, it is flexible. The ecosystem is actually open to collaboration.”

Accenture is experimenting with the integration of AI and robotics tools, both creating their own and partnering with vendors.

“The fact that we can plug and play, we can connect other vendors that we might need to explore with, and Avature can actually adapt with us – not just our needs, but also our clients’ needs – that is so important,” Gibbons says.

She adds that, over the years, she has developed a true partnership with Avature consultants: “We bounce ideas off each other, we share that common goal. We really are trying to get the best out of talent acquisition using that tool.”

Similarly, as Siemens explores emerging technology, Hubert says that Avature plays an integral role.

“What is key for us is that we have a system like Avature that enables a seamless integration where it matters. Avature is the agile and responsive backbone to our TA technology landscape.”

Sebastian Hubert
Siemens

“What is key for us is that we have a system like Avature that enables a seamless integration where it matters,” he says. “Avature is the agile and responsive backbone to our TA technology landscape.”

As leaders continue to develop their approach to strategic TA, the recruiting world will advance more in the next five years than in the past 20 years. This is why organizations must be flexible and agile, employing a centerpiece TA technology that allows for growth.

With so many advancements, companies seeking to stay ahead must operate differently. If the digital age is defined by disruption, then the new organization is defined by learning. Successful companies share common practices: observant analytics, constant reevaluation, and readiness for change.

¹ Josh Bersin, “2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends: Rewriting the Rules for the Digital Age,” Bersin Edge, Deloitte Development LLC, 27 Feb. 2017, [bersin.com/resources/research/?docid=20726](https://www.bersin.com/resources/research/?docid=20726).

² Andrew Gagen, “Global Recruiting Trends for 2017,” LinkedIn, 1 Dec. 2016, [linkedin.com/pulse/global-recruiting-trends-2017-andrew-gagen](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/global-recruiting-trends-2017-andrew-gagen).

³ Gagen, LinkedIn.

⁴ Richard Fry, “Millennials Surpass Gen Xers as the Largest Generation in U.S. Labor Force,” Pew Research Center, 11 May 2015, [pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/11/millennials-surpass-gen-xers-as-the-largest-generation-in-u-s-labor-force/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/11/millennials-surpass-gen-xers-as-the-largest-generation-in-u-s-labor-force/).