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Be the First Call

"At any given time only 3 percent of the employment market is looking for a new job," says Jeremy Miller, a partner with LEAPJob, a Toronto-based sales recruiting firm that specializes in recruiting business-to-business sales professionals. "These are the people posting their resumes on job boards or applying to job openings. It's an active, highly competitive market, and it is becoming exceedingly difficult to find great talent in this small population."

Miller says that many companies are starting to realize that the real gold lies in the 97 percent of people not looking or interested in job opportunities right now. But that doesn't mean you should ignore them. Realistically, Miller says that about 30 percent of that 97 percent will probably never look at your company as a place to work for one reason or another. However, the other 67 percent may not be ready, but you need to stay in touch with them for the future. Why?

"Things can and do change in this world of ours and these people will all eventually look for a new position and join that 3 percent of active job seekers," says Miller. "The goal for employers is to be the 'first call' when they look for their next career opportunity."

"To engage this group of people, companies have to consider ways they can communicate and create value for their own salespeople in their day-to-day jobs," Miller says. "The traditional way of engaging this crowd is through sales managers. Maybe they have a list of A players from the competition and they take them out to lunch or meet them on a quarterly basis to build a relationship. It's a very relevant tactic and every sales manager should have a program like this in place. The next level up is on a corporate scale because a sales manager's activity alone is not enough to staff a sales force."

To engage the passive crowd on a corporate scale, Miller says to take advantage of Web 2.0.

"Web 2.0 allows us to cost-effectively engage people with the content and information that they want," Miller says. "There are many opportunities for organizations to have a voice and engage those individuals who aren't actively shopping for jobs even though they will be in the future – the options are far and wide."

Miller provides this example; "If your organization is known for its technical savvy, you could have your engineers share their knowledge over the Internet," he says. "This allows for brand recognition – something that every salesperson would love. It's also inexpensive to create a blog and to get involved in social networking. You can use all of these and your Website to talk with your audience and give them something interesting. It puts your name out there and draws people to you."

Companies are also using targeted philanthropy to engage the 18- to 24-year-old market. Rather than donating money, they are creating programs that involve their audience so the company's giving is connected to a broader audience.

To create awareness, Miller also suggests using public relations to get your message out to the mass media – article placement and interviews to gain name recognition.

"You can start this out as a kernel where you are doing something very small to a targeted audience," says Miller. "Or you can scale it up to a national campaign using PR, advertising, social networking – put all these components together to make your company that 'first call.'"

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- Frank Lloyd Wright