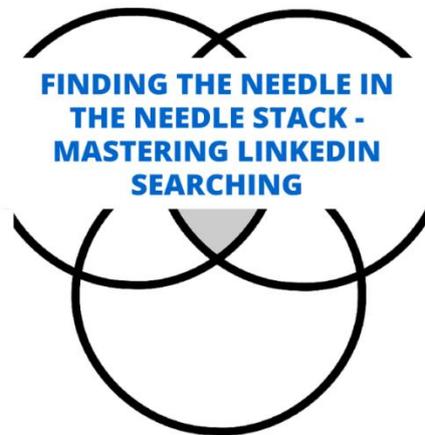


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When I first mentioned that I was going into recruitment to my friends, the immediate response was “*what is it that you do?*”, I went through the usual explanation of explaining that we find the best people in the market, and the response was “*how?*”. Cold calling, emails, referrals, but it all kept coming back to LinkedIn.

For the few who are now aware of LinkedIn, it is the largest business orientated social networking service globally, with over 400 million acquired users spread across more than 200 countries and territories. LinkedIn allows users to create profiles and "connections" to each other in an online social network and recruiters, head hunters, and HR individuals are increasingly using LinkedIn as a way of finding potential candidates.

Tweaking the Boolean search logic

Chatting to friends, it really made me think, that in many respects, all I was doing was searching for words and phoning the people that came up. But it really took until I was working on a project to find female actuaries, and I found 10 in Scotland, that I thought there may be a better way of doing this, because there are more than 10 female actuaries in Scotland, common sense would tell you that.

When I'd started work I had learned all the typical Boolean search logic, but I still wasn't finding enough people for this role, all I was doing was scraping at the edges. I have some friends who were physicists and they were talking about the universe, topics that I had no interest in, that I didn't understand, but what they mentioned was the idea that there are things out there that we can't see, perceive or interact with, but they are there.

This made me think that if all I do is search for keywords, then all I get is profiles that mention keywords. Only about 1/3 of all profiles can be found with simple searches. These are the people who are found over and over again, contacted, emailed and bombarded. In the end these people just go cold to everyone, even great opportunities. This led me to do some further research into other ways of reaching people who you can't see.

Every word can be expressed 50 different ways

Even in casual conversation there are multiple ways of expressing simple things like ordering coffee, or expressing emotion. If people do this in everyday life, how are they going to describe their jobs, skills and experience? Some people say “senior manager” and 100,000 say “snr manager”

It is only by understanding that key words are not used by all that more candidates can be found. Most people on LinkedIn are not actively looking for work, rather they are online for social networking or maybe for that one brilliant opportunity which doesn't exist. This means that many good candidates

are left out of a search either because they have misspelled key words or because they have failed to mention them at all, and this coupled with the use of the unusual job titles outlined above results in these people becoming invisible. Many high demand software experts spell software as “sw” precisely to avoid being contacted by general recruiters.

These issues mean that there are many candidates who are not displayed or are perhaps displayed at the bottom of a search. Only 20% of all possible candidates are viewed this way.

The only way I’ve found to address the failure to find the right people is to find the key synonym’s for job title, skills etc. Maximum inclusion means recognising that there are multiple ways of expressing similar skills. This initial generic search leads to the identification of key words and skills that are commonly mentioned by those on the position that you are seeking. Use these terms as a reference with which to expand your search. Instead of “senior manager” “product design” search for “senior manager” “product design” or “lead a team” or “delivered new device”. The variations on these themes are limitless. But it is important to know that no one initial question can give a complete insight into the available talent.

The recognition that skills are expressed in different ways must be expanded to recognise that some skills may not be expressed at all. Accountants who work at certain companies do not mention specific skills, such as system knowledge. Apply the same ideas outlined above by examining those that work at the same company who do express certain skills or would have those skills and find the equivalency statements. Creativity is king.

Another example is for developers who are frequently members of groups which outline their skills, even if they are not explicitly mentioned. Start with an initial broad search, such as “developer”, then narrow the criteria by searching for a group. Searching for a Java developers group gives a high probability for people who have those skills, as they are developers, who are members of a software group.

Recognising the limitations of simplistic searching is vital to find candidates who may never have been contacted, who would never have been sourced by your competitors. Perhaps an ability to recognise your firm’s weakness may prove to be your greatest strength.

Even with the ability to expand your candidate list through group searching and synonym’s there will be a limit to who you are able to find for specific vacancies. Returning to the actuarial example, the numbers of candidates was highly limited meaning that it was necessary to use LinkedIn for social networking rather than just recruitment. It is vital to link with those who work with your target group. These are people who are actuarial managers, accountants and account managers with experience of working with those you want to find. Experience of the industry and a good understanding of the culture and skills of desired candidates make these ideal people to contact.

The initial issue that peaked my interest, the gender divide in Scottish actuaries, is a great example on how to use simple but powerful tools to increase the diversity of candidates in your recruitment pool. Gender is not specified as an option on LinkedIn searches, so the best solution is to search within references as these include frequent references to gender, “she”, “her” etc. This allows for a search for all females within an industry, with the ease of only using the “OR” functions.

Intelligent recruiting

Good LinkedIn searching is beyond simple Boolean logic, rather it is about being creative when it comes to recognising the abilities that are inherent within LinkedIn. Rather than being keyword focused, think about the questions you ask. Am I failing to recognise that people are different in how they describe themselves? Am I not searching in all possible ways to find in demand skills? Ultimately success in recruitment is determined by intelligence, or so I tell my friends in physics.

At Taylor Osborne we regularly work on challenging projects so the use of creative and diverse research tools both within LinkedIn and further afield is essential to ensure that we are finding and accessing the best talent in the market for our clients. Speak to us to find out more about how we can help.