



Sourcing Plus Branding: A Powerful One-Two Punch for Staffing Agencies



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Many of our clients in the search & staffing space tell us that they're continually evolving their sourcing and branding strategies in order to keep up - and stand out - in today's rapidly changing marketplace.

[Kevin Raxter](#), Managing Partner of [The Centrics Group](#), recently revamped his team's strategies for engaging candidates, nurturing pipelines, and above all building the firm's brand. Here, he shares how they achieved a more proactive, targeted approach.

Your team has undergone a fairly significant shift in the past six months. What's changed?

We essentially revamped our team last year. We realigned how we work, we did a lot more training on recruiting and sales methods, we cut our job board spend, and we started using the LinkedIn platform more strategically. To that end, we gave everyone [Recruiter](#) licenses, and then we launched a [Media package](#) in late 2013. The combination of those things is really contributing to our success. This January, our margin was up 40% over our numbers in January of last year. We are on pace for a record quarter.

You mentioned that you realigned your team and invested in training for them. What was that training like, and what results have you seen?

All of the training centers around engagement and relationships: everything from best practices for using LinkedIn Recruiter to crafting better outreach. Our focus has been connecting and engaging. The results have been outstanding. We're finding more passive candidates and doing more deals because of this switch in methodology.

What about the current recruiting market has driven those changes?

Since the economy has come out of the recession, things have flipped from a "client's market" to a "candidate's market" - especially in the IT sector. We were still heavily reliant on job boards and sourcing active candidates, and we saw a slowdown in our growth based on those recruiting methodologies.

The recruiting industry overall has gone through a shift, thanks to the technology available today. Recruiters used to have success with mass communication strategies – they'd jump on a job board, send a mass email to 50 candidates, see who responded, submit those candidates to a client, and the client would hire someone. Now, we're back to building relationships with candidates. At this point in the game, engaging prospects and getting them to have that initial conversation is key. The LinkedIn platform allows us access to the people we're looking to engage.

Part of your team realignment included the launch of a LinkedIn Media package with a [Gold Careers Page](#), [Employee Profile Ads](#), and [Job Slots](#). What were your goals going in?

We set goals for two key metrics: Company Page followers and our firm's Talent Brand Index (TBI).^{*} When we launched in December 2013, we had about 150 followers and wanted to hit 1,000 by the end of Q2. And when we began, our TBI was 2%. We wanted to reach a TBI of 10% within the same time frame.

What results have you experienced?

The numbers have been striking. We went from 150 followers to more than 3,500 in under seven months. Our Talent Brand Index shot up from 2% to 32%, which ranks us #1 compared to our peers. That means that people are really engaging with our brand on LinkedIn.

The click-through rate on our ads is well above industry average, and we're seeing significant increases in traffic to our Company Page and our employee profiles. In addition, the number of applicants to our LinkedIn Jobs has skyrocketed – from virtually none to approximately 1,000 applications a month.

And what do those numbers mean, in terms of real impact on your business?

The fundamental change we've seen is in the quality of candidates we're reaching. Candidates on job boards for the positions we look for – senior-level IT roles – are typically not the best candidates.

LinkedIn has given us access to the entire passive candidate market, which is a better fit for our needs. About 80-90% of our placements are coming from candidates sourced via LinkedIn. We not only find the people we're looking for currently, but we can find passive candidates, have them follow us, and keep them engaged for an opportunity six months down the road. Thanks to LinkedIn, we can stay ahead of the game and be a lot more proactive in our recruiting efforts.

What's your favorite social recruiting feature?

The LinkedIn Targeted Status Updates I can send to our followers. Before, if I wanted to post a message to my LinkedIn status or to Twitter – for example, "I need a java developer in Atlanta" – people all over the country would see it and it would have no relevance to them. The fact that I can use Targeted Status Updates to narrow down the audience and just post to our followers in Georgia, or wherever the position may be – it's big for us. Our followers are getting more relevant information as opposed to a mass blast. And that will only become more relevant and targeted as our followers continue to grow.

And what's your favorite thing about recruiting?

Every day is different. Different jobs, different candidates and different situations. There are so many intangibles with this job, since our product is people – they aren't stocked in warehouse somewhere, ready to go!

^{*} [Talent Brand Index \(TBI\)](#) is a free tool for LinkedIn customers that measures the strength of a firm's talent brand or employer brand.