

adidas Case Study



“LinkedIn is a game changer for us in Asia because it enables our recruiters to reach out to passive candidates directly through a trusted platform. By speaking to them directly, getting them engaged and excited about opportunities at adidas group while providing a great candidate experience that we strive for, is a massive advantage.”



Jeffery Wong
Manager, Talent Acquisition, Asia Pacific,
adidas Group

adidas is a global leader in the sporting goods industry with brands that are built on a passion for sports and a sporting lifestyle. Some of these brands include adidas, Reebok, TaylorMade, CCM Hockey and Rockport. Established in 1949 and headquartered in Herzogenaurach, Germany, the adidas Group today has about 170 subsidiaries in major markets across the world. It has a global workforce of over 40,000, about one third of whom is based in the Asia Pacific.

Business Challenge – Building A Recruitment Hub

In 2011, adidas embarked on the creation of a shared talent acquisition service to provide a more proactive approach to meeting the company's recruitment needs in the Asia Pacific.

Challenge

- Build a recruitment hub for Asia Pacific
- Develop a proactive recruitment model
- Reduce time-to-fill

Solution

- LinkedIn Recruiter
- Highly targeted InMail

Why LinkedIn?

- Proven recruitment platform
- Extensive member details
- Supports proactive approach to hiring

Results

- Reduced the average time-to-fill from 70 days to 52 days
- Slashed hiring costs
- Ensured consistent employment branding

Prior to this, adidas' human resource managers in various locations looked into their own recruitment requirements. A standard practice would be to post a job description on the adidas job board or on traditional job portals, and wait for the applications to come through, said Jeffery Wong, Manager, Talent Acquisition, Asia Pacific, adidas. If this did not work, they would turn to the recruitment agencies. "These were the two main channels that the hiring managers used," he noted.

The approach was very reactive and there were several drawbacks. Firstly, the quality of candidates coming through was not very consistent because active candidates who would respond to job postings did not necessarily have the expertise or experience that adidas was looking for. Secondly, it was not cost effective or efficient. Wong estimated that the company would have to pay millions of Hong Kong dollars a year in agency fees, and the recruitment cycle would be relatively long.

Another concern that Wong had was with employment branding. "Different agencies may represent us in different ways, and the candidate could be getting different messages," he said.

Enabling A More Proactive Approach To Recruitment

The three-year project to develop a shared service model was aimed at addressing these issues and bringing the Asia Pacific region up to speed with its North American and European counterparts in terms of in-house recruiting. By providing dedicated personnel focused on recruitment, the shared service hub seeks to increase the speed of recruitment, provide greater consistency in employment branding, and be more consumer focused as a recruiting partner to the hiring managers.

With the more proactive recruitment model, adidas began to go into direct sourcing, and LinkedIn was a logical tool for this purpose. "Our headquarters already had a strong relationship with LinkedIn, so it was logical for us to make use of it," said Wong.

One of the LinkedIn features that adidas used right off the bat was Job Slots, and the results were highly encouraging. "When we posted on Job Slots, we would get about 50 to 70 files straightaway that were a close match," said Wong.

Another aspect of LinkedIn that has helped adidas greatly in its recruitment efforts is the ability to reach out to passive candidates by doing a targeted search based on criteria relevant to a particular role. These search criteria may include, for example, the industry that the candidate is in and the experience he or she has working with other companies in the same line of business. Once the prospective candidates are identified, adidas uses LinkedIn InMail to reach out to them.

"I am lucky enough to come from a brand that most people will know, so I am very confident that if I send out an InMail, whether the candidate is interested or not, most of the time I'll get a response," said Wong, who estimated that about 70 per cent of those whom he reaches out to via InMail get back to him.

Reducing Time-to-fill With Targeted Search

The targeted search approach is particularly effective for jobs that require specific skillsets and experience that are unique to the industry. Wong cited the example of the product marketing role, which is different in adidas world where it involves product creation, looking at future trends and consumer behavior, conceptualizing products and working with designers to bring those ideas to life. The particular combination of experience in marketing, consumer analysis, trend spotting and product development makes this role particularly difficult to fill. However, by carrying out a targeted search via LinkedIn, adidas was able to identify and recruit a senior product marketing person to fill this role in its Shanghai Creation Centre within about 60 days.

In general, LinkedIn has helped adidas to reduce its average time-to-fill from 70 days in 2011 to 52 days in 2012. Wong attributed this partly to LinkedIn effectiveness as a tool for targeted search, and partly to the fact that the search process becomes more efficient the more adidas makes use of the tool. As he explained, "The more searches that you do, the more projects that you rollout, the quicker you can build up your talent pool. And the next time you recruit for those roles, you can go back to the same pool and explore the leads that you already have."

Quality-wise, the candidates that adidas connected with via LinkedIn also tended to provide a closer match to its requirements. "If I reach out to five prospective candidates, and if all of them came back to me, in all likelihood at least one would be hired. If I were to place an advertisement, I may receive 50 applications but not get a hire out of there."

Over the past 12 months, Wong was able to fill nine middle to senior level roles by reaching out to passive candidates using LinkedIn. This would have cost the company about HKD1.3 million (US\$167,700) in recruitment agency fees. In comparison, a subscription to LinkedIn costs just a fraction of this.

Strengthening Employer Branding

By providing adidas with a channel to communicate directly with the candidates, LinkedIn also helps the company with employer branding. "When the candidates speak to our recruiters directly, we act as the brand ambassador and we can communicate to them our employer value proposition in areas such as career development and training. We are also able to talk about the direction the company is taking and the benefits that we provide. If we do this through a recruiting agency, they may not be able to provide the details," said Wong.

To learn more about LinkedIn Talent Solution, please visit <http://talent.linkedin.com>