

Case Study

AirAsia



Company Profile

AirAsia, the leading and largest low-cost carrier in Asia, services an extensive network of 85 destinations. Within 10 years of operations, it has carried over 152 million guests and grown its fleet from just two aircraft to 106. The airline today is proud to be a truly ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) airline with established operations based in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines and Japan. This is complemented by AirAsia X, its low-cost long-haul affiliate carrier that currently flies to destinations in China, Australia, Taiwan, Nepal, Korea and Japan. AirAsia was named the World's Best Low Cost Airline in the annual World Airline Survey by Skytrax for four consecutive years, from 2009 to 2012.

Business Challenge

Since 2001, AirAsia has swiftly risen to become one of the leading low-cost carriers in the world. In Malaysia where its headquarters and other key corporate functions are based, one of its key human resource challenges has been to stay ahead of the growth curve by sourcing for quality candidates to fill critical high-level positions within the company.

AirAsia had been advertising on social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter as well as other job portals to fill non-executive or executive roles. However, while this approach worked well for positions such as Flight Attendants and Guest Service Assistants, it was less successful when it came to filling senior management roles. "We sometimes receive a huge number of applicants from very diversified backgrounds across geographies, who may not meet the primary qualifications that we need," said AirAsia's Country Head People Department, Zamrah Ismail.

The airline has also engaged recruitment agencies to assist in its hiring efforts. However, it found that this was not very cost efficient.

In January 2012, AirAsia started making use of LinkedIn, in particular LinkedIn Recruiter and Job Slots, to address the challenges it faced in the recruitment of middle and senior management personnel. These included Senior Executives, Team Leaders, Managers, Head of Departments, Country Heads or Regional Heads as well as critical positions in specialist functions such as Internal Audit, Commercial, ICT and Marketing.



Zamrah Ismail

Country Head: People Department, Malaysia AirAsia
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In its use of LinkedIn, AirAsia eschews standard bullet points for a more conversational tone when posting its job descriptions, said Social Media and Resourcing Executive Azhan Rabi. "LinkedIn is a part of social media, and social media means having a conversation. We tend to ask questions and throw up challenges to get people to ask themselves whether they would be a right fit."

Projecting the "right fit" is also key to employment branding on AirAsia's Career Page on LinkedIn, which includes a section on the top 10 reasons why anybody should join the company. "What we are looking for is a cultural fit. This is very important to us, more important than education or professional qualifications," said Zamrah. "We have a young and vibrant open door culture which emphasizes creativity and being fun and friendly, and it is very important that the person who comes in can fit into this environment."

Besides Job Slots and the Career Page, AirAsia also uses targeted search in LinkedIn to hire for niche positions, for example, roles such as Head of Catering & InFlight, Head of Internal Audit, Solution Architect or Commercial & Marketing positions, as well as positions that are available in its overseas offices in Thailand, Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. "In these cases, LinkedIn helps us in terms of its wide geographical reach. We are able to source for better quality candidates from around the world," said Resourcing Specialist, Vikram Anand.

Since January, AirAsia has filled quite a few urgent and critical positions through LinkedIn. This has proven to be more cost-effective compared with the use of recruitment agencies, said Zamrah.

The quality of candidates coming in through LinkedIn was also better, said Vikram. "Recently, when we were hiring for the Head of Catering & InFlight, we had more than 200 applications coming in through LinkedIn, and about 10 per cent mapped onto what we were looking for. With other channels, we would get about 3-5 per cent. The quality of the responses is much better with LinkedIn."

"The use of LinkedIn has definitely had a positive impact for us and helped us to attract good talent," said Zamrah. "We're still at the nascent stage, but as the number of people following AirAsia on LinkedIn increases by the day, we will continue to explore new ways to utilize LinkedIn in an even more effective and efficient manner."

LinkedIn User Tips

- Adopt a conversational tone when posting job descriptions on LinkedIn.
- Ensure you are in constant touch with your active and passive candidates and keep them posted on the current and forthcoming happenings in your organization.
- Connect with a wider LinkedIn subscriber base by advertising and promoting all open positions.