

ELIMINATING TALENT ACQUISITION CHALLENGES IN THE NEW PARADIGM: A PROPOSED MODEL OF TALENT ACQUISITION PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of post-pandemic work dynamics, there's talent shortage worldwide, even after huge unemployment caused by temporary closing-down of businesses and disrupted economic activities due to COVID-19. There's enormous cost involved in talent screening, assessment, and hiring after rounds of interview and selection tests, however when newly hired candidate doesn't turn-up after receiving offer or undergoing onboarding process, whole activity-endeavor is squandered. The new age TA manager face multifold issues in identification, hunt, and sourcing of talent in the ever-dynamic working environment in post-pandemic context. The market of skilled candidates is becoming fiercely competitive in tech-enabled and AI supportive work-era, posing further question of, how and where to detect right talent in right time and at the right cost, who stays with organization at least till the time he starts generating return on investment for the organization. The biggest challenge talent acquisition managers face today

is, candidates turning ghosts after selection and receiving employment-offer. It is a loss in terms of time, money, efforts, and work. TA managers are in constant search of solution to cope-with this issue. In this paper we have made an attempt to unravel this burgeoning problem by posing two research questions; What factors determine joining decision post-selection in an organization? And; What strategy should TA manager use to make dynamic talent join the organization when selected after rigorous screening and selection process?

By analyzing conceptual secondary data and recent literature relevant to answer research questions, we propose a useful model for new age TA managers to successfully hunt for talent and make informed decisions. Model proposed in this paper is an original work of authors to unravel problems faced by TA managers in acquiring right talent at right cost and within right time by comprehending employee intention to join and provides insightful techniques to be applied by TA managers to break vicious circle of search-select-ghost-search.

Keywords: Talent Acquisition (TA), Talent Search, Acquisition Cost, Talent Ghosting

INTRODUCTION

Right talent acquisition is first step to success. But what if your talent ‘ghosts’ after selection and/or offer-acceptance, it turns into a big pain and huge loss. The cost of recruitment, then loss of work thereof for which candidate was selected. Indian professional industry is facing this unrelenting challenge after Covid-19 waves especially, IT industry. The potential employees are getting hired at even 100% hike and yet they do not turn-up on day of joining or interview. In India, ghosting stands at 35% meaning 3-4 people ghosting out of every 10, and costs to the tune of Rs. 1000 crore per year to recruitment industry (Golikeri, 2018). According to an article by Jones (2021) in ‘Business Insider’, mention of ‘Ghosting’ in Glassdoor interview reviews has reached to 450% since start of pandemic. According to an article in Forbes ghosting in US has increased from 18% in 2019 to 28 % in 2021 (Kelly, 2021). Experts believe that apart from Covid-19 calamity, main reason for this crisis is broken recruitment chain/process. Other researchers identified various reasons and challenges as factors governing this issue.

In this paper, authors have made an attempt to identify all possible reasons/challenges and proposed some possible solution in form of a model to be adopted by recruiters to meet this challenge. To conduct this study, following research questions were posed along with objectives to resolve those questions.

Research Question 1: What factors determine joining-decision post-selection in an organization/

challenges and reasons governing as factors for ghosting?

Objective 1: Identifying factors responsible for talent turning-down offer for employment after rigorous screening and selection process.

Research Question 2: Are there some effective solutions available?

Objective 2: Proposing an effective talent acquisition process model to hire, make a candidate join and stay till s/he is assimilated with organization.

The methodology used is Evidence-based review using an integrative synthesis of published literature that is peer-reviewed and validated with thorough data analysis. High emphasis is drawn on problem-solving approach to challenges and issues faced by TA Managers in post-Covid-19 work environment. By analyzing conceptual secondary data and recent literature relevant to answer research questions, we intend to propose a useful model for TA managers to successfully hunt for talent and make informed and efficient decisions in acquiring right talent.

IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES/ REASONS OF GHOSTING

Talent is meant to be skilled human resources and precisely the human and intellectual capital an organization has, is what makes it successful, competitive and sustainable. The finest of policies, procedures, techniques, and expert vision can also become futile if not executed and performed by the ‘Right people’ in the expected right manner. This lays dire need of having right talent in right time and at the right cost. ‘Right people’ mean talent which not only has required skills and competencies but also which

fits into organizational culture well (Pandita, 2019). Several researchers have made attempts to ease the TA process, and make it effective to deal strategically with its concerns. “The worth of talent can be analysed by difficulty of finding it” (Polyhart, Weekley, & Dalzell, 2018). In modern times, specifically when pandemic hit the organizations, working professionals and the whole economy, talent pool has further shrunk and pose various unexplored challenges to deal with. When best of efforts is made by TA Manager and HR department to shortlist and attract fine talent for vacant position, either they run away casting about for better offer and negotiations or become ghosts on day of joining/onboarding.

According to Oppong (2013) one of the challenges in TA field is, indicators of talent are contradictory and sometimes even unclear (Kontinen, 2019). Now, mind-set of talent prospects, is becoming further unclear, and contradictory of their actions. While they appear for interview and selection process, giving their candidature for filling the position, it is still uncertain whether they will join with the same company if get selected.

It is crucial to success of TA process, to address the acquisition challenges so that companies can spot the struggling steps, focus their resources on these difficult areas and overcome them. With increasing demand for high-potential talent and scarce ‘Star’ performers, there’s growing tendency of employees to switch companies and high propensity of having multiple job offers. “According to the Talent Now Survey 2018, Attracting top quality candidates has become difficult as talented job seekers are having multiple offers in hand” (Anita, 2019). This has resulted in the changed power dynamics in the market,

and candidates are having increased power to negotiate and decide. In an effort to explore ‘impact of Employer brand on the intent to join’, (R. Sharma, 2018) have studied and found, there’s positive relationship between employer branding and employee attraction, turnover intention, job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

As Talent is rising, TA strategy must be re-assessed to meet challenges of changed work dynamics and overcome drawbacks of having no clear vision, low employee engagement and long time and high cost in hiring talent (Walford-Wright & Scott-Jackson, 2018). Further, lack of commitment challenge, as per recent survey of HR professionals at Fortune 200 companies proclaimed, most difficult aspect of the role of TA professionals was creating and ensuring a true sense of ownership among senior managers regarding their roles during TA process (Kontinen, 2019). Another challenge is even if organisation has successfully attracted talent, in next step, where transition takes place from acquiring to assimilation in the organisation, candidate may find that expectations are not met by employer, leading to loss of acquired talent (Holland & Scullion, 2021) and host of challenges that talent may leave either after receiving or accepting offer. At the integration stage, while organisation put efforts to socialise new talent through On-boarding process, again if these efforts do not appeal the employee psychologically, s/he may feel most vulnerable and likely to consider leaving the organisation, eventuating in all the TA process, time and cost in hiring talent go in vain. Therefore, initial 90 days are crucial to success of newly hired talent, through careful on-boarding of newcomer as the whole process is time consuming and costly (Sharma & Stol, 2020).

In the post-pandemic career scenario, job seekers lack certainty about employers’ expectations (Hirst & Benson, 2021) and are also uncertain

about their own career paths and what exactly they’re looking for in a job offer due to ‘career shock’ (Akkermans et al., 2020).

Table 1: Showing Problems/Challenges due to Candidates’ ‘Ghosting’ Behaviour

Problems/Challenges	Author
Changed (negotiation) power dynamics of talent ^{brt} , High Cost per-acquisition ^{hirst}	(Walford-Wright & Scott-Jackson,2018) ^a , (Kontinen, 2019) ^b , (Anita, 2019) ^c ,
High/long time spent per-acquisition ^{aqrs}	(Arrawatia & Verma, 2019) ^g , (Fayoumi & Loucopoulos, 2021) ^h , (Bugg, 2015) ⁱ ,
Offer Decline after hectic and vibrant acquisition process ^{beiru} , No show on day of joining ^{eu} , Ghosting after accepting offer/on-boarding ^{eglu}	(G. G. Sharma & Stol, 2020) ^l , (Deeba,2020) ^q , (Phillips-Wren et al.,2016) ^r , (Umachandran, 2021) ^s , (Jayathilake et al., 2021) ^t ,
Quality of acquired talent ^{abgsr}	(Holland & Scullion, 2021) ^u

Table 2: Showing evidence-based literature synthesis of factors leading to ‘Ghosting’

Challenges Identified	Author
Candidate’s Intent to Join:	(Walford-Wright & Scott-Jackson, 2018) ^a (Kontinen, 2019) ^b , (Hite & McDonald, 2020) ^c , (Hirst & Benson, 2021) ^d , (Anita, 2019) ^e , (Pandey et al., 2021) ^f , (Arrawatia & Verma, 2019) ^g , (Fayoumi & Loucopoulos, 2021) ^h , (Bugg, 2015) ⁱ , (Hancock & Schaninger, 2020) ^j , (Potočnik et al., 2021) ^k , (G. G. Sharma & Stol, 2020) ^l , (James, 2021) ^m ,
Employer Brand ^{gnoprvtw} , No clear vision ^a , Lack of commitment ^{gu} , Lack of mutual trust ^{abu} , Lack of certainty of expectations ^{edgkm}	(Girotra et al., 2018) ⁿ , (Jose, 2019) ^o , (Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2010) ^p , (Deeba, 2020) ^q , (Phillips-Wren et al., 2016) ^r , (Umachandran, 2021) ^s , (Jayathilake et al., 2021) ^t , (Holland & Scullion, 2021) ^u ,
Lack of clarity in prospect due to Career shocks and disruptive career path resulted after Covid-19ct	(Pandita et al., 2019) ^v , (Whysall et al., 2019) ^w
Lack of understanding of changed needs and mind-set of talent candidates ^{beghkmstu}	
Failure to win talent during acquisition process ^{begiruv}	
Timely assimilation and nurturing of acquired talent ^{egiuv}	
Engagement and retention of acquired talent ^{bfglmqtuvw}	
Changed work dynamics in post-pandemic times and WFH/ remote locations ^{cfjmsr}	

PROPOSED MODEL FOR IMPROVED EFFECTIVENESS OF TALENT ACQUISITION PROCESS

Using integrative synthesis, reviewed literature provides evidenced elucidation for challenges faced by new age HR department and TA Managers, specifically after the whole recruitment process has been implemented and

all strategic ends are scrutinized. Therefore, we propose a conceptual model that would not only improvise effectiveness of talent acquisition, besides will ensure gainful assimilation of newly hired talent in the organisational culture, leading to competitive-advantage of the organisation as it will assist TA managers in dealing-with challenges listed and encountered in acquiring talent.

Figure 1: Proposed Model of Effective Talent Acquisition Process



Talent Pipeline is foundation in strong build-up of appropriate supply of required talent in the organisation. As recognised by CGMA (2012) “Two of most critical factors in Industry 4.0 are, quality of its human capital and management of its talent pipeline” (Whysall et al., 2019). This step will ensure a positive employer identity and brand image for prospective talent. To build a strong and profound Talent Pipeline

employers need to make their organisation both known and attractive, to develop familiarity to reduce fear of the unknown and offset chances of failure of socialisation process (Silzer & Dowell, 2009). In digital era, TA managers must manage their social media profiles to enhance brand image. For example, keeping a track what others are writing about them on important platforms like ‘Glassdoor’,

'LinkedIn' etc. Then create brand image by publishing regular blogs about their best practices, issues concerning candidates and employee testimonies.

Practice Candidate relationship management by keeping track of candidates appeared for interview earlier, open doors for ex-employees, maintaining talent pool and inviting them in social events of the organization to nurture prospects and turn them to active candidates.

Initial Screening and Shortlisting Many of the recruiters stated that labour market is candidate-driven and top candidates stay available for 10 days only before getting hired (Anita, 2019). The TA managers should be quick in tapping the talent, shortlisting and calling for the interview before it is found by the competitor. Delay in hiring process may lead to further increased cost of hiring and loss of productivity due to vacant position. TA manager must screen employment history of candidate to determine if there's job hopping pattern or by identifying personality traits like conscientiousness from LinkedIn profiles that reveal commitment level of candidate (Fernandez et al., 2021)

TA managers should be careful in this step and do not call candidates who are well-settled in their native place and might not be willing to relocate. Even if they get lured with hiring advertisement and/or employer brand to take momentary decision, chances are s/he may step-back later. In the first step employer made attempt to attract the talent and establish positive brand image, however if candidate's expectations and preferences are different, it may be insufficient to get attention of and call-acceptance by the talent candidate.

Call for Selection Process (Selection Test) is a discretionary step as per demand of the industry. Many organizations conduct behavioural/ personality tests, psychometric tests and analytics to evaluate talent candidate and also to map commitment, clarity and other traits required for job.

Conducting Rounds of Interview: Several rounds of interview targeted at assessing the candidate's KASH (Knowledge, Abilities, Skills and Habits) and intention to join. Habits and attitude, reveal a lot about candidate's conscientiousness to keep employer informed of his/her final decision. These rounds also reveal availability and punctuality of candidate to meet schedule, or if candidate is skipping the interview repeatedly, avoid pursuing with such candidate, as s/he lacks commitment and will be hard to retain. At this stage it is relevant to assess changed needs and desires of candidates (Anita, 2019).

Probing intent to join This step can help deal with host of challenges that are listed above in Table II. While interviewing at initial level, look for signals that may indicate his/her intent to join by following ways:

- a) While asking about the joining-period and expected CTC, if response is direct and clearly stated revealing commitment of the candidate, however if response is vague and undecided, it reveals, s/he's not seriously looking-for or planning to join. This will also reveal his/her knowledge of industry norms on CTC and whether s/he has negotiation power.
- b) By probing more into intention to join while candidate is made comfortable after rounds of conversations, after breaking the ice, ask "if there's anything that might stop you to decline offer or step-back in last minute" ask in the

flow of the conversation upfront to get real answer and right intention on decision to join or decline offer on selection.

c) Next question could be “if you have applied for/attended interview elsewhere, and waiting for results?”, and “if you have other offer in hand, how you weigh it against the offer I may give you?” know if answers are logical, well interpreted.

d) Dig more into getting professional and personal reasons that motivates him/her to look for job change, and what exactly are his expectations from job role and package offering.

e) Stick to the procedures of making an offer and seeking acceptance in written/on mail within a certain time duration, to prevent delay in hiring and documented offer acceptance to make certain the timely joining.

f) Pay close attention to verbal and non-verbal cues, tone, and expressed/unexpressed concerns that precisely reveal his/her intention to join. Also, may have a structured questionnaire to test his seriousness and sincerity to look for job change.

g) Do not hesitate to ask if s/he has informed family members of the decision of job-change, and if s/he's married, and informed spouse about this decision and how supportive spouse is for this decision.

Offer of employment should be made only when TA manager has ascertained and ensured positive, favourable and committed intention of candidate to join and to stay with the

organisation after joining. Offer must constitute all items and benefits that meets the needs and expectations of candidate to increase chances of offer-acceptance.

Engaging Talent Before On-boarding This is one of crucial steps to ensure joining of selected candidates. It is this break in acquisition process after offer-acceptance and before joining that ‘Ghosting’ occurs most of the time and is costliest. At this stage, organization must engage prospective employee by keeping in touch, clarifying on psychological contract, and assigning ‘Mentor/s’ to nurture and engage them till they join and get assimilated in the organization. These mentors may organize interactive session after offer-acceptance to educate candidate about career growth plans, opportunities, clarify doubts related to organization's processes, and help reduce fears through socialization.

Talent Onboarding, Nurturing and Assimilation After On-boarding, still task of TA manager is not over yet, if assimilation of newly hired from unknown to known has not taken place. This transition will help talent to become productive contributors from being an ‘outsider’. Researchers have established, new employees when effectively socialized after On-boarding process and have developed positive relations with peers, will tend to sense more adapted to new job role demands, have an improved self-efficacy, and robust attachment with organization leading to greater organizational commitment and intent to stay.

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