



Job Ads that Win the Talent War

Recruiting during a talent shortage (there's always a talent shortage) can be hit-and-miss, but the right words can have the right candidates knocking on your door first.

Deloitte's 2017 research showed talent acquisition is now the third most important concern for business leaders.

You're in a talent war. Not a 'talent tussle' – a war. That means pulling out all stops if you're serious about attracting high-calibre employees.

Test these tips in battle and enjoy the spoils!

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The first port of call for prospective employees is often your recruitment ads, so it's smart to make these punch above their weight. Flick quickly through the careers section of your newspaper. What ads catch your eye? You're competing for mental real-estate in a very crowded market, so it can pay huge dividends in time and money to make sure yours stand out.

The key to writing successful recruitment ads is to get attention, then clearly and concisely build interest and value.

The AIDCA method

The AIDCA persuasive writing technique – Attention, Interest, Desire, Conviction, Action – will help keep your ad relevant, succinct and appealing.

ATTENTION

Getting *attention* in a sea of ads is your first challenge. The layout and design of your ad is critical, so use a good designer.

The next most important element is your *headline*. Research shows 80 percent of people reading ads ONLY read the headline before moving on, so work hard on yours. Writing one that attracts your target depends on you being in tune with their needs, desires and interests.

Keep your headlines simple, short and punchy. Proven approaches are to arouse curiosity (e.g. 'Work for us and You'll Never Work Again'), highlight benefits (e.g. 'Nine-day Fortnights'), or present news (e.g. 'New Graduate Recruitment Program').

If you feel the job title is a strong-enough headline in itself, consider using a strapline, or secondary headline, to get attention. For example, the job-title headline 'Communications Director' could be sweetened with the strapline 'International travel assignments'. Remember your readers are always listening to WII-FM (What's In It For Me?), so highlight the role's benefits.

INTEREST

Once you have their attention, build *interest* in the role. To do this, reveal its unique selling point or points, and align the job and company with your target audience's wish-list and values. Demonstrate why customers should choose you over your competitors.

Past research by Talent2 showed 49 percent of Australians assessed how environmentally responsible a company was when deciding whether to apply for a job, so include information on that if possible. Other attractive options could be that the role may be rare within your industry, is centrally located, or has flexible working hours.

DESIRE

For standout response, your ad must then build *desire*. Your tone should reflect your company's brand values and promote the positives of working for you. Can you mention your company's reputation, special innovations and what your business does better than anyone else (i.e. its USP: Unique Selling Proposition)? To return to our 'communications executive' example, the ad might continue listing facts like the company's award-winning history, on-site gym and industry-leading performance.

CONVICTION

The 'C' in the AIDCA formula stands for *conviction*. That is, how can you convince your readers that what you say is true? Consider adding a short testimonial, or research or survey results that back up your claims. Often something like this can also work to get attention if used as part of the ad's graphics.

ACTION

Finish your ad with a clear call to *action*. Make the next steps clear that you'd like applicants to take, including the details of any information or documents they must supply. And make the steps easy – don't make them jump through unnecessary or annoying hoops, or you'll lose them.

Attracting the best talent from a shrinking pool means powering up every aspect of your recruitment program – especially how your job ads are written.

Professional writing training courses for staff who write job ads can maximise your media spend. Contact us for more information.

First impressions

Keep these in mind when laying out your ad:

- Bullet points are a fast, easy-to-read way to present information.
- Giving text room to breathe (white space) will improve your ad's appearance. Less is often more.
- Use easy-to-read fonts like Arial, Tahoma and Times.
- When choosing fonts, consider your brand image – serif fonts convey a more traditional feel, while sans-serif fonts can look more modern.
- Use italics, bold and underlining, but sparingly.
- Blocks of upper-case text are hard to read.

Don't show me the money

Research consistently suggests major drawcards that attract people to organisations are company values and culture. This is particularly true of the highly mobile Generation-Y, who tend to rate workplace culture and work-life balance above higher pay.

Attracting employees through value-adds like training and development, flexible work hours and career-progress plans not only attract the best and brightest, but help you retain staff and limit exorbitant re-hire costs, which can be up to 150 percent of a position's annual salary.

No train, no gain

Glassdoor's research showed recently that Millennials rate 'the ability to learn and progress' as number one in their search for a great company.

And 42 percent say they're likely to leave because they're not learning fast enough.