



Luring Talent Starts With the Job Description

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Explosive growth in the number of Internet employment sites is creating a new generation of passive job seekers.

Surveys have shown that while 60 percent of those who visit an employment Web site are looking for a job, the other 40 percent are there because they're curious and could be enticed if they see something attractive.

Combine that with a booming economy, and it's more tempting than ever for database marketers to test the waters. For employers, it has never been easier to lose a talented database marketer. During the pioneering days of database marketing in the mid-1980s, it wasn't unusual for database staffers to stick with one employer for seven years or longer. These days, five years seems more the norm.

Part of the problem is the field of database marketing is still relatively new. There is no standard definition of database marketing. There are probably 50 terms to describe it: one-to-one marketing, customer relationship marketing, data-driven marketing, data mining, knowledge science, to name just a few. The abundance of job titles and department names built around them has made it difficult for prospective employers to home in on those candidates who meet specific job requirements.

Another challenge facing employers is many organizations are still new to the process, and others are redefining the way they have done it in the past by reorganizing their existing database marketing teams and moving them from information systems into corporate marketing, or vice versa.

In this increasingly volatile employment market, what can a company do to keep top talent?

For many companies, the standard hiring process falls short because it often begins before the company has identified the critical performance outcomes needed. Without specific outcomes, it is difficult to establish effective, performance-based selection

criteria, which, in turn, increases the odds of an unsuccessful hire because of mismatched expectations between the database marketer and the employer.

Accurately communicating critical performance outcomes to the database marketing candidate starts with the job description.

First, the job description should contain a paragraph summary of the position's main objectives. This is where you take your brush and paint a broad picture of how the duties and responsibilities of the database marketer will help guide the organization through new marketing opportunities. Second, expand on those objectives using numbers and percentages where possible. Third, devote the remainder of the job description to listing critical skills required for the job.

As an example, this was taken from a job description I received for a director of database marketing for a Fortune 500 company: "We are seeking a senior level Marketing Database Director to design, build, enhance and maintain the company's marketing database for customers and prospects."

The phrase "design, build, enhance and maintain the company's marketing database for customers and prospects" could mean one thing to the CEO and another to the vice president of marketing.

Does the company want to focus first on existing customers, then prospects? Or will each segment receive equal resources? What about the time frame? The CEO may be thinking that within 12 months he would like to see his new database marketing group start showing a return on investment. The vice president of marketing may argue that it might take 18 to 24 months. Key decision-makers must first reach agreement on critical performance outcomes that must be achieved, against what time line they need to be accomplished and against what specific performance standards.

The good news for employers is that database marketing is a quantifiable science. Database marketers and the team members they hire are accountable for their activities, and results can be measured.

Using the above example, the job description might include these specific performance outcomes: "Within 90 days, complete an analysis of our customer base, expanded market potential and internal staff capabilities. Within 12 months, develop and test market an effective loyalty program that within two years will increase reactivation rates by at least 15 percent per year." Any database marketing candidate looking at this job description will now have a clearer understanding of what specific outcomes the company expects to accomplish through this position, and in what time frame the employer wants them completed.

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It is also important during the interviewing process to be as specific as you can about how your database marketer will be rewarded upon accomplishing set objectives. Database marketers want to feel they are "high-profile." By their nature, many enjoy the role of trailblazer. After all, they are leading the effort to introduce what to many organizations is new way of marketing.

Talented database marketers need to have their accomplishments recognized, and they need to feel their talents are contributing to corporate success. That is impossible in a low-priority environment. Database marketers will perceive their trade to be treated with high priority at companies that reward performance. Awarding additional bonuses and offering stepped-up titles for meeting and exceeding set objectives are among the more commonly used incentives that seem to motivate database marketers.

As an employer, you must be able to answer these questions: What are the critical performance outcomes that must be achieved through the position? Against what timeline do they need to be achieved? And how will the success of the database marketer be measured? If you can't answer these questions, you're not ready to hire.