Tapping the Talent BY CINDY WAXER PLANE OF THE PROPERTY OF THE

It's no wonder more people are becoming project managers: The work is challenging yet stimulating, the field is growing and, while many companies are trimming payrolls, the median project manager salary in the United States is a robust

to know where to look for top project professionals—and what to do when they find them.

US\$105,000, according to PMI's 2011 Project Management Salary Survey.

But as more people flood the field, many organizations are finding it difficult to identify, recruit and nurture top talent. PMI's Pulse of the Profession™ In-Depth Report: Talent Management found that 83 percent of organizations reported difficulty in finding qualified project management candidates to fill open positions in the past year.

The challenge, then, is to tap into the talent pipeline early to get the best project professionals on the right track.

"We really want to make sure that we're getting the right talent," says Lynn Batara, director of Franklin Templeton Investments' enterprise project management office in San Mateo, California, USA. "But that can be tough. With so many folks being out of work, there's a lot of talent we have to sift through, so it takes us a lot longer now to find talent. In the end, companies need to find a way to make the hiring process happen more quickly."

The solution for project management veterans such as Ms. Batara is to make the talent search more strategic. Forget about one-stop shopping for agile experts and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator scorers at job fairs. These days, project leaders are finding the best talent using targeted sources, from business networks and university campuses to referral programs and social media channels. Many are experiencing winning results as they redefine the way companies recruit project management talent. Here are five promising pipelines to consider for future talent:



The Company Ranks

Who You're After: Up-and-coming talent to fill an entry-level project management position

"We always look internally first," Ms. Batara says. "For an entry-level position in project management, we start by looking at our testers or operations people as sources."

After all, mining one's internal talent ensures that you're filling the position with an individual who's already familiar with the company's corporate culture and project management methodologies. A Wharton Business School study found that external hires earn 18 percent more than talent promoted from within but have significantly lower performance ratings.

Talent-management software that tracks employees' strengths and weaknesses allows seniorlevel executives to flag and groom employees that demonstrate leadership qualities and real project management potential.

Get Them Up and Running: "Even if our internal employees don't have specific project management skills, we're likely to engage them in a curriculum that will train them, especially if the company wants to motivate its staff," says Eugénie Hercouët, PMP, consultant in program management at Safran Consulting in Paris, France. PMI's Pulse of the Profession In-Depth Report: Talent Management found that 83 percent of organizations that are successful at developing highperforming teams make training a priority.

The more formalized the training offered to internal employees, the better, according to Jozef Suchoza, a managing consultant at Capgemini in Bratislava, Slovakia. "You need to participate in internal training programs in order to absorb corporate methodologies and people-skill trainings."



Who You're After: Seasoned project managers who may not be in the job market

If an internal search fails to produce qualified candidates, organizational leaders can use industry events, such as PMI global congresses or chapter meetings, for help in discovering local talent who might not be circulating their résumés.

"I'm quite involved with the PMI chapter in Sydney and attend as many of their events as I can," says Maja Kowalski, PMP, a program director at consultancy Beyond Projex, Sydney, Australia. "Recommendations in the project management world have always worked for me. The best way I've ever found talent is through networking."

To fill highly specialized roles, thinking beyond general conferences can pay big dividends. Leaders on the hunt for a project manager with strong risk-management expertise might attend financeoriented events hosted by a local chamber of commerce, says Ms. Kowalski. In the search for a project manager with lean expertise, seminars presented by a manufacturing association, for example, can yield great leads.

Get Them Up and Running: For seasoned project managers, effective onboarding may be more about transitioning to a new office culture than formal training, says Ms. Kowalski. She recommends setting up casual meetings in less formal environments, such as a coffee shop, for project managers from a variety of disciplines to convene to talk shop and swap tips.

"I like to have people talk with the new hire even if they're working on different projects," she says. "I like them to share the knowledge."



Many universities with project management courses and professional accreditation programs are fertile grounds for talented project managers-in-the-making, says Ms. Hercouët.

"We usually hire recent university graduates for a first-level, operational project management office (PMO) position where they're consolidating data or updating different documents," she says. "When we look outside our company for freshly accredited students who have no experience but are ready to work, university campuses are a great way to build up talent."

Get Them Up and Running: "Hiring an individual fresh out of university can sometimes be the best choice, but ideally it's a supporting role, working with someone who will give them an overview and oversight," says Mr. Suchoza.

For Ms. Batara, guaranteeing a good transition happens before the new grad is officially hired. "We have college students intern over the summer," she says. "That's been a great way for us to get a sense of their talent before hiring them on."

PMI's Pulse of the Profession In-Depth Report: Talent Management found that workers less than 35 years old are more receptive to training; 51 percent of organizations reported that training methods are most successful in that demographic. That's good news for organizations looking to build young talent quickly. One potential area for improvement is in tailoring training for those younger workers. Only 13 percent of respondents said their training program is customized for specific ages or generational groups.

named technical skills as the most difficult area to fill positions.

31%

Reducing

Quality

Cancelling or delaying strategic

initiatives

Measuring the Talent Gap

A deep dive into talent data, from PMI's Pulse of the

Profession In-Depth Report: Talent Management.

Organizations report that in the past 12 months,

talent scarcity has negatively impacted their

growth and profitability by

Inhibiting

Innovation

Impeding growth

forecasts 66% of organizations

Organizations report that training is most needed in



technical skills 70%



interpersonal 70%



business *58*%

Organizations successful in developing high-performing teams are more likely than other organizations to...

Have formal training for project management

28%

Have formal training for program management

Have formal training for portfolio management

24% 5%

Train in soft skills

Have a mentoring program for new hires

75% 56%

70%

72%

86%

Use workshops for new hires

45% 28%

Use classroom courses for new hires

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Social Media

Who You're After: Tech-savvy project managers with strong web skills

Social media channels such as LinkedIn and Facebook aren't only having an impact on the way people communicate; they're also revolutionizing the tools recruiters use to find top talent. "We definitely use different mediums like LinkedIn to get the word out when we're hiring for certain project management positions," says Ms. Batara. Social media channels are an excellent way to source "cutting-edge types," she says, particularly project managers with strong skills in web development and more technical approaches such as agile.

"It's more efficient to find candidates using Viadeo than attending job fairs," says Ms. Hercouët, who points out that the Euro-centric professional networking site is more popular than LinkedIn in France. She uses Viadeo's keyword search engine to narrow candidates by Project Management Professional (PMP)[®] credential and specific tech skills.

Get Them Up and Running: Social media recruits tend to be on the younger side, says Mr. Suchoza, which makes them a great fit for a mentorship program. "An internal mentor can offer advice, coach, monitor and control training," he says.

Organizations successful in developing high-performing teams were more likely to have mentoring programs for new hires than their low-performing counterparts—75 percent versus 56 percent, according to PMI's Pulse of the Profession In-Depth Report: Talent Management. Mr. Suchoza also encourages business leaders to share details of "real projects" so new employees who may be strong on skills but weaker on experience can better grasp a company's "rich corporate information" and learn by example how leaders handle project management issues.



Who You're After: Referred candidates who might be flying under your radar

Despite today's high-tech recruiting tools, old-fashioned word of mouth still works. "If I have a project that needs leaders, I'll send out an email to all the good project management professionals I know," says Mr. Kowalski.

Ms. Batara also believes in leveraging connections for strong referrals. "We've got great project managers working for us now who have a lot of talented friends," she says. While many companies offer bonuses for referrals that lead to a new hire, Ms. Batara adds that there's a certain sense of responsibility that comes with recommending someone you know for a position. "Your name is on the line, so you're not going to introduce every Tom, Dick and Harry," she says. "There's accountability in making a referral."

Get Them Up and Running: Just because a new hire is familiar with an existing employee doesn't mean he or she is familiar with a company's internal workings and project management practices.

"Companies need to make sure a new hire understands the difference between the project management methodology they might be used to and your in-house methodology, in order to really integrate them," says Ms. Hercouët. That means referred hires should go through the same rigorous onboarding as any new hire. PM



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—Lynn Batara, Franklin Templeton Investments, San Mateo, California, USA



For more on the Pulse of the Profession In-Depth Report: Talent Management, see the PM Network® web exclusive, "Mind the Gap," at PMI.org > Knowledge Center > PM Network.