Recruitment Marketing Strategy:

Take a Proactive Approach to Sourcing Talent

Develop a proactive approach to source, segment and nurture talent

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Build a proactive sourcing strategy

Sourcing has become a top priority in talent acquisition, with 64% of employers recognizing its importance.[1] However, despite the recognition, 66% of companies are dissatisfied with their current recruitment marketing efforts.[2] Many teams are eager to source and hire top talent but struggle with where to begin.

Traditional methods of sourcing are reactive. Recruiting teams wait for a vacancy and then begin looking for a candidate to fill it.

But this strategy is becoming less popular for a reason. Instead, forward-thinking organizations take an "always-on" approach. That is, they continually source and nurture talent even when there is no open role.

Why would you want to take this approach?

1. **Low unemployment combined with high application rates** indicate that the majority of job seekers are currently employed but open to options. A proactive sourcing strategy opens a channel for those people to interact with your brand when they're ready instead of waiting until you have an open role.

2. **No one can predict the future.** Having a broad pool of talent is like insurance for your recruiting team. It gives you options to work with when you struggle to find talent for critical roles later in the year.

3. **The upfront investment is worth it**, as 55% of proactive recruiting and lead nurturing efforts have been shown to reduce time-to-hire.[3]

In essence, a proactive approach to sourcing has a better return on investment for your organization. By continually sourcing and engaging talent, you create a steady stream of interested job seekers who are ready to begin the hiring process when you are — improving both the time and cost to hire. **And it's something you can implement today.**

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In this guide, we'll cover four essential components of a proactive sourcing strategy:

1 **Attract leads**
Get them in the door

2 **Segment leads**
Prioritize the best fits

3 **Nurture leads**
Encourage them to apply

4 **Measure performance**
Evaluate and improve your strategy

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① **Attract leads:**
Create a candidate persona

Every effective strategy begins with a clear goal. But when it comes to sourcing, instead of asking, "What am I trying to accomplish?" you should ask, "Who am I trying to hire?"

Candidate personas help you define this answer. A persona is a fictional representation of an ideal candidate and includes the traits, skills and experience a person needs to excel in a specific role.

Here's a quick guide to creating a candidate persona:

1. **Pick the role**, such as Software Engineer or Marketing Director.

2. **Focus on skills and experience** rather than personal attributes. This helps reduce unconscious bias by focusing on the tangible traits that make a person good at their job.

3. **Include their pain points**, how they want to communicate with your company, job search behaviors and where they spend their time online.

4. **Share with hiring managers** to make sure you're on the same page about who your ideal candidate is.

5. **Incorporate some of these descriptors into your job postings** to help job seekers better identify with relevant roles.

Hint

You may already have ideal candidates in your ATS! With iCIMS intelligent talent matching, you can select an existing candidate as "ideal" based on must-have skills and experience. From there, AI is applied to seek out similar candidates.

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1 Attract leads:
Invest in the next-gen CRM

iCIMS Candidate Experience Management (CXM) is *the* next-gen CRM at the cutting edge of recruitment marketing innovation. It uses behavior-based campaigns and deep engagement scoring to support a low-effort, high-ROI strategy.

This is especially important for a proactive strategy that uses a broad mix of tactics in parallel to continually target and attract talent.

With iCIMS CXM, you can:

- Build a network based on future business needs and avoid starting from scratch with each job

- Source candidates from outside and inside iCIMS CXM to build quality pipelines and increase engagement

- Use data from your ATS to identify, prioritize and take action on candidates in iCIMS CXM

- Conduct recruiting events and automatically follow up with attendees to keep them interested

Explore key differences in candidate experience software in the 2024 Guide to Comparing Recruitment Marketing Software.

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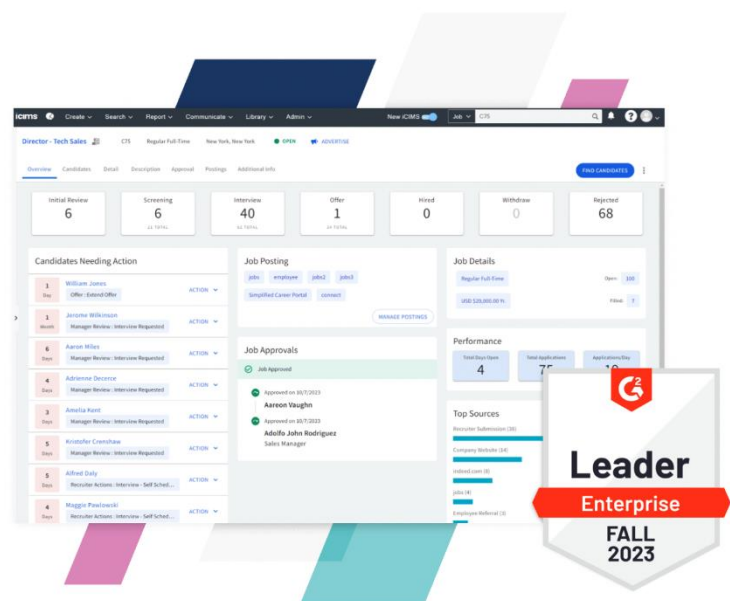
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1 Attract leads:
Job advertising

As the competition for quality workers increases, job seekers are less likely to find your open roles organically. You can cut through the noise by posting on niche job boards, but this typically requires lots of manual effort and time.

Instead, check out solutions like iCIMS Job Advertising which allows you to launch advertising campaigns on multiple job boards without leaving your ATS. Here's how it works:

- Choose which jobs are most important to promote (i.e., jobs that are a high priority for your organization to fill quickly or that typically have hard-to-find candidates).

- Define your target audience by selecting the location, salary, weekly working hours, education level, position level and industry.

- Receive tailored recommendations for job boards based on the criteria defined. You can also search for job boards specific to your state, type, etc.

- Choose your preferred channels based on campaign duration, reach and budget, and the jobs will be posted automatically from iCIMS to each job board.

- Analytics allow you to adjust your strategy as your business needs and priorities change – whether your hiring is accelerated, paused, or both.

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1 Attract leads:
Text to apply

Allow candidates to begin the hiring process directly from their smartphone. With text to apply, candidates send a word or code to a phone number and receive an automatic response with further information. The candidate may receive a complete application, a document with more information, or a link to a form or website.

Strategically advertise your mobile-apply process in the places where candidates interact with your organization, so you can capture their interest while your brand is top of mind.

The Cheesecake Factory®

With one text, a customer turns into a candidate

Each year, The Cheesecake Factory hires between 40,000 and 45,000 employees across its brands. However, the number and quality of applicants dropped significantly during and after the pandemic.

Along with changes to the length of their application, the company streamlined the candidate experience by making it easy to apply from a mobile device. Candidates can text "cake jobs" to 97211 to apply from their phones.

Today, between

60–75%

of the company's applications come from mobile devices.

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(1) # Attract leads:
Career sites

Job seekers use your career site as the ultimate source of truth to learn about your employer brand, open roles, benefits and more. So, it's not surprising they're also spending more time on career sites before hitting apply.

Session duration
increased over 10%
year-over-year

Candidates who complete
an application view
9 pages of a career site
on average

iCIMS, December Workforce Report, 2023

To continuously attract talent through your career site:

- Give candidates an understanding of your organization with authentic branding elements like images, content carousels and employee-generated videos.

- Allow talent to self-serve through a digital assistant that answers FAQs, screens resumes and automates interview scheduling.

- Use analytics to find areas for adjustments — then test new messaging to see if it yields better results.

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1 Attract leads:
Talent communities

A talent community signup form is a great, low-pressure way for talent to opt in to your brand without applying for a specific role. Here are some tips to increase conversions.

1. Add a sign-up form to every page
iCIMS added a talent community signup form to <u>every page of its career site</u> and saw a 10x increase in pipeline growth. You can also add a link to your social platforms and email signatures.

10x

2. Shorten the form
Keep the form concise, with no more than five fields, and remove any questions that aren't mandatory. You can always ask for additional details later through an automated follow-up campaign.

3. Test your calls-to-action (CTAs)
Simple changes to the content and design of your CTAs can yield significant results. For example, you can change the word "Submit" to something more active, like "Send," "Click to send," or "Go. " And try to use first-person pronouns instead of second (e.g., Say "Send my information" instead of "Send your information"). Test each change for at least a week to evaluate its impact on conversions.

Submit

Click to send

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1 ## Attract leads:
Virtual events

Events play a vital role in recruitment marketing, and your communication strategy should include both pre-event and post-event messages.

Segment event attendees
For event marketing, segmentation is crucial. Tailor your event promotion and post-event communications based on factors like location, job type or experience level. This allows you to send more personalized content to prospects and attendees.

Diversify your communication channels
Combine email and text messages to confirm attendance and provide event updates. Use a mix of media to reach your audience effectively, like a combination of text-based messages and videos.

Send pre- and post-event communications
Start your pre-event communications a month in advance. Build excitement and anticipation around the event, similar to how conferences prepare attendees. Let job seekers know what they can expect, who they'll meet, and what actions they need to take. Send reminders one month, two weeks, one week, and one day before the event. Each communication should reinforce the event's value and provide clear directions.

After the event, begin with a thank-you note to show appreciation for their participation. Follow up with a call to action related to the event, such as applying for relevant job openings. Lastly, encourage networking by connecting attendees to the people they met during the event.

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2 **Segment leads:**
Prioritize your pipelines

Sourcing skilled talent is only half the battle. Now, you need to organize, segment and nurture job seekers until they're ready to convert.

But not every job seeker is worth the effort. While you want to maintain a base level of engagement with every lead, you should invest the greatest amount of time and resources in prospects who are highly qualified and interested in your organization.

To do so, use this chart to segment and prioritize talent:

1

☺ Lead likes your brand

☺ You like the lead

2

😐 Lead is indifferent

☺ You like the lead

3

☺ Lead likes your brand

😐 You are indifferent

4

😐 Lead is indifferent

😐 You are indifferent

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2 **Segment leads:**
Breaking down the lead chart

Quadrant 1

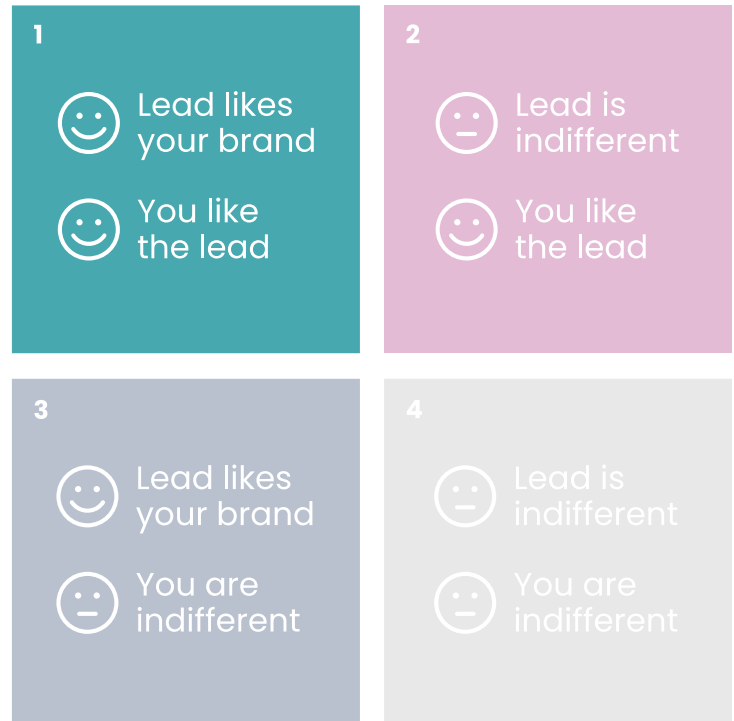People in the upper left quadrant are often called "hot leads."

Hot leads are those who are genuinely interested in your company, have sought-after skills and are likely to convert quickly.

They've likely connected with you, opted into your talent pipelines or attended your events.

They like you, and you like them.

To keep them warm and drive them toward conversion, you can:

• Develop campaigns to learn more about their preferences and qualifications

• Send a list of open roles that match their skills and experience

• Invite them to events for further engagement

1
☺ Lead likes your brand
☺ You like the lead

2
😐 Lead is indifferent
☺ You like the lead

3
☺ Lead likes your brand
😐 You are indifferent

4
😐 Lead is indifferent
😐 You are indifferent

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2 **Segment leads:**
Breaking down the lead chart

Quadrant 2

People in this quadrant need to warm up to your brand. Keep them engaged by showing what your brand values, highlighting what's in it for them, and addressing their key concerns.

Uncertainty doesn't provide a welcoming environment for job seekers. They want to know what to expect from your organization and the roles in which they're interested.

1 ☺ Lead likes your brand ☺ You like the lead	2 ☺ Lead is indifferent ☺ You like the lead
3 ☺ Lead likes your brand ☺ You are indifferent	4 ☺ Lead is indifferent ☺ You are indifferent

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2 **Segment leads:**
Breaking down the lead chart

Quadrant 3

Engage with candidates who like your brand but may not be a good fit for current open roles. Use profile-building campaigns, where you ask people to update their information so you can gather more insights about their skills and experience and maintain engagement.

Quadrant 4

Keep minimal contact with candidates who may never be a fit. While you may send occasional updates, don't invest extensive resources in this group.

Even for those who may not seem like an immediate fit for your organization, it's essential to maintain some level of engagement. Consider sending candidate tips once a quarter to stay on their radar.

1	2
☺ Lead likes your brand ☺ You like the lead	😐 Lead is indifferent ☺ You like the lead

3	4
☺ Lead likes your brand 😐 You are indifferent	😐 Lead is indifferent 😐 You are indifferent

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③ Nurture leads:
Personalize and automate

iCIMS Candidate Experience Management (CXM) merges our powerful marketing automation technology with our existing CRM to help you create the truly personalized experiences that talent craves while keeping recruiter efficiency a top priority.

Self-driving, behavior-based email campaigns promote engagement with limited oversight from recruiters and sourcers while automated hot leads lists help recruiters prioritize the most interested and qualified candidates.

This combination creates a conversion powerhouse so you get high quality applicants for every role.

To make your campaigns more effective, personalize them. Building trust through personalization increases the likelihood of message opens and responses. Some quick tips include:

• Using the recipient's name in the subject line

• Sending emails from an actual person rather than a "do not reply" address

• Embedding video testimonials in an email to give a behind-the-scenes look at an employee's day-to-day

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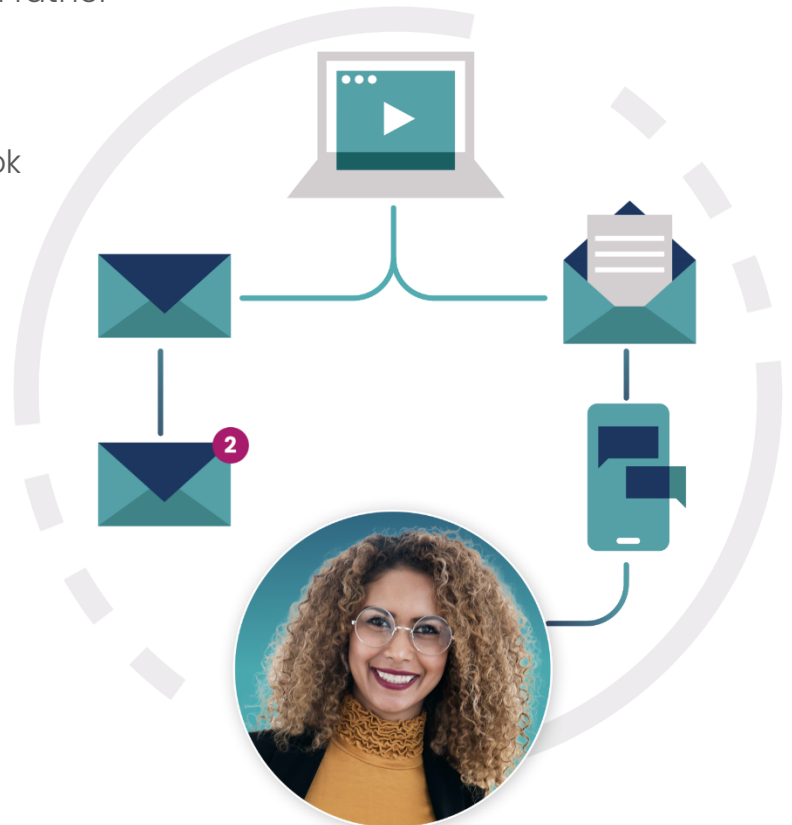
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## (4) **Measure your performance**

A proactive sourcing strategy is cyclical, not linear. It's a continual journey that is never truly finished, so measuring performance should be done on a regular and recurring basis.

Two critical areas to focus on are talent pipelines and communications.

- Monitor the size of your talent pipelines and strive for consistent growth month-over-month and year-over-year.

- Evaluate how effectively you're converting individuals to your talent pipelines.

- Keep track of the number of people you've reached through your communications.

- Analyze open and click-through rates to gauge the effectiveness of your messaging.

Understanding how your investments in sourcing impact the bottom line can help you make the case for a greater budget and more resources.

Use these **10 recruiting metrics** to analyze your sourcing strategy.

Are you engaging candidates?
Email Usage Metrics - campaign and direct emails

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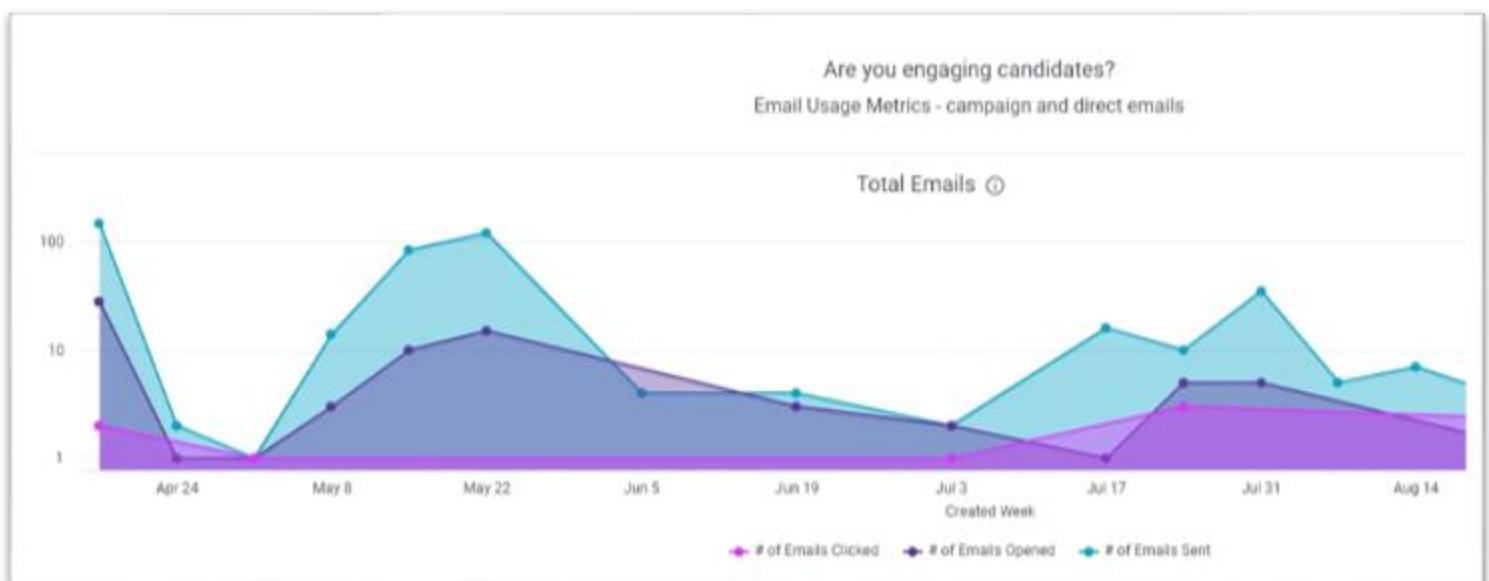
Next steps

Your sourcing journey is an ongoing process of refinement and optimization. With the right mix of tools and strategies, you can attract, segment and nurture leads effectively, reduce recruiting costs and meet your recruitment marketing goals. As you move forward, remember to stay agile, embrace change and continually seek ways to improve your sourcing strategy.

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iCIMS Talent Cloud is the AI-powered best-in-class hiring platform designed to supercharge efficiency, cut recruiting costs and exceed candidate expectations.

Learn more at icims.com.