

Résumé Overload

New software helps small companies keep up with the swarm of applicants

By Raymund Flandez
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With corporate layoffs spreading, smaller firms are seeing a flood of available talent. But floods come with their own problems, particularly for companies with limited resources.

Fortunately, there's a host of cost-effective, or even free, tech tools that help sort through and choose the best job candidates.

Some can broaden a search using multiple online job sites, others winnow the field with tests or prerecorded interviews. Some also perform fast background checks and help companies manage the whole hiring process through one portal.

"This economy has created a window of opportunity for small businesses," says Peter Weddle, a human-resources consultant in Stamford, Conn. These tools offer "a way to manage the tidal wave," he says.

What follows are just some of the options available:

Free Postings

Unlike many job sites that charge for each posting or require big upfront fees, RealMatch.com lets employers and job seekers post free, and charges recruiters only when they find a candidate they want to contact. Like online dating sites, RealMatch, from RealMatch Inc. of Potomac, Md., lets job seekers build profiles and choose job titles and relevant skills from a list created by RealMatch. The system then looks for matches with job listings similarly crafted by employers.

Eli Golshan, manager at Equity Trading Capital LLC in New York, says he recently posted a job on RealMatch.com for a junior equity trader and received 163 matches and 14 applicants. "The quick thing [with RealMatch] is that you can get the candidates that match the profile and requirements of that job," he says, as opposed to the hope-for-the-best methods of many job boards.

Mr. Golshan also is paying less than some of the big job sites charge: \$195 for 30 days with RealMatch.com, compared with \$395 for CareerBuilder.com and \$295 for Monster.com.

One potential drawback: Employers offering new or quirky jobs may require listings that can't be created from the skill sets in RealMatch's database.

For employers with high turnover and hourly workers, such as cashiers, SnagAJob.com, of Richmond, Va., narrows the search with questions such as whether an applicant can stand for long periods. Many of the listings are tailored to the restaurant, retail, hospitality, health-care and trucking industries. Costs start at

\$169 per month, but volume discounts are offered. The company says it has seen about a 55% rise in small-business users in the past year.

Next Step: Hiring

While face-to-face interviews are best, there are products that help eliminate a lot of unnecessary meetings. Consider VoiceScreener (www.voicescreener.com), from HarQen LLC of Milwaukee, which lets employers record interview questions over the phone, then send an interview invitation to an applicant by email, or post an "Interview Now" button in a listing on an online job site. Applicants follow an emailed link to a customized Web page where they type their phone number. VoiceScreener calls the number, plays the employers' questions to the applicant, and records the answers.

The answers get uploaded to a secure Web site where employers can review them at their convenience and share and discuss them with colleagues.

NeuWave Medical Inc., a Madison, Wis., medical-product start-up, plans to fill 10 positions this year and has been swamped with applications. Using VoiceScreener, says Laura King, NeuWave president and chief executive, it took only about three hours to do what normally would take two days.

The entry-level fee for a VoiceScreener subscription is \$99 per month, which includes the ability to store up to 180 interviews on the site for a year.

Companies using this approach to interviewing should be careful about the image it conveys. Answering automated questions may leave applicants feeling cold. "It's a different experience," says Madeline Laurano, a Boston-based principal analyst at Bersin & Associates, a research firm for talent management and enterprise learning. "I know I hated calling numbers with a recording on the other end," says Ms. Laurano.

Such an approach also may not be useful for highly specialized or technical jobs, such as a software-engineer position. The line of questioning may not be detailed enough, and there are no follow-up questions.

Ms. King says she will interview in person for positions with a highly technical role or that require special expertise. But, she says of VoiceScreener, "If it's an administrative assistant you're looking for, you're going to use it hands down."

Video-based interviewing software from InterviewStream LLC lets employers see and hear candidates as they answer prerecorded questions via a Webcam. Employers create an interview by selecting five or six of 2,500 prerecorded questions created for numerous industries. They then send job seekers a link, which when clicked puts the Web-based software on their desktop. Candidates start their Webcam, go through some practice questions, and start the video interview. The Bethlehem, Pa., company says small-business users pay between \$25 and \$60 per interview, with discounts depending on the volume.

Ms. Laurano, the analyst, says there's still a big learning curve with video-based interviews and even video résumés. She notes that some people aren't comfortable being in front of the camera and may have that deer-in-the-headlights look.

Background Checks

Verifying skills and backgrounds is made easier by numerous new tools. PreVisor Inc., Roswell, Ga., offers about 1,000 online tests to assess job candidates' abilities in areas including typing speed, audio transcription, legal terminology, even selling over the phone. A call-center simulation sees how well candidates enter data and respond to mock calls. Costs range from \$15 to \$50 per test.

Some warn that such tests shouldn't be the only criterion. Technical ability isn't everything, says Laurie McCabe, a partner at Hurwitz & Associates, a Boston research and market-analysis company.

Checking backgrounds, often a laborious process, is streamlined by HireRight Inc., Irvine, Calif. Rob Pickell, vice president of marketing and product management, says his company can provide a complete report in less than three days. His company's background checks range from \$29 to \$59 per person, depending on the type of records being sought, from addresses to court and criminal records.

Erich Flynn is chief executive of Treehouse Interactive Inc., a Draper, Utah, company that provides Web applications and outsourcing for sales and marketing and so is privy to sensitive company data. About 18

months ago he noticed his bigger clients started requiring background checks for current and new staff. Before using HireRight, he says he spent \$100 per check and had to provide paperwork on each employee. Now he says he supplies what HireRight needs online, and can complete his end of the task for each employee sometimes within minutes.

HireRight says it has verification services in more than 200 countries. But there are some limitations on how deeply it can dig, says Jim Holincheck, managing vice president and industry analyst at Gartner Inc., a technology research and advisory firm. For example, it's difficult to do checks in some countries where criminal records are spotty. HireRight is at a disadvantage there, he says, because it is smaller than some competitors. But, "They've been working on expanding that," he says.

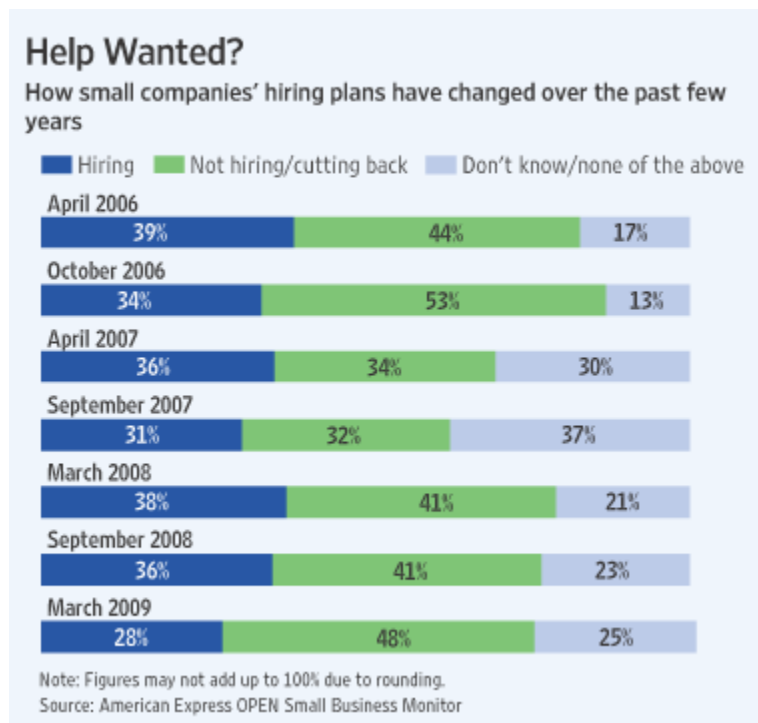
Mr. Pickell says HireRight conducts background checks outside the U.S. the same way bigger companies do, by using a collection of partners and suppliers. They may have to visit a local police headquarters to get the results. Ms. Laurano suggests free search engines and networking sites for checking backgrounds, too.

All Together

A few companies provide all of a small business's human-resource needs, from recruiting and hiring to background checks.

San Francisco-based SmartRecruiters.com, a unit of MrTed Ltd., is a free, one-stop portal to assist with recruiting and hiring needs. It lets companies access, in one spot, other recruiting applications they subscribe to. It's also integrated with professional networking site LinkedIn.com and Skype, eBay Inc.'s free Internet phone service.

While free, the functionality and the user interface are basic, says Ms. Laurano. Plus, there's no customer-support line, which many of the big applicant-tracking systems offer. The company says it has a limited customer-support service for now, but its goal is to let users build a community-like support line.



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