

Out with the old, in with the new

Recruitment agencies need to embrace new technology to stay ahead of the pack, says Phred Steer, Director of Redrock Consulting.

So, times have changed. With the country struggling to come to terms with the prospect of a long-lasting economic downturn the job market looks very different to how it did in the heady days of the 1990's and 2000's when there was an abundance of jobs and the recruitment industry could call all the shots.

As the numbers of job vacancies drop, the key concerns for organisations on both sides of the fence is now dominated by cost. As a recruitment consultancy, we are looking at any opportunity that will save us time – it is money after all. Our focus is still to provide the right candidate for the client. The only change is that we are looking to do that in the most efficient way possible.

For a long time managed service providers claimed they could make the recruitment process more organised. Many large organisations adopted RPO to speed up their processes, make it more professional and ultimately save a serious amount of money into the bargain.

However, consultants have become somewhat sceptical of managed service providers. For example, although many RPO suppliers claim to recruit from many different consultancies, not just their parent organisations (nearly all RPO providers are offshoots of large recruitment firms), this seldom happens in practice. Most of them, in fact, effectively operate single vendor solutions, putting the vast majority of the business through their own companies.

But technology and times are changing, there are new methods which agencies and consultancies should be looking at. We are currently working with a vendor neutral supplier which is proving very beneficial for our business.

This specific system provided by Comensura is a totally automated managed service which sits between the agency and the market. Whereas previous managed services have actually turned out to be competitors, this is a genuinely neutral vendor, providing a competitive environment in which agencies can compete on a level playing field.

This form of recruitment process management cuts out the master vendor. We still work directly with the client on certain appointments but we are also in a network of approved and audited suppliers managed through an automated software platform. Because it offers access to thousands of recruitment consultancies across the country, users can select from both specialist and non-specialist suppliers whenever they need to.

But what really distinguishes this model is that it is a dynamic and truly interactive operation. The system is able to measure agencies' performance against a balanced scorecard, a series of pre-established benchmarks that take into account both quality and cost of staff, and tier them accordingly. If the top tier agencies do not have someone on their books with the requisite skill-set and attributes, or if their costs are too high, the system moves on to agencies on the next rung down and so on.

However, if an agency fails to deliver, or if the worker they send doesn't meet expectations, then it swiftly loses its tier one supplier status and with it first shout at the most lucrative contracts. As an agency we are immediately motivated to provide quality, cost-effective staffing options.

Because this type of system is transparent and neutral, there is no conflict of interest. The cost remains very clear and the relationship between client and agency can thrive.