



A Paradigm Shift: VISION for Making the Transition from Recruiter to Virtual Organization Recruiter and Virtual Organization Consultant

Every now and then something comes along that revolutionizes an entire industry or brings about a new age. Without having to go all the way back to ancient history, we can refer to some of the most recent events that have taken place during our lifetime and which have shaped the world in a way that none of us babyboomers could have ever imagined.

The advent of the PC in 1974 - which became widely available by IBM in 1981 - was one of them and there is no need to expand on that. It took a number of years for most companies to catch on and realize that this was not simply a toy and that it would soon replace these huge mainframes and expensive workstations they were hooked into. VISION played a key role in some of these companies who became early adopters and led the way.

Moreover, a number of smaller companies who could not afford these huge mainframes and expensive workstations also saw opportunities hitherto unavailable to them and led the way to realize huge efficiencies in productivity and economic returns. Besides the fact that they had nothing to lose, VISION also played a key role in their decision.

Microsoft-Bill Gates's idea to license the operating system - in this case, purely a concept but, nonetheless, "revolutionary" - did more than anything else to bring the PC to the masses at a price they could afford. Besides the fact that necessity played a key role in Bill Gates's thinking - breaking away from a behemoth like IBM and the huge cost of manufacturing PCs, etc., being key factors - VISION was needed to make that decision.

Bill could have never anticipated in a million years that this concept would serve as the foundation for what was about to happen in later years starting from 1990 onward, the birth and rapid expansion of the World Wide Web. I might as well acknowledge Tim Berners-Lee and Marc Andreessen for their VISION of the Web as we know it today.

Which brings us to Today and the Recruitment Industry in particular. These technological advances have completely changed the world and transformed the way we do business on a huge scale. Companies are struggling to attract and recruit the sort of premium talent that they need in order to adapt to these technological changes and the resulting transformation which is rapidly taking place in this new global and interconnected landscape.

The Virtualization of business is taking place at a dizzying rate and, from a technology standpoint, the possibilities are endless in terms of communication, cooperation, and connectivity. Microsoft and others are gung ho on Virtualization of the workspace and virtual collaboration tools. Social networks are all the rage and companies such as ERE.net, LinkedIn, MySpace, Frappr, etc. are sprouting up on almost a daily basis; and

even employers are beginning to form social networks that are directly tied in to their website for talent recruitment and marketing purposes.

These technological changes are spawning a whole new set of challenges for executive management, and especially for human resource executives, worldwide. Primary among these challenges are these ever perplexing questions and dilemmas that they are faced with:

How do you harness in a strategic and orderly fashion this ocean of opportunities presented by the virtualization of the workspace? How do you quantify and analyze the results?

What type(s) of services do we need and who are the providers?

The answer to that becomes very difficult due to the thorny issue of language and terminology. We all need language to communicate and there is no clearly defined virtualization lexicon that facilitates a seamless communication process between client and service provider.

Questions pertaining to, "What is a Virtual Organization, What is Virtual Organization Management, What is a Virtual Team, Is this Virtual Team Consulting services, Are We considered a Virtual Organization, What is Virtualization, What is Virtualization of the Workforce, What is Virtualization of the Workspace, Is this Virtual Team Recruiting, Is this Virtual Recruiting, Will our Recruiters become Virtual Recruiters working from Home-God forbids, How is Virtual Organization Recruitment different than Virtual Recruiting, We already have or use Organizational Consultants and Human Resources Consultants and how do these roles differ from a Virtual Organization Consultant, etc.," cause a great deal of anxiety to the individuals asking these questions since, for the most part, they have little to absolutely no knowledge of who and where to turn to for answers.

Are there any existing best-next practices, policies and procedures for managing a Virtual Organization?

Are there any existing best-next practices, policies and procedures for recruiting the sort of premium talent that will be able to adapt and thrive in a virtual environment or virtual organization?

What type of assessment tools should be adopted in order to identify the best candidates who will be able to thrive in the new Virtual Organization?

How do we prepare and train our "existing" workforce so it can cope with the increasingly rapid and dizzying rate of virtualization of the organization?

The answer to all these questions lies in Virtual Organization Recruitment and Virtual Organization Management Consulting instead of the old Virtual Team Consulting; that's assuming that certain companies made the big leap to hire Virtual Team Consultants in the first place.

Virtual Team Consulting is engagement specific and deals with a microview of a virtual situation.

Whereas, Virtual Organization Management takes a macroview of an entire organization and, as is standard practice with its typical brick and mortar counterparts, seeks to institute best-next practices, policies and procedures for operating in a [virtual] environment. In this instance, the virtual organization acts in parallel with the brick and mortar organization instead of acting as its extension.

These best-next practices, policies and procedures can be gradually implemented throughout an entire organization on a *piece by piece* basis [e.g. group, department, location, function, etc.] until one is able to achieve a near or completely virtual duplicate of the entire organization. When fully realized at whatever stage (*piece*) of implementation, the benefits are immense and translate into a direct and positive impact on the bottom line.

Virtual Organization Management is often confused with one of its subsets, Virtual Team Consulting. Virtual Organization Management is light years ahead of virtual team consulting.

Once implemented, Virtual Organization Management allows an organization to make a seamless transition from today's Virtual Chaos to the new Virtual Organization which is rapidly taking shape before our very own eyes. It provides the roadmap that an organization needs to follow during this rapid period of Virtualization of the Workspace.

Whereas, Virtual Organization Recruitment allows an organization to identify and recruit the best talent-21st century employees-who are able to adapt and thrive in a virtual environment.

Which brings us back to these HR-related questions previously stated:

What type of virtual organization recruitment guidelines and assessment tools should be adopted in order to identify the best candidates who will be able to thrive in the new Virtual Organization? Are there any existing standards available?

Where is Virtual Organization Recruitment training provided and by whom?

How prepared are today's recruiters - Corporate and Agency Recruiters - in dealing with these new challenges?

The answer is not that obvious. To this date, most recruiters of all stripes and persuasions have been doing a courageous and outstanding job at filling positions for their corporate clients and stakeholders. A great number of them are extremely internet-saavy and very adept at using the latest internet technology and recruitment tools. In fact, many Agency Recruitment firms consider themselves virtual organizations because they have made primary use of the Internet for all communication and activities. Some recruitment firms and RPOs - such as Library Associates based in Beverly Hills, CA - even offer Virtual Team Consulting services to client firms.

However, this is NOT about who can best use internet tools and technologies to recruit more efficiently. Nor is it about Virtual Team Consulting or recruiting candidates who can best use internet tools and technologies. It's really about recruiters recruiting candidates who can adapt and thrive in the new Virtual Organization.

In light of the new challenges that the virtualization of the workspace itself presents, most recruiters are ill-equipped to adequately address the Virtual Organization Recruitment needs of their clients; and their role and responsibilities need to undergo a radical transformation. After all, you cannot give what you don't have.

A paradigm shift must take place: from the role of Corporate or Agency Recruiter to an elevated and very prestigious role of Virtual Organization Recruiter or Virtual Organization Consultant. A role which reflects the demands and greater level of sophistication needed for this new recruiting position. A role that is more consultative in nature and which helps their client develop and put in place these specific guidelines and assessment tools needed to identify the best candidates who will be able to thrive in the new Virtual Organization.

Therefore, every single organization - which intends to aggressively compete in this global market for premium talent, this 21st century employee, in order to develop and or maintain an edge over its nearest competitors - must immediately begin the process of providing Virtual Organization Recruitment Training to its entire recruiting force. This training should be outsourced to a VORT (Virtual Organization Recruitment Trainer) with deep experience in recruiting premium talent for virtual organizations.

And what about the Corporate Workforce itself? Who will train the hundreds of millions of new and existing workers at these companies that are undergoing this rapid virtualization? Should this training be outsourced to a VOMT (Virtual Organization Management Trainer) or be conducted in-house?

At first glance, the most logical answer is for HR to immediately set up a separate Virtual Organization Recruitment and Management Training department entrusted with such task. However, upon closer reflection, the question is, "Who will train the Trainers?"

To that end, NetWEB Elite Solutions, Inc. - a pioneer and inventor of patent-pending best practices, policies and procedures for managing a virtual organization; with deep experience in that field since 1997 - through its newly formed division, Virtual Organization Management Institute, is the sole and only credible organization in the world leading the virtual organization recruitment and management charge in that effort. A shameless plug for an organization I chair.

With respect to the details of such implementation, the first and most essential task for Human Resources is to rapidly begin the gradual process of providing Virtual Organization Recruitment - NOT Virtual Team Recruitment - training to a new cadre of recruiters as well as to some of its existing recruiters; some of whom will eventually form the core of a new Virtual Organization Recruitment & Management Training department established with the assistance of the virtual organization recruitment and management consulting firm - the VORT/VOMT - upon completion of their training.

Once this in-house Virtual Organization Recruitment & Management Training Department is fully established, as a result of close collaboration between the head of HR and other members of executive management, it should immediately begin to provide Virtual Organization Management training to certain designated senior corporate executives and middle level managers; individuals who have been carefully scrutinized and chosen to comprise a very elite team. These individuals MUST represent the best of the brightest within that organization.

Please note this training should NOT be forced upon these individuals; otherwise, you will have, at best, a mediocre team to begin with; one which will surely result in a disastrous failure. Instead, inclusion on that elite team should be seen and perceived as an acknowledgement of superior performance and exemplary conduct that is above and beyond the call of duty. The success of the first team will lay the groundwork and foundation for the successful implementation of this training throughout the entire organization. Failure is not an option for the simple reason that executive management will not allow room for a second chance.

For a number of critical and very important reasons, the details of which are outside the scope of this treatise, the initial training must be conducted via an audio teleconference-webinar session in order to introduce recruiters to the virtualization lexicon - the language that will be used to communicate with them during the later stages of the virtual organization recruitment training process.

Once this "orientation" training has been completed, it becomes critical that the second stage of training be conducted ONSITE at the client's location. Continuous training is then recommended, although not required, over a minimum 3-6 month period for Virtual Organization Recruitment and, ideally, over a 6-12 month period for Virtual Organization Management.

This new vanguard of Virtual Organization Recruiters, Virtual Organization Consultants, Virtual Organization Management Consultants, and corporate managers trained on that subject is critically needed NOW at companies at all levels and, from all indications based on previous and current experience, there is a groundswell of support in both directions - from top to bottom and from the bottom up - for this change to take place in certain sectors of the corporate world.

To this date, the corporate world - and, by extension, Corporate Human Resources - is split into 3 camps: Camp Vision, Camp Aware, and Camp Oblivion.

Camp Vision

Camp Vision contains some of the more visionary companies who have been struggling with these vexing issues, then considered exotic, as far back as 1994; companies who have specifically allocated the resources needed for virtual team consulting and collaboration tools in their fiscal budget. Some of these companies, as they were then named, included BP Amoco, Canadian Tire, Ford, etc. They have long relied on Virtual Team consultants to provide them with guidance and assistance. Others have been "winging it," so to speak, and making the rules as they go along.

These companies, now at a critical juncture, are ideally suited and very well poised to make the transition to the next phase of the evolutionary process: from Virtual Team Consulting to Virtual Organization Recruitment and Virtual Organization Management.

They were wise to make the initial steps as Early Adopters and they have tremendously benefited from their decision which have resulted in savings of billions of dollars over the past 13 years. Most likely, they will continue down the path of innovation and progress and will continue to set the trail for others to follow with the adoption of Virtual Organization Recruitment and Management.

Although no definitive data exists on the number of companies that make up Camp Vision, one can safely say, based on anecdotal evidence, that they represent no more than 2% of the global corporate world.

As for the rest of the corporate world, it is split into the other 2 camps: Camp Aware and Camp Oblivion.

Camp Aware

Corporate Human Resources and Agency Recruiters at Camp Aware are aware of the fact that this is somewhat a gray, confusing, and thorny issue that needs to be tackled with as soon as possible, however, they do not see any urgent need to do so at this time and nor have they made any attempt to include it as a separate line item in their fiscal budget. They have other pressing needs and priorities and, unless mandated by the CEO or Board of Directors, this is not something that needs fixing at this time. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Rather, they view it as something that needs to be patched. I dare say, they look at it from the standpoint: "If it is cracked, patch it." In which case, some of them are doing an excellent patch job.

Some do offer variations of flex-work schedule which includes telecommuting; a number of them employ statutory employees and independent contractors who telecommute in some capacity; others, such as Wells Fargo Bank, have remote global teams and engage in quite a bit of collaboration.

A number of them includes companies, e.g. Bank of America, who hire Virtual Recruiters to work directly from their home office for as much as \$80-90 per hour after undergoing a 2-week training at their corporate location; after which time they are only required to report back to corporate on a quarterly basis.

Some of these companies have experimented and failed miserably with hiring Virtual Recruiters due to a lack of training on standards, best practices, policies and procedures and, as the old maxim goes, "once bitten, twice shy." But nonetheless they should be credited for having taken the initiative in the first place.

There is another but very important reason for the lack of enthusiasm in Camp Aware: HR is not really sure if this is an IT issue or a corporate management or organizational consulting issue that falls within the HR domain. After all, they currently have organizational consulting experts either currently on board in charge of HR or in a consulting capacity and it just doesn't seem to be an issue. In other words, there are no alarm bells ringing.

Most are not even aware of the existence of the virtual organization recruitment and management discipline. Therefore, they have been in some sort of a void - a sort of twilight zone - with respect to how to properly address the issues presented by the virtualization of the workspace. They recognize the issues since they are dealing with that on a daily basis, however, they have no clue that a solution exists. See if that sounds familiar: "Virtual Organization Recruitment? What's that?" "Virtual Organization Management? What the heck is that? But I sure wouldn't mind learning more about it!"

And the third and most critical reason is the reluctance to go out on a limb and step out in front of an issue where there is no consensus by executive management that a serious issue even exists. No one wants to be a maverick or see their ideas shot down before

they even have a chance to develop any wings. In fact, very few of us want to be the first one on the dance floor.

That being said, we believe that Camp Aware companies hold a great deal of promise with respect to their own corporate bottom line, the world's economy and, in particular, the virtual organization recruitment industry; because once their collective power and wisdom is finally unleashed, the economic-efficiency thunder will loudly reverberate around the world. Based on intelligence gathered thus far, this should begin to take place as of the date of this writing, however, their effect will not be felt until the next year or two.

To quote Confucius, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." They have already taken the baby steps; now it's time to walk and run; and some of them are beginning to make that walk.

And for those Recruiters and Corporate Trainers who heed the call for transition to Virtual Organization Recruiters, Virtual Organization Consultants, and Virtual Organization Management Trainers, they will be poised to reap the huge rewards and prestige these positions will bring due to the impact they will have on their employer's bottom line; and this will indeed be welcome news for all.

Camp Oblivion

As for Corporate Human Resources and Agency Recruiters at Camp Oblivion, they are completely oblivious to the relationship between the virtualization of the workspace-workforce and the need to recruit AND train a different type of workforce. They continue to do business as usual and are only interested in preserving the status quo. The word "virtual" is synonymous with "The Jetsons"; some exotic and futuristic concept not grounded in today's reality. As far as they are concerned, it's much ado about nothing; it's still a brick-and-mortar world and it's going to remain that way for quite some time into the foreseeable future; and all is well on the western front.

This catastrophic failure of imagination not only rests on the shoulders of Human Resources but also on those of the entire executive management team; and by the time executive management realizes what's going on, they will be so far behind their competitors that they will be faced with an almost insurmountable challenge to catch up.

They are the Late Adopters of the corporate world, extremely conservative and resistant to change. They are bound to get on board sooner or later, but only after everybody else has gotten on board and it becomes the "in thing" to do.

This group will represent the Third Wave of the transformation of the recruitment industry and, by extension, the corporate world; and if history is any guide, this should take place within the next 7-10 years. With the significant influx of new entrants into the Virtual Organization Recruitment field at that particular stage, the rewards and benefits will begin to stabilize and level off and the prestige associated with the titles of Virtual Organization Recruiter, Virtual Organization Consultant, and Virtual Organization Management Trainer will begin to lose their novelty and luster.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Corporate and Agency recruiters and Corporate Trainers with the VISION to heed the call and make the transition to Virtual Organization Recruiter, Virtual Organization Consultant, and Virtual Organization Management Trainer will have an opportunity to redefine the global corporate landscape on a scale such as it has never been seen before, revolutionize the entire recruiting industry, and bring about a new golden age. History is in the making, so go for the ride.

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