

WHEN RECRUITER PRIORITIES COMPETE:
FILL SPEED, GROWING REQ LOADS
& DIVERSITY



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HOW MANY REQS IS TOO MANY? THE STATE OF REQ LOADS TODAY



“Each organization can figure out its ideal recruiter requisition load from its own data.”

TIM SACKETT
SHRM-SCP
president of HRU
Technical Resources

It's a question as old as the recruiting profession itself: How many reqs should one recruiter handle at a time? Even in our data-driven age of hard metrics and objective assessments, the answer is: *It depends.*

In 2016, Jobvite's "Recruiter Nation" survey clocked an increase in overall req loads: 33 percent of recruiters anticipated filling more than 100 roles in 2017, whereas only 27 percent of recruiters said the same thing in 2015.¹ While subsequent "Recruiter Nation" surveys don't report explicitly on recruiters' req loads, they do suggest req loads may still be rising.



According to the 2018 survey, there are now more open roles than there are candidates to fill them, and 74 percent of recruiters said they expected recruiting to become more competitive in 2019.²

With the unemployment rate at 3.6% (a level not seen in nearly 50 years) and the volume of open jobs at a 17-year high, competition is rising; requiring recruiters to do more with less — and that often means individual recruiters must take on more reqs just to keep making placements.



It may feel frustratingly vague but recruiting experts from Jim Stroud³ to Dr. John Sullivan⁴ to Tim Sackett⁵ have all gone on record to say there is no hard and fast rule to follow when it comes to assigning recruiters reqs. In fact, Sackett went so far as to tell SHRM that the idea of a universal “average” requisition load is “nonsensical.”

However, that doesn’t mean req loads are random. Rather, it means that “How many reqs is too many reqs?” is a question that can only be answered on a case by case basis. As Sackett put it, “Each organization can figure out its ideal recruiter requisition load from its own data.”

But what data should an organization consider? Here are the key factors:



THE POSITION & INDUSTRY

As a general rule, the more specialized, highly skilled, or high-seniority a role is, the fewer reqs of that type a recruiter can handle at once. The more complex the role, the more footwork a recruiter has to do to source, vet, and place a candidate. In other words: filling high-volume sales associate roles for retail stores is a whole different ball game than headhunting the perfect COO for a Fortune 500 financial firm.

The industry in which the job operates also matters. Roles in industries facing massive skills gaps will obviously require a little more time and effort to fill, for example.

According to a 2018 Korn Ferry report, the financial and business services sector faces the biggest gaps, with an estimated deficit of 10.7 million workers by 2030. Close behind are the manufacturing sector (projected deficit of 7.9 million workers) and the technology, media, and telecommunications sector (projected deficit of 4.3 million workers).⁶



GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Filling a tech role in the San Francisco Bay Area? Your pipeline will be lousy with candidates. Filling that same tech role in rural Ohio? It might take a little more time. Both where the role is located and where your candidates are located can have huge impacts on req load.



THE RECRUITERS THEMSELVES

Some recruiters are better than others and can handle more roles at a time. As Stroud put it, “The best recruiters know how to get things done whereas newbies have a learning curve.” The more experienced and skilled a recruiter is, the easier time they’ll have filling multiple roles at once, even if those are highly specialized niche roles.

In addition to a recruiter’s experience and skill level, we have to consider the recruiter’s responsibilities outside of filling roles, if any. If a recruiter’s whole job is to source and submit candidates, they can take on more reqs. If, on the other hand, a recruiter doesn’t have much administrative support and has to handle scheduling, offers, and onboarding, the req load has to drop. Similarly, if the recruiter has other job duties outside recruiting — like managing a team, conducting trainings, leading tech implementation, etc. — then they simply have less room on their plate for reqs.

As dedicated recruiting specialists, third-party recruiters can often handle significant req loads with ease. The expertise and vast networks of talent they’ve accumulated over the years allow them to move quickly to identify, source, and match candidates to opportunities. **Third-party recruiters rarely have other responsibilities to worry about beyond recruiting, which allows them to make clients’ reqs their top priorities.**



THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE

In today's high-tech, highly competitive recruiting world, resources — specifically in the form of tech tools — can make all the difference in a recruiter's req load. Indeed, tech may be the single biggest factor in the equation: experts have found that recruiters who have access to cutting-edge technology can handle roughly twice as many req loads at once.

Do recruiters have advanced ATSs that can sort and screen resumes? Do they have automated messaging tools and chatbots? Do they have online assessments that quickly vet candidates? Do they have access to referral platforms and robust social media tools? The more work a recruiter can offload to tech, the more reqs they can fill.



A BASIC BENCHMARK

Req loads vary by nature, but some people really want a benchmark. That's understandable. Take it with a grain of salt, but here's what SHRM says: **The U.S. national average across all industries and employer sizes fluctuates between 30 and 40 reqs per recruiter.** The national median is 15-20. *Remember: A recruiter can handle a lot more or a lot less than this depending on the factors outlined above.*



DIVERSITY RECRUITING: — TOP VALUE & TOP SLOWDOWN?



“According to LinkedIn, 78 percent of talent leaders view diversity as a top trend that is shaping the future of recruiting.”

2018 Global Recruiting
Trends Report

Diversity matters at work — and not just in a feel-good, doing-the-right-thing sort of way.

According to LinkedIn, 78 percent of talent leaders view diversity as a top trend that is shaping the future of recruiting.⁷ That's because diversity drives results in culture and company performance. The more diverse a workforce is, the more variety of perspectives it can bring to the table. This is crucial to avoid groupthink and push innovation. Moreover, when a company has a more diverse workforce, it more accurately reflects the diversity of its customer base. This can help the company move faster to understand and solve customer issues.

This all translates into hard numbers: Boston Consulting Group found more diverse companies drive 19 percent higher revenue than less diverse companies.⁸

Diversity is similarly important to the candidates you're trying to recruit: A Randstad survey found 78 percent of employees feel a workplace where people are treated equally regardless of background is an important employment consideration for them.⁹

But while diversity recruiting matters, it also throws a wrench into req loads.



Today, the name of the recruiting game is speed. Armed with the right technology, recruiters can handle almost twice the number of req loads as they used to.

But effective diversity hiring often requires recruiters to slow down. As Dr. Sullivan argues, “It is essential that diversity recruiters have a lighter recruiting load so that they have more free time to personalize their approach.”¹⁰

Why? Because building a more diverse workforce requires that recruiters look beyond their usual tactics and talent sources. If they keep going back to the same places and the same techniques to capture talent, they will keep capturing, you guessed it, the same kind of talent. Instead, diversity recruiting requires a customized, personalized approach.



MAINTAINING HIGH-TOUCH DIVERSITY WHILE STAYING EFFICIENT

Diversity recruiting might be a high-touch affair, but that doesn’t mean it’s incompatible with rigorous, tech-driven, data-based recruiting. In fact, the best way to run an efficient diversity recruiting initiative is to leverage the right tech.



DO THE RESEARCH

A top recommendation is that recruiters take a page from marketers and treat diversity recruiting as a form of market segmentation. Marketers know they can’t sell products in the same way across different demographics, so they research how to reach each demographic, including the kinds of messaging people are most responsive to.¹¹

Research obviously takes time, and while you are researching you won’t be recruiting, but think of it as an upfront investment. If you put the time in now, you’ll spend less time filling the same kinds of roles later.



LET DATA DRIVE IT

Market segmentation counts on data, and so does good diversity recruiting. You should track your diversity recruitment initiatives to determine what strategies work, where they work, and how they work.

A robust analytics platform is key here, as you'll need to track a lot of moving parts: what sources yield what kinds of candidates, what kind of messaging is used and how well it works for different populations, what kind of interactions produce positive results, etc.

Along the way, you will build an arsenal of tools and tactics you can pull from at any time.

Remember, the idea here is not to standardize your recruiting approach, but to widen the range of tools at your disposal.



PUT THE RIGHT RECRUITERS IN CHARGE

Speaking of data: You should be tracking which recruiters return the best diversity recruiting results. Diversity recruiting is a specialty, and some people are better at it than others. Identify who your key recruiters are, and then assign them to your diversity reqs.



USE THE RIGHT TOOLS

Obviously, recruiters need to track different talent sources to see which ones return the best results, but there are also a whole lot of other tools that can assist in your diversity recruiting efforts. For example, a solid employee referral platform allows you to leverage your current workforce to build an even more diverse workforce. You also need a comprehensive candidate database or talent pipelining tool to stay in touch with silver medalists and other promising prospects. Additionally, there are certain tech tools designed specifically for diversity recruiting efforts. These tools won't be right for every recruiter, but they may be worth researching, depending on your needs.



A SELF-PERPETUATING CYCLE

One important thing to note is that the better you get at diversity recruiting, the easier it becomes. Sure, you grow more skilled and experienced as a recruiter, but there's more to it than that. Simply put, a more diverse workforce makes it easier to attract more diverse people. When candidates see your team is already diverse, they won't have as many concerns or hesitations about joining up. Your brand as a recruiter and/or employer will also gain a boost, attracting more candidates to your pipeline.¹²



REQ LOAD EFFICIENCY & DIVERSITY RECRUITING: NOT OPPOSITES AFTER ALL



Speed matters in a tight talent market. The best candidates are off the market in as little as 10 days.¹³

It makes sense, then, that more and more recruiters have been turning to technology to streamline hiring and increase their req loads.

Yet diversity matters, too, and diversity recruiting is an even more high-touch affair than recruiting normally is. This can make it hard to maintain high req loads for diversity recruiters.

Luckily, this seeming deadlock can actually be avoided. By relying on the right kinds of tech tools, making data-driven decisions, and giving the right reqs to the right people, recruiting teams can maintain high-efficiency req loads while still implementing successful diversity recruiting initiatives. It may require a little investment of time and energy up front, but once you have the right tools in your tool belt, you'll be handling higher volumes of diversity recruiting reqs like a pro.



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