

# *entelo*

## The 7 Secrets of World-Class Recruiting Organizations

Over the years we've had a chance to talk to hundreds of executives about how they are recruiting for their companies. We've seen companies up close who are clearly setting the bar for talent acquisition. And we've seen others that are, well, not doing quite as well. Now, of course we can't divulge all the information that's been shared in confidence with us, but what we can do is pass along some really important best practices that separate the winners from the losers in the talent war. Our goal, through both the software we're building at Entelo and through the information that we disseminate privately to our customers and publicly on our [blog](#) and our [Twitter feed](#), is to help you build the best possible team that you can. So without further delay, here are seven tactics we've seen world-class recruiting organizations employ:

#1 – **Aggressively seek out passive candidates.** We refer to this as being “passive aggressive”. The best recruiting organizations that we've talked to are not content to sit back and wait for quality people to find them. They participate in something that we like to call “Proactive Recruiting”. It's the heat-seeking missile approach to recruiting.

How do they kick this process off? Here are a few things we've seen:

- **They do whatever they can to determine where the people they are looking to hire are likely to be.** Often this is knowing what company a person might have worked for previously or what school they attended. It might be diving deep on a specific [Github](#) project that has a lot of correlation with what their company is building or taking a deep dive into academic publications (as an aside, we've seen more people using [Academia.edu](#) and [ResearchGate](#) as recruiting tools lately). Whatever it is, it's done with a level of intensity that is second-to-none. They are determined to leave no stone unturned in their search for the best people to fill a position.
- **They have a systematic "hit list".** Way more sophisticated than the "spray and pray" approach other organizations use. They realize that the universe of the "right" candidates is actually somewhat narrow, so they take the time to research those individuals and reach out using highly customized messages. To hear them talk about their process is akin to sitting in the "war room" on Draft Day for a professional sports franchise. *Who's on the board right now? Who's looking to move soon? Whose boss just took a new job?* Yes, it can be almost as exciting as getting ready to make that first round draft pick. Who said recruiting couldn't be a blast?
- **They have a process in place so that interactions are tracked and effort isn't duplicated.** Similar to how sales organizations have a pipeline and track most, if not all, interactions with prospects, the world's best recruiting organizations have a strong process in place. The reason for this is largely common sense. If you're aggressively reaching out to thousands of candidates you can't afford to slow down to check with a colleague as to whether you've already contacted someone. And you have to have information at your fingertips when you engage.

There are a variety of ways to do this. Lots of people use [Entelo](#) to track engagement.

We've written extensively on how you can [use Highrise for this](#) (and especially the

[Highrise-Rapportive integration](#)). And there are a host of other options as well, such as

using your ATS (will work better or worse depending on which ATS you are using) or a

CRM system like Salesforce. But don't resort to spreadsheets or managing this stuff in

email. There are just too many solutions out there that will scale better and more

importantly, will allow you to retain important information even as people come and go from

your recruiting team.

No doubt almost all of you are reaching out to passive candidates right now. But can you be more aggressive? **Not in the harassing way** (we covered that extensively in the [Outbound Recruiting 101 blog posts](#)) but rather in the **“we’re going to make sure we get on the radar of as many high-quality candidates as possible” way.**

**Secret #2: “Poke” candidates.** Remember poking, that long-lost remnant of Facebook silliness? The thing about poking was that it was a very lightweight way to suggest interest (albeit of a different variety than recruiting!). So what the heck does it mean to “poke” candidates? We see it happen in a couple of different ways:

- **Follow candidates on Twitter** - This offers all sorts of benefits relative to the one second it takes to do this. First off, it’s a subtle hint to the candidate that you are interested in them. Because the vast majority of people “accept” all Twitter follow requests (usually automatically given that most people don’t protect their Twitter updates), it’s much more lightweight than sending a LinkedIn connection request.

**Once you follow a candidate on Twitter all sorts of good things can happen.** The candidate can follow you back meaning that they’ll be seeing your updates, that you can DM them, etc. In addition, even if they don’t follow you, it raises the odds that if they get an email, InMail, etc. from you, they’ll respond. Familiarity breeds comfort and even though it’s a slight effect, having “seen” your name before as one of their Twitter followers gives you a

slight edge on outreach.

(BTW, we've added a simple "Follow" button for candidates on [Entelo](#). We're doing whatever we can to make this as easy as possible for you!)

- **LinkedIn requests** - This is a more aggressive tactic and we'd advise to proceed with caution. Sending random LinkedIn connection requests to people you don't know is not a good idea. But there's a step that goes beyond what most people do which is important to grok: the contextual connection request. Here is an example.

Perhaps you go to a [Meetup](#) and look at the RSVP list ahead of time (you are doing that right?!). There are a couple of engineers on the list that you are looking forward to meeting, but the Meetup is crowded and you don't get a chance. Guess what? You have a perfect context to send them a request (e.g., "I missed you at the Ruby on Rails Meetup last night but wanted to connect."). Some will accept and some will decline but at the end of the day you'll be building your Rolodex and, as with Twitter, all sorts of good things start to happen when you're connected to a candidate on LinkedIn.

If you aren't right now, start thinking about how you can "poke" candidates. It might seem like a minor thing, but it's easy and the compound effect of this over time is pretty powerful.

**Secret #3: Expand the top of your funnel.** There's a conversation we hear often in recruiting, especially in small start-ups. Someone will inevitably complain about how tough

it is to recruit. The question then arises as to how many people they've talked to or reached out to for a given position and the answer will be something like "Gosh, at least five!" Guess what, that ain't going to cut it!

**Recruiting is a numbers game.** Let's say that for every 10 people you reach out to, one is interested in talking (some recruiters have a much higher hit rate, others have a lower hit rate). And now let's assume that for every 10 people you talk to, one expresses interest and formally applies to your company. And for every 5 people who apply, you end up hiring one. OK, now you know your numbers (more on metrics later). **You need to reach out to 500 people to get your hire.**

It's more nuanced than this of course but you should have some sense of how many people you need at different stages of the pipeline to hit your numbers. Once you do, it's a matter of filling the pipeline more fully. Perhaps you are getting higher "conversion" rates than the ones above but aren't expanding the top of the funnel enough. That's a common problem and one that can be rectified. Conversion rates are often tougher to fix.

So how do the world's best recruiting organizations expand the top of the funnel?

**First, they get very efficient at finding people.** Everyone has their favorite strategies here. For some it's heavy networking. For others it's throwing long boolean strings into Google and seeing what comes out the other end. Whatever it is, see how you can make your process faster and more efficient.

This works better with some strategies than others. If you like to go to Meetups, that's great, but you'll only typically meet a handful of people at a Meetup. A better strategy might

be to host the Meetup so that you can get the list of everyone who attended and reach out directly. Going to conferences? **How about hosting a conference instead?** Companies like [10gen](#) and [Github](#) have done this with great success and it's one of the reasons (among many others!) why those companies have such robust hiring pipelines.

**Second, they get very efficient at qualifying people.** Once you've made the decision to reach out to someone you've made a time commitment. The time to write the email and the time to respond of course but, more importantly, all the time you'll spend if this person ends up in your pipeline. This is truly a case where an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If you do the proper diligence on a candidate upfront, you can often prevent hours of wasted time down the road.

One of the reasons we built [Entelo](#) the way we did was to help with this. It's our goal to turn a process that might take 5-10 minutes (that first pass scan of a candidate) into something that might take 30-60 seconds (on average). Multiply that by hundreds of candidates over the course of a typical month and you've saved significant time. Too many recruiters either don't do their homework upfront or spend entirely too much time per candidate doing research. Both of these scenarios are sub-optimal.

**Finally, they get very efficient at contacting candidates.** Use templates in tools like LinkedIn Recruiter. Use Entelo to get direct contact information for candidates. Use tools like the ones we'll share with you in tip #5 to dramatically increase your velocity when it comes to reaching out to candidates. We've seen people make order of magnitude

increases in their ability to reach out to candidates.

**Secret #4: Give candidates a strong reason to engage with your company.** This is where a lot of companies fall down. Heck, we've fallen down there. Heck, if we're being honest we're probably falling down there right now! We're working on so much cool technology here at Entelo and [our Jobs page](#) doesn't really do justice to what we're doing (please don't fault us, we've been so focused on building you a great product!).

**But you can do better.** You can check out [Dropbox's quirky jobs page](#) and think about how it appeals to the very engineers who they are trying to recruit. Or think about how [Asana offers an incredible \\$10K to people to pimp out their work set-up](#). Or how companies like Google do [Tech Talks](#) to allow their employees access to some of the brightest minds in the world. And it's not just Google doing this! Lots of startups are as well. Even Entelo has Brown Bag Lunches where we host amazing engineers and entrepreneurs in our offices for a chat and some tasty eats.

Jeff Lawson, the CEO and Cofounder of Twilio, said it best: **“When a candidate walks into your office your goal should be to make sure their mind is blown.”** We'd take it a step further. They should have that same feeling when they hit your Careers Page, and when they come across your company's Github page (your company does have a Github page right?).

And speaking of Github, there's another reason to engage with your company: A strong open source presence. **Want to see what an amazing open source presence looks**

**like?** Check out our friend Rafael's company [LearnBoost](#). LearnBoost has invested in open source and, besides being the right thing to do, it has paid off in dividends from a recruiting standpoint. In fact, [according to this answer Rafael gave on Quora](#), **LearnBoost now has the 2nd highest number of project followers on Github after Facebook** (and incredibly, ahead of Github itself!). That's phenomenal for a company that, according to LinkedIn, has less than 10 employees. Who says the little guys can't compete?

Your goal? It's the same as any world-class recruiting organization. Be the kind of company that friends can't wait to tell others that they work for. This could be for any of a variety of reasons. Figure out what yours are.

**Secret #5: "Sharpen your saw."** What tools do you use to recruit? When's the last time you added a new tool to your toolkit? The best recruiting organizations in the world look at their tools the same way Tiger Woods looks at golf clubs and Maria Sharapova looks at tennis racquets. They stop at nothing to find the absolute best tools in the world that will give them an edge at finding great candidates.

They think about where their top candidates hang out. Facebook perhaps? [Are you using Facebook Ads for recruiting yet?](#) If you aren't, why not? The world's best recruiting organizations are.

These organizations are on job boards of sites like [Github](#) and [Dribbble](#) early because they know that the getting is good when you're one of the first people to discover a high-quality audience. **They want to get the best candidates and this means being ahead of the**



**curve on where the best people hang out.**

And they're always testing new tools. Of course they're using [Entelo](#) but they've also tried out [Branchout](#), [Gild](#), [Identified](#), [TalentBin](#), [Work4 Labs](#) and other cutting-edge tools. Sure, a lot of those tools won't be the right fit but they'll darn well make sure they've tried as many things as they can before they settle on what they'll use long-term. **The right tool represents an order of magnitude improvement in productivity** and so it's worth it to them to spend the time to make sure they are using the best possible equipment.

And it's not always about spending a lot of money either. In fact, a little while back on our blog we wrote a post entitled [7 Power Tools for Talent Scouts](#). The tools highlighted in that post will set you back less than the cost of dinner--well worth the investment for things that can help you do your job better and reduce the amount of time you need to spend at the office.

We're geeks for great tools so if you come across anything amazing be sure to let us know and we'll hook you up with some great Entelo swag! 😊

**Secret #6: Be obsessive about metrics.** We could write a white paper just on the topic of metrics for recruiting. Perhaps some day we will...

**What we'll say now is that world's best recruiting organizations track everything.**

Sure, a lot of companies track their source of hires in their ATS. But that's just the starting point. What's your response rate for InMails vs. emails? What subject lines perform the

best when reaching out to candidates? What's the average ratio of candidates who apply to candidates who make it to a second round interview across your various sourcing channels?

Do you have the answers to these questions and others like them? The best recruiting organizations do and they use those answers to continually improve their processes and better allocate resources. One of our very first customers at [Entelo](#) impressed us when he told us that in the first month of using Entelo, they experienced twice the response rate when reaching out to candidates via Entelo over what they were experiencing from competitive platforms. That impressed us in part because it was, well, awesome. But even more so we were impressed that he had enough data to know that. Most organizations don't.

**The bottom line here is that great recruiting organizations obsess about their bottom line.** Not necessarily their profits, but rather about the number of outstanding hires they've made. In order to get there they have to walk the funnel backwards and to do that properly they need to have metrics at each stage of the funnel. Without that, they're mostly shooting in the dark and no doubt pouring a lot of money down the drain.

**Secret #7: Make recruiting priority #1.** From the people we've talked to it's very clear, **all of them view recruiting as Job #1.** Their CEOs spend significant amounts of time recruiting. They invest in the right tools and make sure their teams are fully staffed for the challenge in front of them. Recruiting high-quality candidates is not a "nice to have". It's an

absolute must have.

Don't believe us? The late Steve Jobs consistently placed a [premium on recruiting](#). To those who suggest they don't have time to recruit, Jobs offered the following gem:

*I disagree totally. I think it's the most important job. Assume you're by yourself in a startup and you want a partner. You'd take a lot of time finding the partner, right? He would be half of your company. Why should you take any less time finding a third of your company or a fourth of your company or a fifth of your company? When you're in a startup, the first ten people will determine whether the company succeeds or not. Each is 10 percent of the company. So why wouldn't you take as much time as necessary to find all the A players? If three were not so great, why would you want a company where 30 percent of your people are not so great?*

And the Silicon Valley legend, Vinod Khosla, also suggests that one of the most important aspects of building a startup is [finding the right team](#).

*I think the single, most important fact about doing a startup is being clear about your vision and not let it get distorted by what pundits and experts tell you. But the second most important thing is finding the right team, and that's really, really hard, because people tend to look*

*for people around them... You know, I was relentless... really spent well over 50% of my time recruiting, and I encourage all entrepreneurs to try and do that.*

In our experience that more than anything separates the winners from the losers. Which side is your organization on? Our hope is that increasingly you're in the former camp and we're working tirelessly on our end to help in any way that we can.

And to that extent, we'd love to hear how we can help you even more. Send us an email [contact@entelo.com](mailto:contact@entelo.com) and tell us what you want to see, be it improvements to Entelo, subjects you'd like to see us write about, borrowing one of our engineers to your team for a day or two...OK, we can't do that last one but we hope to do whatever else we can to help you build an incredible team!

Thanks for sticking with us for another 3,000 words or so and best wishes in all of your recruiting efforts. Go out there and hire up a storm!