

A photograph of two women in an office environment. The woman on the left, with blonde hair and glasses on her head, is pointing towards a screen. The woman on the right, with long dark hair, is looking in the same direction. The background shows office equipment and ceiling lights.

Continuous Innovation

The Talent Connect community is another way that IBM is adding value to this long-time RPO partnership



Insight

Support company growth through proactive talent pipelining

This U.S.-based manufacturing firm is one of the world's leading innovators in materials science, with a 169-year track record of life-changing inventions. The company applies its unparalleled expertise in glass science, ceramics science and optical physics, along with its deep manufacturing and engineering capabilities, to develop category-defining products that transform industries and enhance people's lives.

The partnership with this client and IBM Talent Acquisition began almost 20 years ago. As the timeline shows, the relationship has been marked with steady growth and innovation.

The IBM recruiting team continuously finds ways to bring more efficient and effective ways to recruit the talent this client needs. A significant improvement was the Talent Connect talent community we developed for the client out of an urgent need to transform an approach that wasn't working.

The client was paying a third-party platform to perform "talent pooling," but this approach was problematic. The team couldn't determine the return on investment the client received from the platform—most notably in whether new hires were coming from the system.



2001

First delivery of recruitment services in U.S.

2004



Awarded a longer term project in Taiwan



2005

Signed first North America RPO contract

2011



Expansion of Campus Recruitment Program



2013

Expansion of recruitment delivery into EMEA

2014



First infographic job descriptions



2015

Expansion of recruitment delivery into Mexico



Creation of Talent Connect talent community database and social media presence

2017



Creation of hourly hiring process



2018

Established dedicated branding and social media role

2019



Launched Executive Recruitment function

In addition, access to the platform was limited to a handful of recruiters, due to the high costs of using the system, which was maintained exclusively by the vendor. There was no candidate portal or customization. Recruiters could not use it as a way to centralize “sharing” candidates with one another—a particular pain point for a global company that has more than 50,000 employees worldwide. Recruiters in different locations shared candidates with each other mostly through email, so there was no team-wide visibility into a candidate database or talent pool.

Another need for improvement was campus recruiting and onsite professional recruiting events, where recruiters gathered hardcopy

resumes and took handwritten notes. Not only was this approach inefficient and time-consuming, but it was not conducive to OFCCP adherence.

Candidates, too, felt the drawbacks of the platform. Communication wasn’t optimal, so “silver medalist” candidates were not regularly engaged to keep them “warm” as interested candidates, nor did they have a compelling way to learn about the client and its culture. Recruiters spent a lot of time individually getting candidates up to speed on who the client is and what it manufactures.



Idea

Engage candidates with Talent Connect

IBM approached the client about creating Talent Connect, a talent community for engaging with, educating and hiring qualified prospects and applicants. The recruiting team researched the best practices of other Fortune 500 companies and determined that Talent Connect must include:

- [Ease of accessibility](#)
- [Content push](#)
- [Opportunities for learning](#)

However, the team knew it needed another component for Talent Connect to be a success: integration with a CRM that the entire recruiting team could access. The CRM would enable matching candidates to the skills the client needs, and provide access to a variety of reporting, including an ability to measure ROI for the business.

The team met with division leaders, hiring managers and lead recruiters to understand hiring for business-critical needs. The client purchased a dedicated CRM platform, and the team developed recruitment processes and candidate workflows that Talent Connect and the CRM could support.

The recruiting team first focused on building the community with candidates who had skills most essential to the client. Originally, Talent Connect had five “silos” of applicants, but it has since evolved to the following:

- [Sales / Marketing / Product Line](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [HR](#)
- [Legal Services](#)
- [IT](#)
- [Supply Chain](#)
- [Engineering / Research & Development](#)



Engineering / R&D is by far the biggest silo of candidates, with 24 subcategories of related skills. When candidates who have been added to the CRM are invited to join Talent Connect, they choose the silo they are interested in joining.

As IBM was creating Talent Connect, we also developed candidate-focused social media accounts for the client, a significant recruiting tool for educating candidates because the client is a business-to-business company, not business-to-consumer. In addition, we digitized our [campus recruiting process](#), making it easier to capture an electronic resume and share it with the entire recruiting team.

Candidates in Talent Connect have a positive initial touchpoint with the client: through recruiters, employee and network referrals, campus recruiting, special events and social media messaging. And they are screened carefully. In addition to matching job silos and skill sets, candidates must meet a standard set

of criteria to ensure that everyone in the talent community is representative of the client's top needs.

Benefit to the candidates

Candidates in Talent Connect have a personal relationship with a dedicated member of the IBM talent community team for the client. This is someone who knows the candidate and what he or she wants out of a career.

Candidates also receive:

- **Monthly newsletters and/or quarterly check-ins via email, depending on their preferences and projected availability**
- **Collaborative learning and networking opportunities around the candidate's area of expertise, including webinars and live panel discussions**
- **A better understanding of what shapes the company's culture – collaboration, innovation, values, and relationship building – through employee testimonials and discussions**



The value of a talent community in difficult economic times

Talent community services are especially relevant during the economic circumstances that resulted from the global pandemic in 2020. Millions of people were laid off or furloughed from their jobs, had job interviews canceled or offers rescinded due to the sharp downturn in business. Companies that were forced to downsize, or not follow through with planned expansion, need a way to stay engaged with their valuable former employees, and to stay in touch with future new hires. Having a talent community integrated with a CRM is the ideal way to do this.

Impact

Right person,
right place, right time

Traditional sourcing and recruiting tactics focus on a client's immediate demand. In this situation, communication with a candidate tends to end if that person is not interested or available for a current opening. When demand changes, recruiters start over to find requested talent.

But with Talent Connect, recruiters can proactively create a strong pipeline of candidates for the client, avoiding "reactive" recruiting. IBM's Talent Connect team maintains a relationship with qualified candidates, keeping them engaged with the client so that they are ready to begin the interview process. For instance, college students who are in Talent Connect but don't join the company upon graduation are still very important members of the community as potential mid-career hires.

Talent Connect's main benefits for the client and future workforce include:

- Great relationship management
- Positive brand representation
- A more personalized candidate experience
- Better insight into ROI

With candidates who are engaged, interested and informed, recruiters have a greater capability to work with hiring managers to get the right person, in the right place, at the right time.

Since the launch of Talent Connect in April 2015, the client has seen significant growth in the community as a hiring source, with a total of 294 sourced hires from Talent Connect.



In 2019, more than 25% of all full-time hires made were hired from Talent Connect, not including interns. IBM also can track which interns who joined the client through the campus recruiting program become full-time employees.

True to the innovative nature of the RPO relationship that IBM has with this client, we will continue to look for ways to improve the use of Talent Connect and the client's CRM. We are investigating ways to introduce more automation and AI capabilities into candidate workflows, such as automated searches of candidates on social media and professional platforms. This will help us determine candidate interests, further personalize their experience and provide more curated content for their education.

For more information

For more information about how IBM Talent Acquisition can create a talent community for your recruiting needs, visit ibm.co/TAO

“IBM is a successful partner with [us]. We have drastically improved hiring manager and candidate satisfaction over the last few years and decreased cycle times by 20 days. Our TA team are rock stars, each and every one of them.” – Client's Global Director for Talent Acquisition



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IBM Global Business Services
Route 100
Somers, NY 10589

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