Hiring for Business-critical Teams

IBM collaborated with the client to create a dedicated recruiting team for high-touch, accelerated hiring projects

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Insight

Emphasize business-critical hiring projects

This industrial machinery company helps solve the biggest flow-control challenges for customers worldwide who rely on the product lines, engineering, project management and service expertise of this 200-year-old company.

Today, this U.S.-headquartered client offers more than 100 distinct pump models and a wide range of valve and seal products, employing more than 17,500 associates in 300-plus locations around the world, including more than 180 Quick Response Centers (QRCs) that provide aftermarket parts and services to customers.

To support the company's goals and growth through talent, IBM began a global recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) partnership with this client in 2013. We recruit in more than 50 countries across North America, EMEA, APAC and LATAM for all roles within the enterprise, including manufacturing, engineering, R&D, logistics, supply chain, corporate, commercial and executive functions.

In 2019, a year after the client renewed its partnership with IBM, we recruited 3,099 new hires.

A recent strategic area of focus for Talent Acquisition is working with the client to reduce the time to fill requisitions that are part of business-critical hiring projects.

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Idea

Reposition ourselves as project managers and process experts for critical hiring projects and execute on them with the STAT team

IBM's approach to this opportunity is to collaborate with hiring managers and HR to agree on the prioritization of hiring demands while our recruiting teams aggressively create talent pipelines.

Together with the client, we formally created the Special Tools & Tactics (STAT) team, which targets hiring projects that fall outside business-as-usual hiring. These projects have "exceptional hiring requirements" that need an augmented contribution from the Talent Acquisition team to enhance the timeliness and effectiveness of service delivery.

That contribution comes from STAT, which provides high-touch management and reporting for these projects, enabling the client to meet the business demand for resources in an accelerated timeframe.

An example of the high touch that STAT provides is the weekly standup meetings that the team holds for its projects. Along with a weekly dashboard report, the meetings track challenges, roadblocks and successes. This helps everyone on the team to stay on the same page and act on their takeaways from each meeting.

STAT has taken on recruiting projects for as few as 7 hires to more than 200. Success comes from staying highly organized and focused with all activities, including their partnerships and interaction with the client's hiring managers—key to each project's success.

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STAT tries to stay ahead of recruiting needs a fiscal quarter at a time. Our recruiters schedule calls with the appropriate hiring managers and local HR leaders to obtain business forecasting, and then act on those insights by engaging in "pre-emptive" candidate generation and selection. This approach helps the team plan events such as job fairs and open houses. They also make sure they receive specific direction on job requirements, deadlines and budget from hiring managers.

This proactive approach is especially helpful with projects that include hiring for niche roles, and it gives recruiters a better understanding of the types of candidates that hiring managers want to join their teams.

STAT can use the same sourcing tools, channels and tactics that are available to other IBM recruiting teams. They devise a strategy that includes the tools to use based on the input and expertise of the local recruiters, and the success of past sourcing activities. Together they agree upon a plan and present it to local HR partners to get their input and validation.

Success Stories

Here's how the STAT approach has succeeded with some business-critical hiring needs.

Finance Center of Excellence in Hungary. The client wanted to transform its finance operations and consolidate globally dispersed personnel into a Center of Excellence in Debrecen, Hungary. The aim was to standardize processes, achieve "economy of scale," simplify reporting and financially leverage this lower-cost environment to reduce overall cost to the client.

STAT was tasked with hiring about 150 resources, increasing the finance team from 60 to around 200. One reason STAT was assigned this project was because so many people in different parts of the company were involved, not just from Talent Acquisition and Finance, requiring a single point of information and coordination to ensure alignment across all stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle.

Recruiting and hiring the new personnel took a year and mirrored the transition project timeline. The project was a good example of the proactive and "just in time" sourcing the STAT team does. For example, to fill the resources pulled out of Germany in July, the team began recruiting in Hungary in April of that year. The project was especially complex due to the demand for finance and accounting skills and a variety of European languages that were required from a relatively small local labor pool.

New Data Analytics Team. The client wanted to improve the internal management of data, which affected their ability to use data for decisions. So they decided to create a new Data Analytics team, a globally dispersed group with roles in India, Hungary and the United States.

STAT was asked to fill 17 positions created for this group. The project had an aggressive hiring timeline of three months, and STAT filled the roles in 54 days. The project was a success in part because the business stakeholder was engaged with the entire process, providing clear job descriptions and requirements, and making hiring decisions quickly.

"It was really good to have a very engaged central point of contact who kept track of the overall status," said the client's Director of Operational Analytics. "Overall, we were presented with the right type of candidates, and the hiring project was closed in record time."

Early Retirement Program. An early retirement program for sales team members in North America required STAT to back-fill those resources with new ones. This project called for 30 positions to fill, including Sales Engineers and Applications Engineers, which STAT completed in an average of 52 days per role.

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Impact

Successful STAT projects drive value on multiple levels

The proactive, accelerated processes the STAT team executes delivers value to the client on multiple levels.

One level is in talent acquisition metrics—for example, reducing time to fill and thereby lowering the overall cost to recruit and onboard new personnel. This is evident in "aged" projects the STAT team is assigned to, where the desired time to fill was already exceeded.

Another area of improvement is increased efficiency, particularly in hiring manager interviews. In some locales the old process meant candidates would undergo multiple rounds of interviews, and then recruiters would wait for hiring manager feedback. In one location, candidates for junior roles would go through five rounds of interviews with panels of six people each.

STAT provides guidance to local HR teams on limiting the number of interviews and restricting them to the hiring manager and perhaps the upline manager. STAT also encourages hiring managers to be more proactive in the hiring decision, breaking up the bottlenecks that can occur when too many personnel want to be included in the decision.

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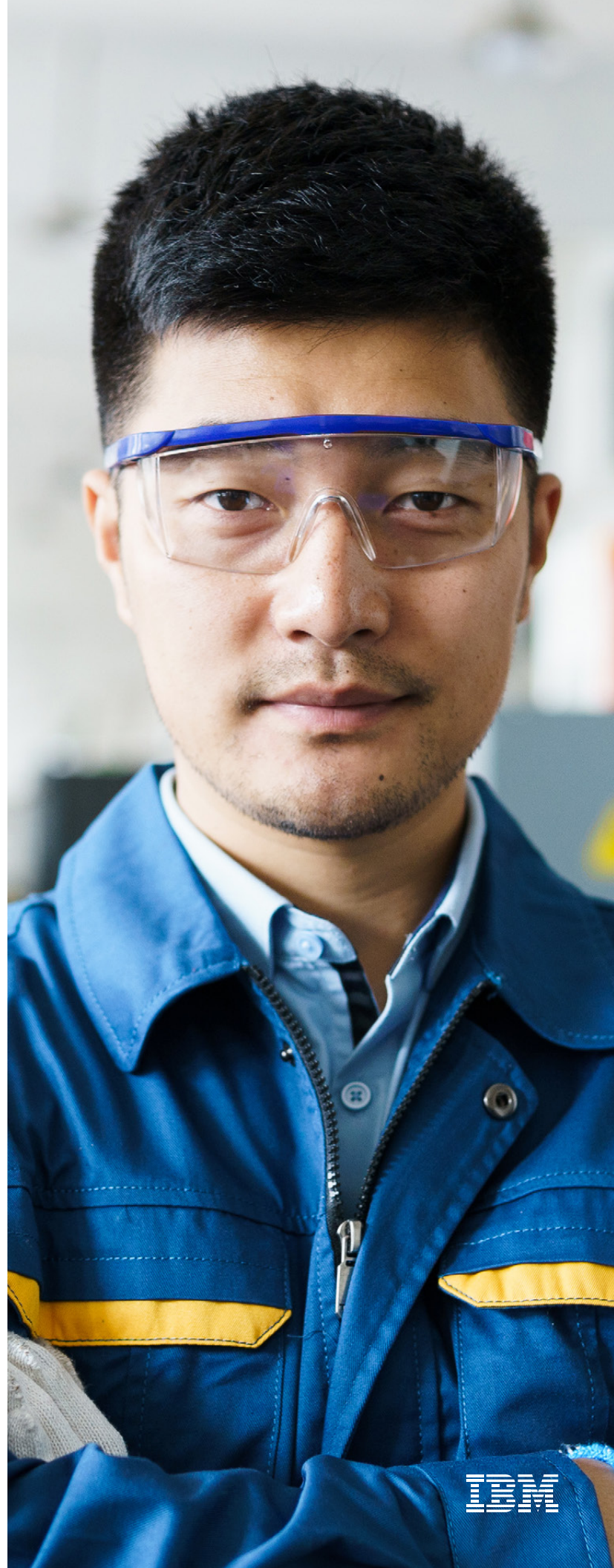
On another level, the client is reaping broader business benefits through the reorganized or new teams that STAT has recruited for:

- Consolidating the finance center in Hungary resulted in a significant reduction in operating costs.

- Completing an in-house audit team by hiring the final seven positions in 60 days is reducing the cost and dependency associated with using a third-party auditor.

- The Data Analytics team is leveraging the huge volumes of internal data to better define and inform numerous strategic imperatives across the enterprise.