

Building Bridges Helps VMS Efficiency

A liaison will enhance your technology

By Tom Kosnik

Many organizations, once they have implemented a vendor management system, expect the system itself to manage activity between hiring managers and staffing vendors. Then they assign someone to manage contracts and service-level agreements. Wise as these decisions may appear, they miss the mark in terms of fully utilizing a VMS.

The next-best person to hire to improve your company's VMS is a liaison that works with internal hiring managers and external staffing vendors.

A VMS is what it is: a system. Ultimately, it needs to be managed by people. Unlike "product" procurement, "human resource" procurement is messy. Human resources come into a company system in various ways. Every contingent candidate submitted to the system has unique skill sets and experiences. Relying too heavily on technology can deny hiring managers the information they need to make good decisions. Letting the system itself manage much of the activity between the hiring managers and staffing vendors creates an environment for the hiring managers to fail.

Who Does What?

The people responsible for managing vendor contracts and service-level agreements usually sit at the 10,000-foot level. They are rewarded for saving money, not helping hiring managers obtain better-quality workers.

Occasionally, some people will discuss getting HR to intervene in the work flow and candidate flow between a VMS tool, hiring managers and staffing vendors. This approach is not without its challenges. Most HR departments do much more than acquire human resources. The management of the process becomes a lower priority on the list of items needing attention. And, just like purchasing managers, HR recruiters lack the authority to manage the end-to-end contingent process.

To expect the human resources department to create success here also creates an environment for failure.

The Way Forward

There is a better way to increase the success rate of hiring managers working through a VMS or a managed vendor list. And that is

to hire a liaison that fits between the external staffing vendors and the internal hiring managers.

This person is a driver who can remain in charge of a verbal transaction with either a staffing vendor or hiring manager. The liaison is someone who can think quickly on his feet and move the process forward without requiring reams of data. A classic "people person", the ideal liaison would be able to work comfortably at all levels of an organization and with

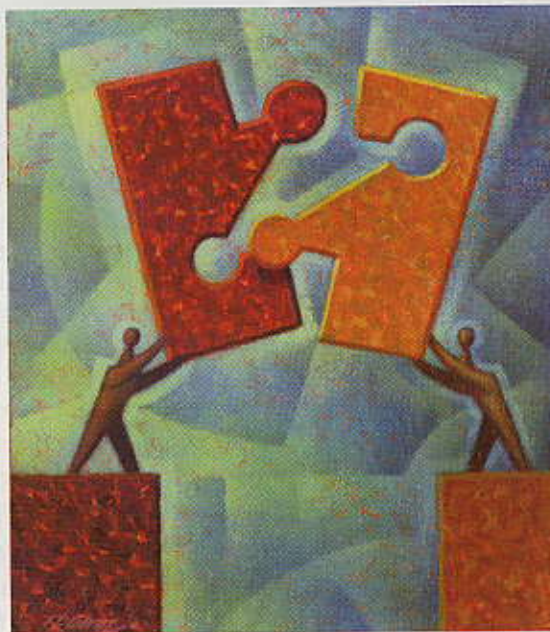
The tasks a liaison can assist with are endless. Here are just a few:

Flushing out critical information from hiring managers. Often, an email requisition from a hiring manager does not spell out all the details. First, hiring managers are under pressure to get several initiatives completed and spending time to spell out the fine details of a requisition simply does not happen. A liaison can get these fine details from the hiring managers. After a little work

history, a good liaison will know the difference between level-two and level-three skill sets for a particular manager. How does this benefit the organization? The hiring manager spends less time reviewing resumes and interviewing candidates.

Focusing certain requisitions on the abilities of specific vendors. Some executives believe that a VMS levels the playing field for all vendors. This is a myth. The shotgun

approach of releasing requisitions to all vendors on a list creates a situation in which some vendors try to fill the pipeline rather than submit quality resumes. A liaison can learn the capabilities of



staffing vendors to better define needs and explain the factors involved in acquiring the best fit. In a way, the profile of a liaison is a person who has an A-type or sales personality.

each staffing vendor and then allocate certain requisitions to vendors that specialize in acquiring these skill sets. How does this benefit the organization? Allocating requisitions to vendors that have the greatest chance of succeeding again means less time hiring managers spend reviewing resumes and interviewing mismatches.

Obtain feedback from hiring managers quickly. Experts say that a 4 percent unemployment rate really means that there are no employable candidates. High-quality candidates are not going to sit around for two weeks waiting for a response. Staffing vendors need to get feedback to can-

didates within 24 hours. Hiring managers don't mean to be tardy in offering feedback. Typically, they just have a lot on their plates. A liaison can get feedback from hiring managers on a very timely basis. The benefit to your organization? An improvement in the time in which hiring managers are getting their hiring needs met and fewer high-quality candidates being lost to other job opportunities.

Assisting vendors working through a VMS. It may come as a surprise that most staffing vendors are left on their own to figure out how to fulfill requisitions in a VMS model. The more mature staffing vendors will have two

fulfillment teams. One works with critical requisitions and one works on less specific or less critical needs.

A liaison can work with suppliers to improve their internal processes and facilitate the exchange of best practices among them. They can also step in to resolve disputes. How does this benefit an organization? More efficient and effective staffing vendors mean dollars to their clients' bottom line.

The best person to hire to improve a company's vendor management system or functionality of a vendors list is a liaison working with internal hiring managers and external staffing vendors. Hiring the right person, out-

lining job duties and financially rewarding this person on predetermined metrics and deliverables will be critical to the success of this position.

In the end, by using a liaison, your organization will take a big step forward in its effort of acquiring top talent, increasing hiring manager's hit ratios and increasing your staffing vendor's services to your organization. ●

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