

On the North Bay hiring scene

North Bay companies continue to compete for skilled workers, so much so that on online job board NelsonJobs.com there are almost two thousand job openings at any one time. As employers battle to hire the best employees and struggle to retain their existing work force in an area with high housing costs and lots of job opportunities, it's increasingly critical that they counter these challenges with new HR management technologies, better aptitude tests and a vibrant contingent work force in order to remain competitive. Those are the trends that we are seeing at the Nelson Family of Companies – a long time fixture of the North Bay hiring scene.

Well-qualified job applicants often receive multiple offers within 24 hours. At Nelson, we've seen orders for IT and development positions jump twenty percent in the last year. It's a great time to be looking for a job, but the hiring companies have to become more resourceful. Combine this with the lack of available HB1 visas for critical resources, and you have a true challenge. Especially in knowledge-intensive businesses like finance or engineering, companies are recognizing that their employees are the most strategic asset they have – and they are developing new models for HR to manage those assets accordingly. Companies like Nelson are critical in helping companies proactively and strategically manage their human capital needs.

The Nelson companies (there are six of them) enjoy a birds-eye view of the trends that shape the evolving work force in the North Bay. Here are some of them:

PART-TIMERS

COME TO THE RESCUE

One trend affecting the availability of skilled employees is the retirement of hundreds of thousands of Baby Boomers, the

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oldest of whom are turning 60 this year. Combine the increase in demand for skilled workers with the mass-scale departure of experienced Boomers, and you have a potential problem.

So the smart companies are recognizing the decades of experience and knowledge resident in these workers and are encouraging retirees and self-employed to come to work as 'contingent' – or temporary – staff. Effectively tapping into the wealth of skill and enthusiasm that resides among contingent workers is one way that North Bay companies can enjoy a happy labor force and remain competitive. Today, as much as twenty percent of the U.S. work force is made up of these contingent workers – with annual spending of \$110 billion – and by 2011 the largest single-employer category in America will be "self." Helping companies recruit and manage their contingent work forces is now one of the largest business areas at Nelson.

NEW TESTS FIND

JUST THE RIGHT CANDIDATE

Another trend is to develop clever new aptitude tests that do a better job of measuring the specific skills that are required for a job and finding the right fit. For example, Sony Computer Entertainment America—one of Nelson's larger clients—needed game testers to locate 'bugs' in PlayStation games prior to their release.

So Nelson worked with Sony to create a hiring test that emulates the testing procedures to gauge candidates' aptitude for locating bugs. The result: lower recruiting costs, happier employer and happier employees who aren't frustrated by being placed in a job that doesn't match their particular skills.

TECHNOLOGY

GIVES HR A HAND

As the work force evolves, so too must the tools used to manage it. Technology in particular is increasing its role in managing human resource assets. Technology can range from simple recruiting systems built in-house to full-blown work force management solutions that include risk assessment, independent contractor compliance management, work force lifecycle management, supplier management, and payroll. Because of their complexity, these work force management systems often are outsourced to specialized companies—WorkforceLogic, for example—that own and maintain all the technology.

As the economy continues to grow in the North Bay, the Nelson Family of Companies continues to explore innovations in talent acquisition, employee retention and work force management and partners with clients to help them become more resourceful in their hiring practices. With the right resources, North Bay companies can enjoy a happy labor force and remain competitive.

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