



# WPO SPARK KIT – ATTRACTING TALENT

A curated facilitator kit for WPO Chairs and members

## HOW TO USE THIS SPARK KIT

This kit offers you an easy way to engage in a group discussion focused on the topic of **Attracting Top Talent**. To get started, we suggest the following steps:

1. Review the recommended reading list in the Spark Resource Summary chart below.
  - a. Click through the links to see complete articles and videos in Spark, **OR** simply read the [Executive Summary and Key Points](#) section for quick reference.
2. Prepare to facilitate your discussion using the prompting questions and tips suggested on page 2.

## TOPIC OUTLINE

Finding and attracting qualified staff poses a substantial challenge for small and medium-sized businesses. Whether it’s filling entry-level positions or executive roles, many companies are competing for a potentially shrinking pool of qualified candidates. This kit will help you learn ways to overcome these challenges.

“About 40% of small businesses are struggling to attract new employees, and another 21% are concerned about retaining current staff. - *Dave Charest, Director of Small Business Success, Constant Contact*”

## SPARK RESOURCE SUMMARY

Here's a carefully curated selection of Spark content to assist you in leading your discussion. You're encouraged to peruse the complete articles and view the videos. We have also provided **Executive Summaries and Key Points** on the subsequent pages to simplify your preparation.

You may also wish to delve deeper into the wealth of additional resources available in your Spark subscription.

SPARK RESOURCE TITLE	TIME COMMITMENT
1. <a href="#">Attracting Talent During a Worker Shortage</a>	Article - 7 min read
2. <a href="#">The Big Factors that Attract the Best Freelancers</a>	Article - 6 min read
3. <a href="#">Recruiting and Retaining Millennials</a>	Video - 7 min watch
4. <a href="#">Rethink Job Qualifications</a>	Video - 3 min watch
5. <a href="#">Is Your Company Inclusive of Neurodivergent Employees?</a>	Article - 5 min read
6. <a href="#">5 Ways to Infuse Diversity and Inclusion into Your Organization</a>	Video – 7 min watch
7. <a href="#">What You Can Do to Advance Equity</a>	Video – 3 min watch

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### PREPARATION FOR SPARK DISCUSSION AT YOUR MEETING

- **WPO Chairs:** Share this entire document with your members ahead of your meeting and encourage them to review content.
- **WPO Members:** You're welcome to distribute this within your organization to facilitate your own discussions on this subject. Please keep in mind that a paid Spark subscription is required for your team to access the complete articles; alternatively, they can utilize the provided Executive Summaries if the subscription is not in place.

### SCOPE

This Spark Kit focusses specifically on finding and attracting great candidates. Future kits will cover other related topics such as onboarding, retention, and performance management.

Of course, feel free to follow the needs of your group and broaden the discussion as required. Just note that the set of resources provided are specifically related to ways to find and attract talent to small and medium sized businesses.

### LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Creative ways to find and attract talent during a worker shortage.
- How to compete with companies who have more resources.
- Ensuring Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB) are at the forefront.

### SPARK DISCUSSION: 30 – 90 MINUTES

Initiate your discussions with these questions and consider adopting a round-table approach where members can share their experiences. The timing can be adjusted based on the desired depth of exploration and the available time slots on your agenda.

- What has worked well in terms of attracting top talent?
- What challenges are you experiencing?
- What are you hoping to gain from this topic discussion?
- Please share your key learnings from the Spark resources.

### DISCUSSION WRAP-UP

We recommend concluding the discussion by requesting key takeaways and any commitments from each participant regarding their plans for implementation and significant insights gained.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY POINTS FOR SPARK RESOURCES**

*(see chart on page 1 for a list of the articles and videos)*

### **Attracting Talent During a Worker Shortage – Article, 7 min read**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As of late April 2021, the U.S. faced a record high of over 9 million open jobs despite higher unemployment rates, causing a labor shortage. The challenge is particularly acute in filling low-wage and hourly positions. This article discusses innovative strategies to attract high-quality talent in a changing labor market.

#### **KEY POINTS:**

- 1. Reassess Conventional Approaches:** The conventional approaches to hiring won't solve current challenges. Revisit underlying assumptions and stress-test them, acknowledging the evolving labor market.
- 2. Optimize Location and Accessibility:** For hourly positions, geographic proximity is crucial. Enhance accessibility by reducing commuting time through innovative work schedules or offering transportation assistance.
- 3. Adapt Salary to Cost of Living:** Adjust salaries to align with the cost of living to attract and retain talent. Breaking with market norms and offering competitive wages can significantly enhance recruitment efforts.
- 4. Tap into Underutilized Talent Pools:** Identify and target underrepresented talent pools, such as older workers, to gain a competitive edge. Consider partnerships with childcare providers to support women in the workforce.
- 5. Prioritize Covid and Other Safety Measures:** Address Covid-related health concerns by investing in comprehensive safety measures at the workplace. Implement best practices and provide regular updates to boost employee confidence in a safe environment.

## **The Big Factors That Attract the Best Freelancers – Article, 6 min read**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The article explores the increasing use of agile (outsourced and/or freelance) talent in organizations, highlighting that over 50% of global companies plan to increase their use of agile talent in the future. It delves into why organizations are relying more on contingent talent and the top reasons behind this shift.

### **KEY POINTS:**

- 1. Reasons for Increasing Use of Contingent Talent:** The top reasons organizations are increasing their use of contingent talent include leveraging expertise, reducing costs, avoiding permanent headcount addition, speeding up project completion, and gaining fresh perspectives and ideas from external talent.
- 2. Challenges and Complaints:** The top complaints from both executives and external talent regarding their relationship range from cultural misfit to lack of commitment from external talent, and slow decision-making to insufficient buy-in from organizations.
- 3. Alignment Factors for Attracting Agile Talent:** The article suggests four alignment factors essential for building mutually satisfying relationships with agile talent: strategic alignment, performance alignment, relationship alignment, and administrative alignment.
- 4. Building Reputation:** Organizations adopting a surgical or transformational approach to agile talent need to communicate these changes effectively to the agile talent communities they depend on, thus building a positive reputation and attracting top external talent.
- 5. Alignment as a Driver:** Agile talent seeks alignment with the organization in terms of strategic contribution, recognition, a sense of importance, and ease of working, making alignment a key driver for attracting and retaining external talent.

## **Rethink Job Qualifications – Video, 3 min watch**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

“The old way of thinking about job qualifications doesn't work anymore. A skills-based approach will help you bring in people with new perspectives and give your organization a competitive advantage.”

### **KEY POINTS:**

- 1. Qualification Beyond Traditional Definitions:** The video challenges the notion of a single "most qualified" candidate and suggests that qualification is determined by possessing the necessary skills, competencies, and experiences relevant to the job.
- 2. Skills-Based Qualification:** Relevant skills and competencies are the core factors in determining qualification, regardless of whether they were gained through traditional work, volunteer work, or other experiences.
- 3. Transferable Experience Matters:** Experience gained in various circumstances, even outside a specific industry or environment, can be highly valuable and qualify a candidate for a position if the skills are transferable and applicable.
- 4. Considering Supplementary Talents:** While qualifications are paramount, considering additional talents candidates bring, such as language proficiency or diverse industry knowledge, can provide a team with complementary strengths and perspectives.
- 5. Broad Understanding of Qualification:** Adopting a broad perspective on skills and experiences leads to a more diverse workforce, fostering innovation, new approaches, and a true competitive advantage for the organization.

## **Recruiting and Retaining Millennials – Video, 7 min watch**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Venture for America is a two-year fellowship program for college graduates seeking to learn entrepreneurship by working in startup companies. Learn from their program about some ways to support new grads and young employees.

### **KEY POINTS:**

- 1. Focus on Non-monetary Aspects:** The program emphasizes non-monetary drivers like community, network, training, purpose, and support to attract and retain participants. The option for future career moves creates a sense of developmental opportunity rather than a lifetime commitment.
- 2. Importance of Peer Relationships:** Creating a sense of community among participants is vital. Cohorts are formed to foster strong connections among young entrepreneurs, enhancing their commitment and engagement within the program and the companies they work for.
- 3. Understanding and Addressing Motivation:** Mentoring this generation involves understanding their individual goals and motivations, which may not always align with organizational objectives. Supporting them in achieving personal goals cultivates loyalty and engagement.
- 4. Character Development and Growth:** Venture for America recognizes that college graduates are works in progress, and the program, by exposing them to startup experiences, helps shape their character, transforming them into resilient, entrepreneurial leaders capable of positively impacting organizations and society.

## **Is Your Company Inclusive of Neurodivergent Employees? – Article, 5 min read**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The article discusses the rising trend of employing neurodiverse individuals, including those with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and Tourette's syndrome, among others. This demographic shift poses both a challenge and an opportunity for employers, with an emphasis on accommodating and leveraging the unique skills and perspectives of neurodivergent workers.

### **KEY POINTS:**

- 1. Surge in Neurodiverse Workforce:** Employers are witnessing a significant increase in neurodiverse workers, including those with autism, ADHD, and related conditions. The number of people with autism entering the workforce is notably rising, creating a demographic shift in the labor market.
- 2. Addressing High Unemployment Rates:** Despite the growth, unemployment rates among neurodivergent individuals remain high, with estimates exceeding 80%. Employers are focusing on specialized employment initiatives to address the challenges neurodivergent candidates face during the hiring process.
- 3. In-House Neurodiversity Hiring Programs:** Major companies such as SAP, Microsoft, EY, JPMorgan Chase, and Ford Motor Company are actively involved in the "Neurodiversity @ Work Roundtable," an initiative dedicated to implementing neurodiversity hiring programs. These programs emphasize showcasing skills in non-conventional interview settings and providing ongoing support to neurodivergent employees.
- 4. Role of Neurodiversity Workforce Intermediaries:** Neurodiversity workforce intermediaries are emerging as critical players in expanding neurodiversity employment opportunities. Look for one in your area to support your hiring practices.
- 5. Enhancing Neurodiversity Engagement:** As neurodivergent individuals increasingly enter the workforce, employers must respond to the growing interest in neurodiversity employment from various stakeholders, including employees, shareholders, and customers. Creating inclusive hiring initiatives and fostering a neurodiverse-friendly workplace environment are crucial strategies for the future.

## **Ways to Infuse Diversity & Inclusion Into Your Organization – Video, 7 min watch**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In today's business landscape, diversity and inclusion (D&I) are not merely optional initiatives but are integral to creating a more equitable, representative, and high-performing workforce. An expert psychologist and a leadership coach each offer five strategies to infuse D&I throughout an organization, fostering progress and positive change.

### **KEY POINTS:**

- 1. Repositioning D&I:** D&I should no longer be seen as a special initiative or a side issue. It should be integrated into the core mindset of the organization, with a fundamental shift from a one-off effort to a pervasive approach.
- 2. CEO's Role:** The CEO plays a crucial role in championing D&I. By positioning themselves as the top advocate for D&I efforts, they set the tone for the entire organization and demonstrate its importance to the C-suite.
- 3. Business Strategy Integration:** D&I should be central to the organization's business strategy, moving beyond an HR-centric focus. It influences choices about how to win, where to play, and the future direction of the company.
- 4. Accountability:** Executive leaders should be held accountable for driving D&I outcomes within their respective domains. Clearly stated goals, responsibility assignments, and individual leadership accountability are essential for progress.
- 5. Mitigating Implicit Bias:** Identifying and addressing systemic biases at every level of the organization, from recruitment to progression, is crucial. Positive interventions are needed to effect change and create a fairer, more inclusive workplace.
- 6. Leadership Development Coaching:** Shifting from traditional diversity training to leadership development coaching is essential. Managers are the primary determinants of an individual's daily work experience.
- 7. CEO Impact:** The conversations and awareness surrounding D&I have evolved significantly in the wake of global events, such as George Floyd's death. Many leaders have gained a newfound understanding of the experiences of their employees, leading to increased awareness of historical and current social and economic disparities. Empathy has grown, and many leaders now realize the urgency of addressing these issues, with CEOs playing a transformative role in effecting positive change.



## **What You Can Do to Advance Equity – Video, 3 min watch**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Creating positive change and advancing equity in the workplace doesn't require a leadership position. By diversifying your network and collaborating with like-minded colleagues, everyone can make a meaningful impact. This approach emphasizes the importance of collective action and urgency in addressing issues like racism, sexism, and wage equity.

### **KEY POINTS:**

- 1. Collective Action for Change:** Organizations can rapidly re-engineer their workplaces when leaders prioritize and act with urgency, as seen with the response to COVID-19. A similar approach is needed to eradicate racism and sexism in the workplace.
- 2. Diversify Your Network:** Examine your professional network to see if it is homogenous. Research indicates that people often surround themselves with individuals similar to them. Diversifying your network is critical for addressing workplace equity issues.
- 3. Inclusivity in Decision-Making:** Assess who you seek advice from, provide advice to, and collaborate with at work. Recognize who is included and excluded from these opportunities, as it can reveal disparities in the workplace.
- 4. Collaboration for Change:** To effect change, especially when you lack the authority to change policies, collaborate with colleagues who share your goals. Join forces with individuals who support initiatives like wage equity, as these efforts benefit everyone on the team.
- 5. Collective Advocacy:** Unite with colleagues to raise awareness and advocate for change. Organize campaigns, send emails, or voice concerns in company meetings to emphasize the urgency and importance of issues like wage equity.
- 6. Leadership and Competitive Advantage:** Taking the lead on equity issues sets you and your organization apart. Addressing wage equity and advocating for transparency demonstrates boldness and a commitment to putting the organization's best interests first.
- 7. Competitive Advantage:** By addressing equity issues and holding your organization accountable for achieving goals, you gain a competitive advantage. This demonstrates a commitment to transparency and responsible corporate behavior, setting your organization apart as one that actively works towards equity.

## BONUS CONTENT – AI GENERATED TIPS FOR INNOVATIVE TALENT ATTRACTION

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Innovative talent attraction ideas can help organizations stand out in a competitive job market and attract top talent. Here are some creative and effective strategies to attract talent to your organization:

1. **Virtual Reality (VR) Office Tours:** Utilize VR technology to create interactive virtual tours of your workplace. Prospective candidates can explore the office environment, culture, and team dynamics without physically being there.
2. **Gamified Recruitment Process:** Design a recruitment process that incorporates gamification elements. Create interactive challenges or puzzles related to the job role to engage candidates and assess their skills in a fun and innovative way.
3. **Personalized Career Progression Roadmaps:** Provide potential employees with personalized career progression roadmaps, outlining potential growth opportunities within the organization. Highlighting a clear career path can attract ambitious talent.
4. **AI-Powered Candidate Matching:** Implement AI algorithms to match candidate profiles with job requirements, enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of the recruitment process. This helps in identifying the best-fit candidates more effectively.
5. **Collaborative Projects for Auditions:** Instead of traditional interviews, offer candidates a chance to work on a real or simulated project with your team for a few days. This allows both the candidate and the team to assess the fit and potential collaboration.
6. **Employee Ambassador Program:** Encourage your current employees to act as brand ambassadors. Let them share their experiences and insights on social media platforms, giving potential candidates a genuine view of your company culture.
7. **Crowdsourced Job Descriptions:** Involve your team in creating job descriptions. This ensures that the description accurately represents the role and the culture of your organization while fostering a sense of ownership among current employees.
8. **Remote Work Opportunities:** Offer flexible or remote work options, showcasing the organization's commitment to work-life balance. Highlight how employees can maintain productivity while enjoying the benefits of a flexible work arrangement.
9. **Innovative Perks and Benefits:** Introduce unique benefits such as wellness programs, pet-friendly policies, educational stipends, or subscription services that align with the preferences and lifestyle of your target talent pool.
10. **AI-Powered Pre-Interview Screening:** Utilize AI to conduct initial candidate screenings, saving time and resources. AI can assess skills, personality traits, and cultural fit based on candidates' resumes and online presence.



11. **Collaborations with Universities:** Partner with educational institutions to offer workshops, guest lectures, or internship programs. This provides early exposure to potential talent and helps in building relationships with academic communities.
12. **Hackathons or Innovation Challenges:** Host hackathons or innovation challenges related to your industry or specific projects. Invite candidates to participate and showcase their skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.
13. **Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives:** Promote a diverse and inclusive workplace and highlight these initiatives in your employer branding. Showcase the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion to attract a broad range of candidates.
14. **Augmented Reality (AR) Job Postings:** Use AR to create interactive job postings. Candidates can scan a QR code to access a video or interactive content about the job role, team, and workplace.
15. **Community Involvement and Volunteering:** Encourage employees to participate in community service or volunteering initiatives. Showcase these efforts to demonstrate your organization's commitment to social responsibility and community involvement.

Remember to tailor these ideas based on your organization's industry, culture, and target talent demographic to achieve the best results.