
Perspectives: Finding, Hiring Avionics Talent

By Michael DeLaney

Demand has grown dramatically for cutting edge technology in avionics, from generating new systems to updating and modernizing existing systems.

Considering that just a few years ago the avionics sector was relatively dormant, this demand represents a major shift. It also poses a huge obstacle to the labor market, which is facing a declining number of engineering graduates and an escalating number of baby boomers retiring.

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As a result, the competition for talent is heating up — and will likely only intensify. This is especially true for certain skills and positions within the industry, including those candidates with leadership abilities, as well as those in software engineering, mechanical engineering, hardware engineering, systems engineering and program management.

Finding top-tier candidates to fill these positions can, at times, seem like a daunting task.

Every company within the avionics industry is hiring and competing for similar talent. So why should a potential candidate choose to work for you over your competition?

The average candidate is going to evaluate your organization based on several factors, including compensation, opportunity for personal growth, company growth and stability, and technology.

A competitive employee benefits package can make the difference between an employee taking a position with your company — or with another company offering a better package. Therefore, time spent analyzing and improving benefits is a worthwhile investment in the stock of your company.

It's becoming clear, though, that monetary rewards alone won't catapult a company into a desirable place to work. You must also concentrate on creating a work environment where employees feel like they're adding value, enhancing their skills and working in a community that's an enjoyable place to spend eight or 10 hours of the day.

Intangibles such as "there is a strong team feeling here," or "we are known for cutting edge technology," or "we're just a cool place to work" are even more important than salary and benefits, particularly with younger candidates. In fact, recruiters at some aerospace companies are increasingly going out of their way to get in tune with the younger generation through mainstream information exchanges.

Before you get into the position where you need an employee — or two or three — immediately, take a proactive approach to seeking out talent. Get referrals from your existing employees. Develop relationships with college career centers. And regularly participate in job fairs to not only attract candidates, but also increase your company's visibility. Being proactive, rather than reactive, will give your company a competitive edge.

Keep in mind, though, that you must act fast once you find a talented candidate. Good candidates have a short shelf life and if your company's hiring process is slow and cumbersome, you'll lose them.

If you have a critical hiring need, it may be time to contact a professional recruiting firm. Besides helping you find the best talent when you need it, a competent recruiting firm can also help you enhance your company's hiring process.

A good recruiting firm will also know how to make your company more appealing to a potential job candidate. They will consult with you to increase your company's offer-to-acceptance ratios.

And they will manage your expectations, as well as the candidate's expectations, in order to increase your number of successful hires. Who better to understand the current market conditions!

There is huge competition within the avionics sector to attract and retain the best talent. Taking a business-as-usual approach to recruiting amounts to fighting a losing battle. But by taking a proactive approach, optimizing your company's attractiveness to potential hires, and, in some cases, working with a professional recruiting firm, you can successfully win the war for talent.