

hire impact

attraction
retention
engagement



Attract winning administrative support talent



introduction

What greater a competitive advantage can any company have than a talented, stable and engaged workforce. Of course, building such a workforce takes time, organizational commitment and a well defined approach in three key areas:

- **Attraction:** Appealing to candidates who are the right fit for a position in your organization and inspiring them to pursue employment with your company.
- **Retention:** Taking measures to ensure that employees choose to remain with the company even if a comparable job becomes available in another company.
- **Engagement:** Creating the right mix of factors — leadership, environment, colleagues, stability, opportunities for advancement and other individual criteria — that contribute to employees feeling connected to an organization and going the extra mile when performing their work.

Because each of these factors is uniquely related to building a winning workforce, Randstad has created a series of guides that will provide employers with actionable information. In this guide, we will discuss Attraction, with a focus on employees in administrative support roles.



- Understand what attracts administrative candidates and finding the right match for the position and the organization.
- Assess your company's current portfolio of attractors for administrative talent.
- Appeal to the right talent throughout the hiring process.
- Make the right investments in salaries and other attraction drivers.

We have also included a Salary Guide for administrative support roles to assist companies in benchmarking their salary levels against their local employment market.

Attraction drivers: what's important to administrative talent

Finding the right employees is always a challenge, regardless of the economic environment. When the economy is booming, candidates have many competing offers and employers may feel compelled to compromise. When unemployment rises, employees may pursue and accept positions they will leave when the economic clouds clear.

Attracting a winning workforce involves meeting both your company's requirements and those of prospective employees. It centers on clear hiring criteria to identify people who will be the best fit for your company and those who will view your opportunity as their best option for employment – now and in the foreseeable future. Without paying close attention to both of these factors, employers will risk hiring people in the year ahead that will be out the door the next year.

Overview of attraction drivers

People have a wide range of reactions when asked what they want in their next job. Some can recite an in-depth checklist on a moment's notice, while others simply say they'll know it when they see it. Most people, however, have a similar short list of needs and wants, which is prioritized and expanded upon to fit each person's unique criteria for that next position.

Towers Watson, in the Towers Perrin Global Workforce Study 2007-08, described five main attraction drivers for workers in the U.S.:

- Competitive base pay
- Competitive health care benefits
- Vacation and paid time off
- Convenient work location
- Flexible schedule

These attractors are relatively tangible, as they can be measured and benchmarked against what other employers offer in a given market.



The greatest job challenges cited by admins are juggling multiple priorities, dealing with difficult people, and lack of time to handle the volume of work.

Administrative talent – specific attraction drivers

Good employees have options, and those options have a way of finding them. The rise of the internet has resulted in open season on passive job-seekers. For this reason, the employment equation, or match, has to represent a win for both sides.

The attraction drivers for administrative support talent include both those factors that are more tangible, like pay and benefits, as well as the very important factors of job fit and boss and company match.

- Compensation
- Quality of life
- People
- Stability
- Job content

The International Association of Administrative Professionals Benchmarking Survey found that *“The greatest job challenges cited by admins are juggling multiple priorities, dealing with difficult people, and lack of time to handle the volume of work.”* Since that 2005 study, these challenges have only become more extreme. Given the demands on this workforce, it is no surprise that administrative job seekers often cite expanded ideal job criteria to include factors that will minimize or compensate for such challenges and create a positive at-work experience.

Compensation



- **Competitive base pay**

Does the pay fit the position, title and job requirements? Administrative support staff want compensation that is appropriate for their contribution, skills and experience, and competitive with other opportunities in the market. Companies should ensure that pay and profile match and, if not, modify one or the other. Underpaying and/or hiring over-qualified people rarely works in anything but the short term.
- **Benefits and other “perks”**

Benefits packages and employee contributions vary dramatically and can figure prominently in the attraction equation. Employees are increasingly adept at quantifying an employer’s benefit offering and factoring it in to their total rewards assessment. In general, administrative talent place a high value on benefits, especially on basics like healthcare that directly offset out-of-pocket expenses. Employers with competitive packages should ensure they receive the attention they deserve in the attraction process. Those with less robust packages may want to explore ways to compensate (for example, flex time or paid time off) and would be well advised to provide candidates with benefits information early on to avoid refused offers or early turnover.

Quality of life



- **Commute**

How long is the commute and is it reasonable given the market? Do you offer alternative work arrangements (such as flexible schedules) to help offset any concerns? Commute is of high importance to this category of employees. In times of higher unemployment, candidates may appear extremely willing to accept long commutes, but this willingness has a way of evaporating as conditions improve. As a general rule, the risk of turnover is high if the candidate has not worked somewhere with similar commutes in the past.

- **Schedule**

Work schedule, number of working hours and overtime are all important to administrative support employees due to commuting arrangements, availability, their obligations outside of work, and their desire or need for additional income. Without exploring the reasons behind a candidate's scheduling preferences and availability for extra hours, it is good to ensure that there is alignment early in the interview process around hours and overtime expectations. The recommended approach here is the same as with benefits. If the schedule is attractive, use it to attract. If the schedule is potentially problematic, inform the candidate early on to avoid job refusals and turnover.

People



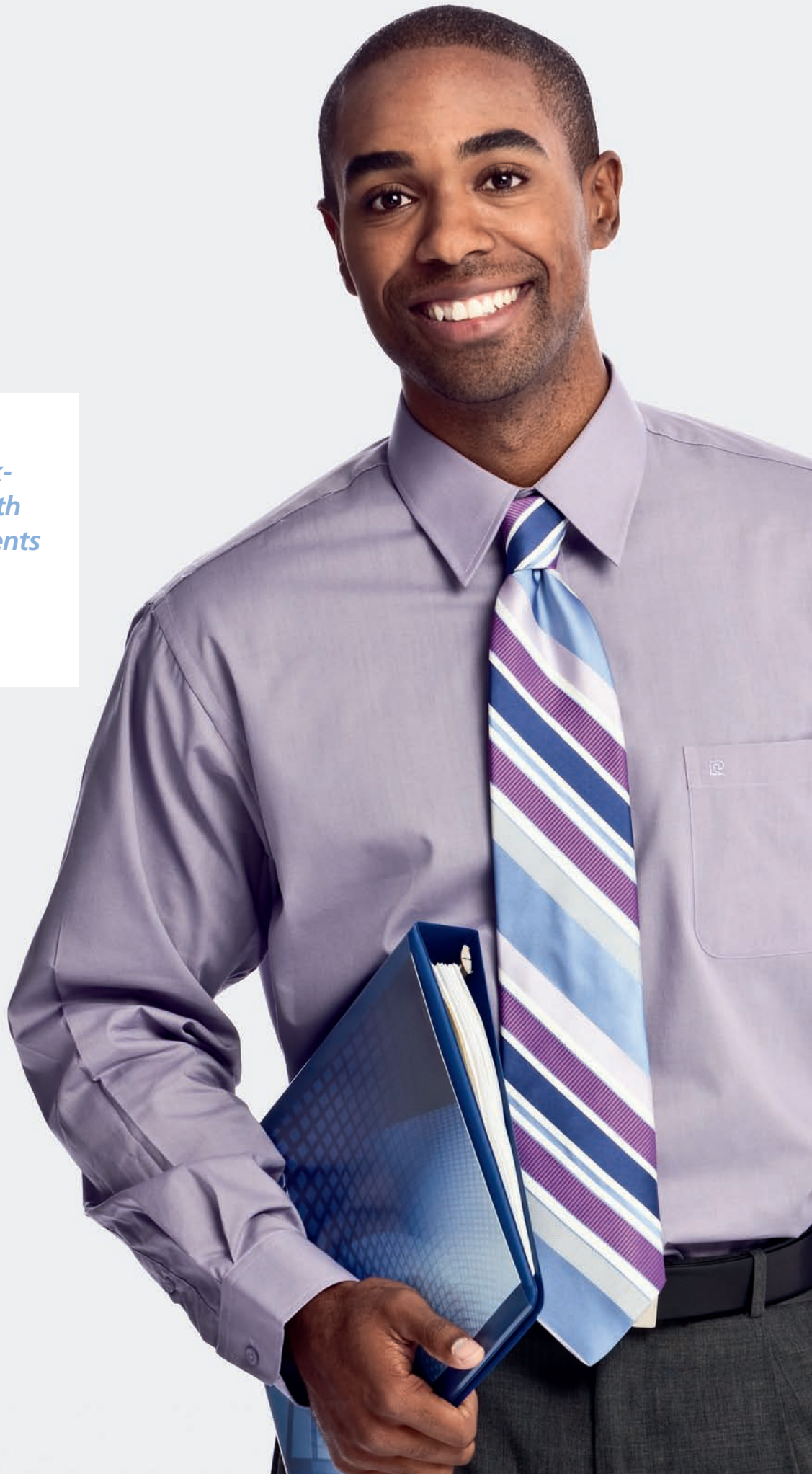
- **Boss fit**

The chemistry and fit between manager and employee can predict the ultimate success and sustainability of the employment relationship. For this reason, it is important to explore what a potential employee is looking for in a boss and the factors that have contributed to the success or failure of their previous manager-employee relationships.

- **Team and company fit**

Pressure, values, work style, level of structure and formality, and degree and style of supervision all contribute to this important element of match. An essential part of any recruiting strategy is to attract employees who will be motivated by their work environment, who will work well with other team members, and who will embrace, or at least respect, the company's values. Employees are most productive in a team and environment where their principles, priorities and objectives fit. For this reason, allow potential employees to "interview" and be interviewed by their prospective team wherever possible. This will provide the company and the candidate with valuable information and will engage the team in the success of the candidate that is selected.

Attracting a winning workforce involves meeting both your company's requirements and those of prospective employees.



Stability



- **Company and position**

Not surprisingly, company stability has re-surfaced as a key attraction driver. What is the likelihood I'll have a job tomorrow? How stable is the company financially? Is the company in a recession-proof or high-growth industry? Even though these criteria may be difficult for any one manager or team to change, the hiring team can communicate effectively to address concerns. Although everyone knows that no job is truly guaranteed, candidates want to feel confident that the next position they take is relatively secure, especially if they are currently employed.

- **Overall reputation and work environment**

Is the company known to be a good place to work? Do people get along well? Does the company value employees and treat them well? Does the company have a reputation for integrity and quality? Similar to workforce satisfaction, the internal environment and the reputation of the company are indicators of the potential employee's future experience. Word of mouth through formal and informal networks is powerful. And in today's world, social media sites magnify the power of such networks. A company's reputation is likely to influence prospective workers – at least the highest quality of workers – who have a choice in their next career moves.

Job content



- **Skills match and job satisfaction**

Are the duties of the position aligned with the candidate's skills and experience? Do they have a legitimate interest in performing the role? Is there enough variety to stimulate and satisfy the employee? Does the role provide the employee with opportunities to learn or develop new skills? Administrative workers want positions that are a good fit for their skills and experience but that also provide opportunities to develop new skills, an overall trend that is magnified by the need to keep themselves marketable after the economic flux of recent years.

From the moment a candidate applies to a job you've posted online, submits a resume to your company, or visits your website to learn more, the formal relationship with your company begins.

A win-win match – what are your attractors?

Understanding what administrative candidates want is only the beginning. The steps below can deliver a meaningful **“Portfolio of Attractors”** that will appeal to the right administrative worker for your organization. Together, they provide an opportunity for companies to differentiate themselves and hire talent that is the best match for them. Companies that want to attract this talent, therefore, should follow a systematic approach to ensure they offer what appeals to this group:

1. **Assess** your current attraction drivers and identify opportunities to improve appeal.
2. **Ensure** you are targeting the right talent base for your company and opportunities and target those that match what you’re offering. Create a specific position profile for your target candidate – know your “must-haves” versus your “nice to have’s.”
3. **Create** a meaningful Portfolio of Attractors that will appeal to the administrative talent you want to hire and inspire them to pursue employment with your company.
4. **Communicate** effectively about your company, positions and what you offer.
5. **Measure** and adjust on an ongoing basis.

Assess your company’s assets and liabilities

At this stage, you may have some idea of how your company is performing currently in terms of offering what is most important to administrative candidates. However, it is best to start with a fresh, deep assessment to get an accurate baseline of where your organization is today.

In general, companies should use both formal and informal methods to assess how they rate currently from the administrative candidate’s view. Feedback from candidates and new hires is critical and should be obtained through surveys, focus groups, informal discussions and other means. The assessment stage should also include competitive analysis, reviewing public data about pay and other information in your marketplace, and benchmarking against competitors and companies in your geography.

Ensure you are targeting the right talent

Next, companies can begin to refine their hiring criteria to target the type of people they want to hire – those who meet the job qualifications and who are attracted to what the company actually offers. With this approach, you will be able to better identify employees that will perform well, go the extra mile and remain at the company long-term.

For example, one company previously sold candidates on their values and how exciting it was to be in their customer service positions due to variety, job satisfaction and stability.

Good employees have options, and those options have a way of finding them.

Then the company leaders realized the candidates they hired were not working out because they could not meet the demands of the jobs: the positions were stressful and required people who could juggle multiple priorities, and the jobs involved long hours. The company adjusted its approach and began to focus on attracting people who were a better fit, those who had been in similar roles and were truly attracted to the job content, challenges and the responsibilities. In this way, the companies began to attract and hire people who fit better into the positions.

Create a meaningful portfolio of attractors to appeal to this workforce

It is important for companies to ensure they are targeting the right talent base for their opportunities while building up attraction drivers that appeal to this talent. It should never be a matter of forcing candidates to fit when they truly are not a long-term match. Previously, we outlined the attraction drivers for administrative talent: compensation, quality of life, people, stability and job content. When adjusting and promoting each of these attraction categories, look at the company's offerings and compare the assets and liabilities to what the target talent base desires.

Of course, companies cannot offer everything an employee may want. Thus, it is critical that they prioritize carefully in alignment with what workers value most. If companies are not competitive in key areas like pay, it is less likely that improving in other areas will benefit much in attracting and hiring the right administrative talent.

In some cases, companies may not have flexibility to adjust in a category. For example, pay scales may be set annually or adjusted once a year. However, companies may determine that their pay scales are at or above competitive levels. So their criteria may state that they want people for whom the position represents a certain percentage increase in pay. Also, they may know that the demands of a particular position are great in terms of overtime, the boss or colleagues on a team. In such cases, companies may ask specific questions during the interview to assess a person's fit for such demands as well as their attraction for what it provides, such as great variety and the ability to advance if they excel in such an environment.

Communicate effectively about what you offer

It's been said that it is better to under-promise and over-deliver than to over-promise and under-deliver. This is certainly true when recruiting administrative talent. If you paint a picture of your company or the job that is not realistic, then you will likely hire talent that will be gone as soon as a position that's a true fit becomes available elsewhere.

First, companies should communicate, as clearly as possible, what they offer as an organization. Of course, how much can be communicated depends upon the medium. More detailed information can be disclosed on a corporate website, for example, about social responsibility or green initiatives.

It is also important that companies assess any gaps they cannot readily overcome and establish a strategy to counter those gaps. A company may be new and have little or no reputation in the market, for example. It can address this gap by emphasizing its experienced leadership and high-growth industry prospects.



Communicating effectively about what you offer means that you'll communicate on two levels:

The definable aspects

- Facts about your company and the job, including size of the company, industry, location, job title and job requirements.
- Details pertaining to tangible attraction drivers: pay, healthcare benefits, flexible schedules.

The emotional and value-oriented aspects

- Descriptors that specifically relate to the company's employment brand, which can include innovative, quality-oriented, progressive.
- Details pertaining to aspirational and added value attraction drivers, such as opportunities for career advancement, mission tied to the greater good.

When prospective employees read a job advertisement, they should understand the requirements of the job and the basics about the company. But they also should get a compelling description that appeals in an emotional way. It is important to convey an idea of the heart and soul of the company – the values the firm stands for and lives by on a daily basis. One job seeker commented, "Who wrote that ad? It was the language in the ad that got my attention – the parts about integrity, quality focus and leadership..."

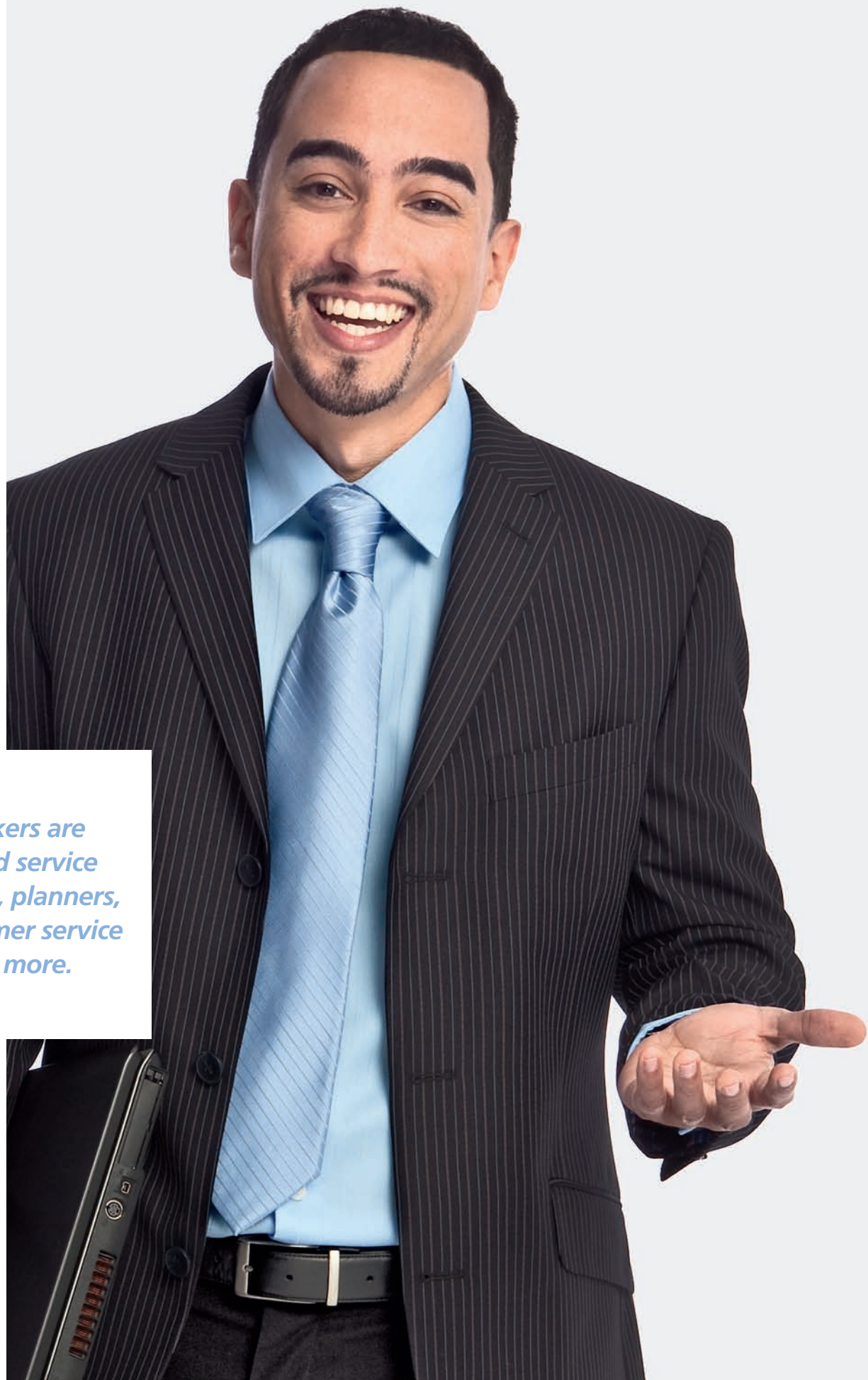
Measure and adjust as needed

Companies should put steps in place to ensure they are measuring how well they perform when it comes to attracting this segment of the workforce and identifying any opportunities for improvement. They should continually assess time-to-offer/time-to-hire metrics and adjusting to improve them can be important to talent and employers alike.

It is equally important to use surveys, focus groups and feedback from new hires, candidates and employees to stay in tune with what they want, how your company is performing and how you can do better. The competitive landscape for administrative talent is constantly evolving, as are the priorities of the administrative talent themselves. Companies need to stay informed and up to date to effectively attract and hire the best administrative talent on the market for their needs.



If you paint a picture of your company or the job that is not realistic, then you will likely hire talent that will be gone as soon as a position that's a true fit becomes available elsewhere.



Administrative workers are often organizers and service providers – greeters, planners, coordinators, customer service representatives and more.

If you love them, don't lose them: maintain attraction during the hiring process

During the hiring process, companies are often competing with other employers, so it's important to pay close attention to how they are keeping administrative candidates attracted during the hiring process. Administrative workers are often organizers and service providers – greeters, planners, coordinators, customer service representatives and more – so they notice when things do not go smoothly. Begin the personal contact with the administrative job seeker in the most positive and professional way, not just as a step in your process. Ensure that this tone continues throughout the entire candidate experience.

Knowing where you stand will help you adjust your own process where possible or communicate accordingly.

Communicate the timeline and time-to-hire

Most of us can remember the great candidate we lost during the hiring process to another opportunity. Quite often, this is due to a lengthy hiring process – or one in which the steps along the way are not communicated to the candidate. Time-to-hire from the candidate's view is important because they want to move through the hiring process quickly and be updated regularly on where they are along the way. Communicate and agree on a timeline at the outset and stick to it. If another offer comes along before your process is complete, the candidate may wait for you, provided the end is in sight.

Communicate attraction drivers early and often

Your team should be aware of the attraction drivers for administrative talent and communicate those early in the process. For example, if your company has rigid work schedules, it is always better to communicate that up front to assess who is truly a good match for what you need. Otherwise, you'll be wasting time with the wrong applicants and losing others you don't get to fast enough.

It is also important to give people opportunities to ask questions that interview etiquette would otherwise prevent them from asking. The more informed a candidate is about compensation, company stability, the team and job content, the better. By communicating early and often, you are more likely to keep the right people interested.

Assess where you stand along the way

Professional recruiting firms like Randstad know that asking the right questions of candidates can ensure you are able to hire the right talent and avoid surprises. It is good to openly discuss whether the candidate is entertaining other offers, exploring other positions or where they are in the hiring process with other employers. Knowing where you stand will help you adjust your own process where possible or communicate accordingly. You'll also gain insight into how much risk there is of losing the candidate.

Ensure a good experience from the first interaction – every touch point matters

The impressions that candidates get from a company's website, recruitment marketing efforts and interactions with hiring managers or HR staff are opportunities to impress or discourage a potential employee. From the moment a candidate applies to a job you've posted online, submits a resume to your company, or visits your website to learn more, the formal relationship with your company begins. In fact, the first interaction as a job seeker marks the start of that person's engagement with your organization. That encounter sets the stage for how he or she will feel about the company during the hiring process *and* after work begins, if the position is accepted.

When you think about the steps in your recruiting process, do you know how each one feels to an administrative job seeker? Do your job advertisements accurately reflect the positions and describe your company? Do they communicate clearly enough to attract those candidates that match your job? Are e-mails clearly and professionally written, without spelling errors? Do candidates get a reply when they contact your company – or at least an automatic e-mail response when they apply for a job?

Well-prepared interviewers make the best impressions

Leaders have an opportunity to use the interview stage as a key differentiator, enabling them to advance the right administrative candidates to the offer stage by giving them the best possible preview of the company and the best experience overall. To accomplish this, you should ensure that interviewers are prepared through both effective interview training and preparation for specific candidates. Aside from the obvious preparation, such as resume review and briefing on the specific candidate, companies should consider the following:

- Does your company have an interview plan for each role?
- Are interviewers experienced and trained to conduct interviews? Have they received training in behavioral interviewing or other techniques?
- Avoid questions about personal circumstances, such as "Where is your daycare?" or outlandish ones: "If you were an animal, what sort of animal would you be and why?"
- Do they know the candidate's "hot buttons" and the gaps between the company's job needs and the candidate's attributes?
- How does your company debrief or share information, including concerns or questions a candidate may have, so that these can be addressed before the candidate leaves the building?



Be prepared for candidates to ask more questions

After the staff reductions, changes in job functions, shortages of jobs and overall economic instability of recent years, candidates are being more thorough when they evaluate job alternatives. They want to be certain that their next career moves are the right ones. Administrative workers have experienced such an increase in workload and an expansion in the skills required for positions, that companies should be prepared for questions about the work environment, job duties, overtime and available resources.

Introduce the rest of the team early, including the boss and colleagues

Companies should make introductions early, even if there are still other candidates in process. Administrative candidates place a high priority on the boss and colleagues. They will get a better feel for the employment environment if they meet members of the team with whom they'll be working, even if only for a brief introduction during the first interview.

Candidate today, customer tomorrow

Employment candidates are important contributors to the reputation of your company in the market and they are potential referral sources for other open positions in the future. Companies should treat all candidates with the utmost respect and inform them in a timely manner about the outcome.