



### **An Alternative Strategy For Recruitment Success!**

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To have a successful recruitment advertising program, a company must learn to choose advertising vehicles that do the best job of reaching the right person at the right time with the right message. This applies not only to the HR department and hiring managers but to CEO's, CFO's, and others on the management team whose responsibility it is to approve budgets and keep an eye on the bottom line.

How can a company determine which are the best outlets to use for their specific staffing challenges? One of the most important factors in any successful recruitment advertising program is Targeting. Where should recruitment advertising messages be placed in order to generate maximum return on investment?

Many years in the recruitment advertising industry have taught me that not all HR professionals or corporate managers are familiar with more than a minimal number of recruitment advertising tools and targeting methods. As a result, a colleague and I created "The Recruitment Advertising Toolbox," a workshop for HR recruitment professionals, as well as their immediate supervisors and other members of the management team. The workshop presents information about several recruitment advertising options, the pro's and con's of each option, how to use each option for maximum effectiveness and how to create an effective recruitment ad/commercial that will attract qualified applicants and separate the company from their competitors. One of the most eye opening moments in the workshop is when we discuss Effective Targeting Strategies.

Effective targeting involves taking off the HR and/or "Personal Opinion" blinders and really putting yourself into the place of a potential applicant. In the workshop we do an exercise where we first discuss the daily schedules of the attendees: getting up in the morning; getting ready for work; going to work; at work; coming home from work; after work activities; shuttling children to and from activities; winding down and going to bed.

As we discuss each part of their day we ask the attendees to tell us what's going on around them at the time. For example, getting up in the morning, most attendees say they have the radio or television on to check out the weather, traffic, etc. On the way to work most attendees are listening to the radio, a few listening to CD's or Books On Tape. At work it's the radio and surfing the net. On the way home it's listening to the radio, CD's or books. Working out after work, it's usually the radio or CD's. Shuttling children to and from activities means they are in the car which means listening to the radio, usually the children's favorite station. And it goes on from there.

Here is where the eyes open and the jaws drop. After going through their complete daily schedules, we review all the media resources participants say they come in contact with each day: radio, television, the Internet, CD's and optional listening materials in the car. We then ask if that's everything, the complete list. Every one in the room assures us that we have the complete list. Then the bombshell drops. "Do you realize," we ask, "that not one person in the room said they read the newspaper?" "The media resource where many companies, including

some of you here today, spend most of their recruitment dollars is the media resource that none of you say you come in contact with during a normal day.”

After a moment of stunned silence, attendees begin to throw out a variety of comments, most of which boil down to, “we don’t have time to read the newspaper.” To which we reply, “It’s important for you to realize that the people you’re trying to reach to fill your job openings are people with busy lives, just like you. They don’t have time to read the newspaper, either.” At which point the topic of Effective Targeting Strategies suddenly has everyone’s complete and undivided attention!

In most cases, employers use one of two approaches to targeting when deciding where to place a recruitment ad: Contextual Targeting or Behavioral Targeting. The more mainstream Contextual Targeting is usually associated with the traditional, status quo, “because-we’ve-always-done-it-this-way” approach to recruitment advertising. It has been a long-held media practice that advertisers put ads in an editorial environment where they “fit.” So if it’s a job ad, employers have to put it in the newspaper. And the only place employers should put a job ad in the newspaper is the Classified Section, because “that’s where all the job ads go.”

For many employers, this practice still holds true today despite a well reported long-term trend of flat to sinking newspaper readership. Not to mention the increasing phenomenon of “Distracted Dispersion,” where today’s worker uses multiple media resources for news and entertainment information instead of just one or two resources, as in years past.

Unlike Contextual Targeting, Behavioral Targeting is a proactive strategy that requires employers to put themselves in the place of prospective applicants. Instead of placing recruitment ads in traditional editorial environments where they “fit,” Behavioral Targeting allows employers to go on the offensive, to place job ads in a variety of media touch points where a prospective applicant will be exposed to the hiring messages as they go about their normal daily routine.

For example, according to a recent study conducted by Next Century Media, behavioral ads win hands down in an online environment. The study showed that behavioral targeting generated an average of 17% more ad looks than contextual targeting. Furthermore, after the first exposure, the advantage actually increased, or “...skyrocketed...” to use the language of the release, to 54.

Why are behavioral ads more effective than traditional contextual ads? One thought expressed by Bill Harvey, Next Century Media CEO, is that behavioral ads don’t get lost in the clutter. Says Harvey, “It is probably a combination of more relevancy and less clutter. It could be that there are just too many ads for the same product category attacking the user’s eye in contextual targeting, causing the user to avoid looking at any of them.” Think about the Employment Classified section of a local newspaper. Hundreds of job ads attacking the reader’s eye, causing the reader to skim over the pages without ever really looking at any of ads “up close and personal.” Yet this contextual environment continues to receive the bulk of recruitment advertising dollars from corporate managers and HR recruiters based on a “because-we’ve-always-done-it-this-way” contextual targeting strategy.

Another reason given in support of behavioral ads is the element of surprise. Bill Harvey explains, “when in the market for a product, and finding an ad for that product in a completely unrelated site, the user might react to the surprise of that unexpected event by looking at the ad.” For example, an accounting firm places an ad for an auditor in the Sports section of the local newspaper, instead of the Employment Classifieds. A prospective applicant turns to the Sports section to get his/hers daily box scores and, surprise, there’s an ad for the kind of auditor career opportunity this person has been looking for the past six months! They hadn’t seen it in the Employment Classifieds but here, in the middle of all the box scores, it stands out.

Or a person is sitting in their car, driving into the office. The radio is on and the driver listening to his/her favorite morning show program. As the last notes of a song drift away, surprise, here comes a creative sixty-second ad for a career opportunity in the audit department of a prestigious accounting firm. The ad talks about why people love working for the company and lists some of the benefits provided by the firm. “Wow,” thinks the driver, “I could be doing the same thing I’m doing now but, with this company, I’ll get better profit sharing, more time to

spend with my family, etc.” The driver picks up a cell phone, calls the telephone number given in the ad, and schedules a job interview later that afternoon. The element of surprise pays dividends.

A third idea is that because of their proactive nature, behavioral ads do a better job at delivering higher quality applicants. It has been said that recruitment ads placed in contextual targeting environments are for companies who don't mind being next to hundreds of their competitors and who can afford to wait for prospective applicants, qualified or unqualified, to eventually find their job ad and respond. Recruitment ads placed in behavioral targeting environments, however, are for companies not willing to wait next to hundreds of competitors. Companies who use behavioral targeting strategies to place recruitment ads believe the best higher-quality applicants are already working for somebody else and therefore not actively looking for new career opportunities in Employment Classified sections or on mammoth national job boards. These companies believe they will land higher quality applicants ahead of the competition by placing job ads where future employees can bump into them during the course of normal daily activities.

Corporate managers, especially those in charge of approving recruitment expenditures, as well as HR recruitment professionals, need to be aware that there is a major strategic shift occurring for effective targeting strategies in today's extremely competitive job market. For example, a recent article in the October, 2005 issue of The Delaney Report indicates that contextually based Monster.com is facing its own challenges. A source in the article is quoted as saying, “You never really get quality people so you stop using it.” The article reports that as a result, Monster recently switched to a new advertising agency in an effort to reshape their marketplace positioning.

In a recent business article, author Keith Hammonds writes, “In a knowledge economy, companies with the best talent win. Finding, nurturing, and developing that talent should be one of the most important tasks in a corporation.” To find the best talent a company needs to use media resources and other recruitment tools that cut through the clutter, present career opportunities in environments where they stand out, and reach higher quality applicants who, since they are already working, are probably not consistent users of traditional, contextual targeted resources.

Does this mean a company should abandon all contextually based targeting programs and replace them with behavioral targeting strategies overnight? Of course not, but it does mean that corporate management and HR recruitment professionals need to review and examine their current programs.

Given the increasing evidence of the strength and effectiveness of behavioral ads, it is time to reallocate recruitment advertising budgets and investigate the creation of blended programs. Instead of spending the majority of recruitment dollars in the Employment Classified section or on a national job board, shift a significant portion of spending to behavioral ads and then make them work together. For example, use a job ad during the broadcast of a local Morning News television program to highlight the benefits of working for your company and then invite viewers to apply online at your company's website.

The possibilities are endless. How do you get started? Pull out a piece of paper and make a list of all the different media resources you come in contact with every day on a regular basis. Imagine how your job ad will look and/or sound in each one of these resources. Then take a minute and remember the people you're looking for to fill the job vacancies, those people are just like you!

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#### **About John Mitton :**

John Mitton is the President of Mitton Media. John has spent the past 20 years helping clients attract higher quality applicants with a variety of proactive recruitment tools including Radio, Broadcast and Cable television. He founded Mitton Media in 1995 to fill a void in the recruitment advertising marketplace. Most recruitment firms based their programs on *contextual targeting*. Mitton had experienced a great deal of success with a variety of

behavioral targeting strategies and founded his firm to introduce these strategies and techniques to the recruitment market place.

**About Mitton Media :**

Mitton Media helps clients across the US, Canada and South America meet recruitment challenges by using blended media programs with a focus on behavioral targeting strategies. Mitton Media has capabilities in a number of traditional and non-traditional advertising mediums. Mitton Media's targeted recruitment advertising programs generate immediate response from a higher-quality, diverse applicant base.

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