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## Article

# Modeling the phased implementation of headhunting as a way to fill vacancies

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## MODELING THE PHASED IMPLEMENTATION OF HEADHUNTING AS A WAY TO FILL VACANCIES

*The object of research is a set of stages of processes, used in the application of hunting as a method of closing vacancies. Such stages include: sources of search for candidates, ways of their interest formation, telephone conversation as an interview, negotiations and compilation of statistics with direct transfer of information to the director of the company.*

*In the course of the study, such general scientific and specific research methods as analysis and synthesis, induction, deduction, as well as methods of comparison, observation and a systematic approach, were used. These methods are to determine the results and dynamics when recruiting strategies are changed or when they are combined. With the help of comparison methods and a systematic approach, it was possible to determine the optimal strategy for closing the required number of vacancies in the future. Using the observation method, it was possible to consider the dynamics of indicators from each selection method separately or in different combinations with each other.*

*Among the complex methods, an analysis was used, which allowed to understand the dynamics of indicators and draw conclusions based on them on each of the options for implementing the methods. With the help of induction on the basis of a set of conclusions about each of the options separately, a generalized conclusion was made about the further rationality of the method of hunting as effective for businesses. The simulation allowed us to develop a strategy for the phased implementation of hunting based on direct search and understanding of its difference with the latter. With regard to theoretical methods, in the process of research the transition was made from the definitions and general provisions of the hunt to a specific consideration of the method in the enterprise and its direct implementation.*

*The result of all studies was:*

- summary of theoretical aspects of headhunting as an effective method of attracting staff;
- effective change of dynamics of indicators at the enterprise during introduction of hunting and its combination with direct search;
- a developed strategy for the phased implementation of the hunt to increase the effectiveness of the method.

**Keywords:** headhunting, direct candidate search, recruiter, closing vacancies, sourcing, personnel management, recruitment.

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### 1. Introduction

Against the background of continued quarantine restrictions, the functional areas of most companies are undergoing dynamic changes. For some positions, direct search no longer gives the desired results, which would quickly and efficiently close all vacancies in the company. That is why recruiters are increasingly using alternative ways to attract candidates. One of them is hunting, which helps to close top management vacancies and those that are accompanied by the possession of specific professional competencies. However, despite its popularity, it is a rather specific way of searching, which requires careful preparation and

consideration of many nuances regarding the specifics of both vacancies and candidates themselves. Therefore, this topic is relevant for research and consideration of methods of implementation and determination of effectiveness.

Hunting consulting companies, such as McKinsey & Company (USA) and Booz Allen Hamilton (USA), began to use hunting in the middle of the 20th century, and this practice reached the CIS countries at the end of the 20th century. Since then, it has been gradually used. At first it was only international companies, but today every company is familiar with headhunting.

Headhunting is used in all areas of business, but most often in high technology. Recent studies have examined the

characteristics of headhunting in Silicon Valley [1]. The specifics were in advance in attracting narrow specialists and working with them. Research has also been conducted on the identification of headhunt as a unique and special method of involving staff in the work of scientists [2, 3].

*The object of research* is a set of stages of processes, used in the application of hunting as a method of closing vacancies. Such stages include: sources of search for candidates, ways of their interest formation, telephone conversation as an interview, negotiations and compilation of statistics with direct transfer of information to the director of the company.

*The aim of this study* is to analyze hunting today as an alternative method of closing vacancies to direct search. To do this, an analysis of the effectiveness of hunting in the example of companies, as well as the development of a phased implementation strategy in today's conditions, has been conducted.

## 2. Methods of research

Both general and specific methods of research in the process of determining the effectiveness of hunting as a method of closing vacancies have become useful. Among the general scientific ones are empirical, theoretical and complex.

Most of them are complex, because they were used for analysis, induction and modeling, which allowed a detailed study of indicators and their dynamics of change. This helped to draw conclusions on each of the elements separately and provided the necessary data to create a strategy for headhunting by direct search.

Observations, comparisons and experiments, as part of empirical research, provided an opportunity to create different combinations of ways to search for candidates and as a result to track changes in performance and compare the effectiveness of methods.

Regarding theoretical methods, the basic concepts and definitions of hunting of well-known scientists, their vision of modern problems in this field and methods of solving them were studied. Thus, on the basis of basic concepts, the method of headhunting in the enterprise was introduced. After conducting research during the work process and identifying the main stages with an extended explanation of the details, based on them, a strategy was developed to implement headhunting in enterprises, taking into account all the specifics and obstacles that may occur in the recruiter.

## 3. Research results and discussion

The main goal of the recruiter is to find the «ideal» candidate for an open vacancy. It is usually not so easy to find a candidate that fully meets the vacancies and the specifics of the company. This is due to the large number of companies that call each other in advance and offer work with good and modern business conditions, where highly skilled workers are a kind of «skeleton» of the company in a fast-changing and transforming environment. Such specialists are highly valued by the owners of the company. In addition, recruiters work primarily with resumes, not reviews, to close vacancies, and it is almost impossible to close management positions using job search sites. For example, it is obvious, that a great manager

will not look for a job and even more so will not post his/her resume on job search sites. In order to close a managerial position as a good specialist in the company, it is necessary to find the right candidate and offer him/her the best conditions, benefits and persuade him/her to move to another company. Thus, it is possible to close a difficult vacancy in a short time by a professional who will guarantee the result for a long time. Professionals are not looking for work, but rather work finds them itself. In the working arsenal of the recruiter: direct search, sourcing, screening and for a long time no wonder – headhunting. It is the latter that allows you to cope with the task of closing a managerial position.

Headhunting (verbatim – hunting for heads) is one of the areas of search and selection of key and rare personnel, both by profession and by the level of professionalism of professionals [3]. Hunting is usually resorted to in cases where direct search is not effective, where alternative ways to close vacancies are needed.

Headhunting consulting companies, such as McKinsey & Company and Booz Allen Hamilton (America), began to use hunting in the middle of the 20th century, and this practice reached the CIS countries at the end of the 20th century. Since then, it has been gradually used. At first it was only international companies, but today every company is familiar with headhunting [4].

The specifics of headhunting as a method of closing a vacancy are as follows:

- the vacancy is not posted on job search sites;
- there is no work with hot candidates, cold calls and offers are made;
- the market with a similar type of activity is analyzed and specialists of the necessary direction are determined;
- the recruiter analyzes information about another company and about specialists directly;
- not an interview, but rather negotiations to reach a joint compromise on working conditions and pay [5].

The effectiveness of headhunting will be considered on the example of the company «Synergy» (Ukraine), which specializes in employment abroad. It is a rather small company with up to 100 employees in the headquarters, which is located in a city with a population of 100,000 people. The analysis was performed for 4 months, which was not affected by seasonality. Recruitment rates for this period are shown in Table 1.

According to Table 1, the company used direct search on a regular basis, so the illustration of April and May months is this method. At June month, headhunting was introduced and only this strategy was used during it. At July, company combined direct search and hunting, which they used in parallel. The histograms in Figs. 1–3 illustrate the changes that have taken place.

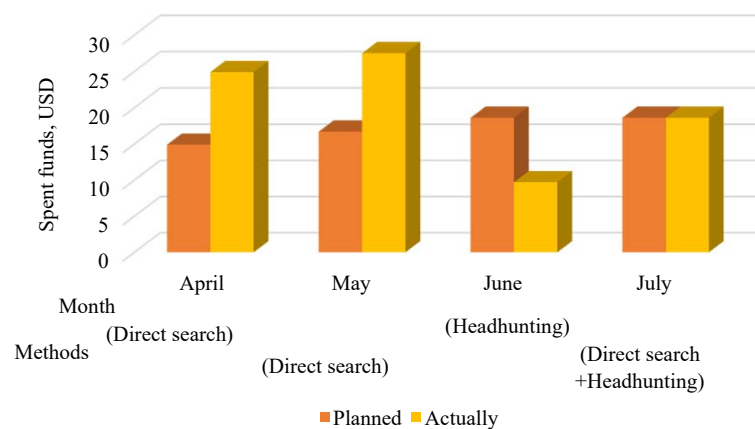
From the histograms of Fig. 1, the overuse of funds when using direct search (April, May) is obvious, as the method involves posting vacancies on many job search sites, which is quite expensive. While in the headhunt (June) much less money was spent than the company allocated for it, which in turn is also due to the specifics of the method, where work with job search sites is not required. When using direct search and headhunting at the same time (July), the costs clearly coincided with the planned company. As for spending money, the most profitable option is 6th month – hunting, because there the need for them is minimal.

**Table 1**

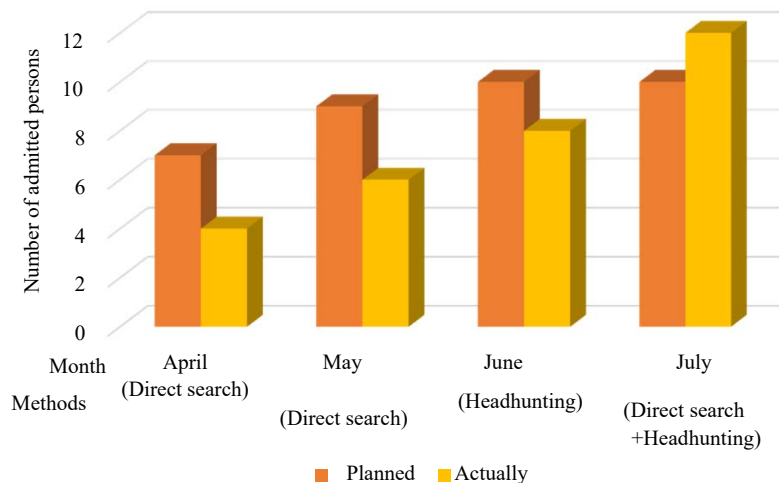
Indicators of recruitment with the introduction of various methods of finding staff

Parameter	April (direct search)		May (direct search)		June (hunting)		July (hunting+direct)	
	Planned	Actually	Planned	Actually	Planned	Actually	Planned	Actually
Number of employees	54	51	63	57	73	65	83	77
Number of fired	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
Number of hired employees	7	4	9	6	10	8	10	12
Closed difficult vacancies	2	0	3	0	3	2	3	3
Closed simple vacancies	5	4	6	4	7	6	7	9
Average time, spent closing 1 vacancy (weeks)	2	2.5	2	2.5	2	4	2	3
Average funds, spent on closing 1 vacancy (USD)	14.9	24.9	16.7	27.5	18.6	9.7	18.6	18.6

**Note:** systematized on the basis of enterprise data [6]



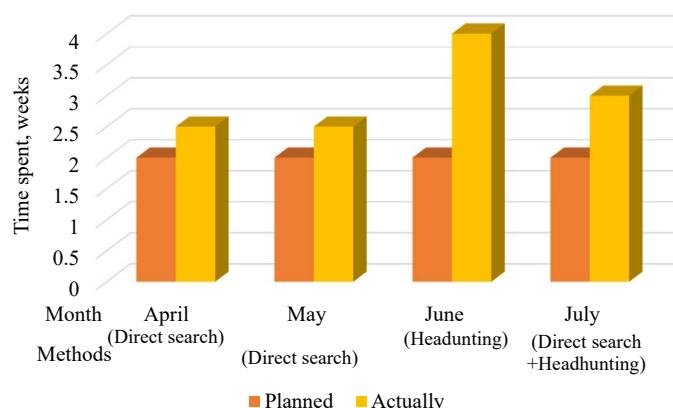
**Fig. 1.** Dynamics of changes in spending costs in the implementation of various recruitment strategies (systematized on the basis of enterprise data)



**Fig. 2.** Dynamics of changes in the number of hired employees in the implementation of various recruitment strategies (systematized on the basis of enterprise data)

The histograms in Fig. 2 indicate a significant shortfall in plans to close the company's required positions in April-May, as well as in June, during which direct search and headhunting were used, respectively. Whereas in July, when combining both methods, the plan for closed vacancies was exceeded, which meets the needs of the company and is the best option.

According to the histograms of Fig. 3, the longer duration of vacancy closures is June and July months, where headhunting and combining headhunting with direct search were used. This is due to the specifics of using hunting as a method of finding candidates, as this process is long due to the many stages, described in Table 2.



**Fig. 3.** Dynamics of changes in time costs in the implementation of various recruitment strategies (systematized on the basis of enterprise data)

**Table 2**

Step-by-step hunting strategy

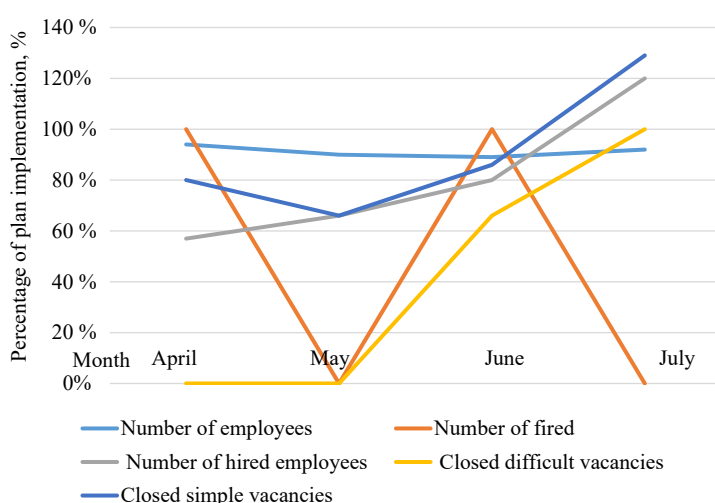
Stage	Description
Sources of search for employees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Search among acquaintances, friends, active communication with potential employees in the teams of competing companies.</li> <li>2. Get acquainted with the sites and social networks of companies, and study the competencies of top management and other employees.</li> <li>3. Search and analysis of pages in social networks of potential employees.</li> <li>4. Search among interested groups – for example, freelance groups.</li> <li>5. Application to the employment center.</li> <li>6. Analysis of resumes on job search sites.</li> <li>7. Get a job where there are many needed employees (call centers, competing companies).</li> </ol>
Interest of employees	<p>If you pretend to be a customer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Show interest in the proposed product or result.</li> <li>2. Show interest in the employee, show enthusiasm for them or their performance of duties, bring them to an informal conversation and find out how interested they are in their work or do not want to change.</li> </ol> <p>Use special contacts and search for candidates on the social network:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze the received information about the employee (from the page in the social network or on the recommendation).</li> <li>2. Establish a friendly relationship with a person.</li> <li>3. Knowing the information about the person, choose the right words and unobtrusively talk about the benefits of the company, close its pains and offer a job.</li> </ol> <p>When hiring a candidate who needs to be «lured», the steps should be as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To open as much as possible, to establish communication, to establish as much as possible warm relations with colleagues.</li> <li>2. Identify the best employees and carefully approach them in a relationship, find out what are the disadvantages of working in this company.</li> <li>3. To offer a new job based on previous experience.</li> </ol> <p>If this is a call to the company:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is recommended to present only the name, tell about the advantages of the company and go to the personal offer, finding out the personal number of the candidate.</li> <li>2. Offer a position with all the benefits.</li> </ol>
Call	<p>It is important to provoke the continuation of the conversation by phone or correspondence in the following scenario:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduce yourself, remind for the previous conversation (if any).</li> <li>2. To interest the employee as much as possible in the main advantages of the company.</li> <li>3. If a person has a positive attitude to the conversation, then tell a few details and ask questions about the experience, interest in this area and prospects.</li> <li>4. If a person does not immediately make contact and refuses, it is important to calmly and confidently explain everything to him/her again in a different approach, to adapt to the person. Even if there is aggression, it is important to react calmly, balanced and just more confidently communicate your goal.</li> <li>5. Offer to just talk in more detail in a relaxed atmosphere and try to change something in life for the better. It is also important to ensure that no one finds out that everything is confidential.</li> </ol>
Interview/ Negotiations	<p>Evaluation of motivation, effectiveness, analysis, customer focus, etc.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prioritize: team, salary, work schedule, office location, career growth.</li> <li>2. How do you feel about the ranking of managers for the implementation of the work plan?</li> <li>3. What helps you execute the plan?</li> <li>4. Can you name some achievements from previous jobs? What are you most proud of?</li> <li>5. What are the difficult problems for you? Could you give an example?</li> <li>6. Describe a situation, in which negotiations did not go as you expected. What happened? What was the result?</li> <li>7. Could you give an example of a situation, in which you feel that you have not shown enough persistence?</li> <li>8. What can you say about the difficult client you met? Why was it difficult? What did you do to satisfy the customer?</li> </ol>
Completion of statistics and transfer to the director of the company	Fill in the data to obtain statistics and pass to the customer (director or owner)

**Note:** developed by the authors

Direct search (April-May) shows less time compared to other methods, as it involves direct work with the resumes and databases of candidates without a long preliminary study of information about them. As for the speed of closing vacancies, the direct search has an undoubted advantage, but it does not provide an opportunity to find the right specialist in a managerial position.

Figs. 1–3 show the main indicators, on which the rationale for the effectiveness of strategies is based. According to them, the strategy of combining direct search and headhunting was the most effective, as there was an overfulfillment in closing vacancies, and no overspending. The losing application of direct search is obvious, as it is accompanied by a large shortage of closed vacancies and funds.

Taking into account all the indicators that were previously translated into the percentage of implementation of the plans, Fig. 4 illustrated it effectiveness.



**Fig. 4.** The effectiveness of the implementation of the plans in percentage terms (systematized on the basis of enterprise data)

Fig. 4 illustrates such important points as: the number of laid off workers, the number of hired workers, the number of closed difficult vacancies, and so on. Despite the positive dynamics from the introduction of headhunting, as well as its combination with direct search, it is worth noting the increase in the number of layoffs, which led to 0 % of the plan on this indicator in April. This is due to the fact that headhunting does not always guarantee high results for the company, as it involves a person, about whom there is not enough information, as a specialist in the work process.

Therefore, it is necessary to approach the hunt very carefully and gradually investigate the specialist who is planned to be headhunted [7]. Table 2 shows the stages of the strategy with an explanation of the implementation of the headhunt on the example of the position of «Sales Manager».

As for search sources, it is impossible to choose one and only follow it – in order to achieve maximum productivity, you must use each of the proposed, plowing the right combination. This will provide a wider range of possible candidates and, accordingly, increase the chances of finding the necessary specialist [8].

At the stage of interest, everything definitely depends on what source was used during the search. Then the legend is formed and two factors are important: the first is to get in touch with the right person, the second – to be able to interest a person at least not to listen and hang up, but at most to accept the proposal for consideration [9].

It is equally important to continue the conversation at the next stage, as it is impossible to discuss and take everything into account at once. Here it is already possible to learn more detailed information about the candidate from him/her personally and successfully sell the company as a potential place of work [10].

It is important, that this conversation ends with an interview. In fact, it will be a negotiation of working conditions and pay, as the company is interested in specialists and creates special privileges in order to get such an employee in the staff [11].

It is important, that all collected data is passed on to the owner of the company, who then communicates directly with the potential employee. A phased headhunting strategy minimizes the risk that an employee will be underqualified or laid off due to dissatisfaction with working conditions.

Narrow-profile specialists are becoming more and more needed every year. Headhunting allows you to close management positions and difficult vacancies, which greatly facilitates the recruitment process. Accordingly, companies receive the necessary employee qualifications and can develop further. At the same time, the process of headhunting is personalized for each potential candidate and includes many psychological aspects.

The organization of the process requires long preparation and careful study of each of the stages. In the future, the development of the study may consist in building further strategies for the development of headhunting, determining the features of its implementation in different sizes, industry structure and other characteristics of enterprises.

#### 4. Conclusions

The study found that the use of headhunting is a very effective method of recruitment in modern conditions. In the process of analyzing the data obtained, it is shown that the best results in terms of the speed of closing vacancies and costs were obtained during the combination of direct search and headhunting.

The results of the study will be useful to all who are interested in modern areas of recruitment, both employees of HR departments at enterprises and scientists, whose research interests cover this concept. For businesses, headhunting is best suited for finding key, highly skilled employees with rare competencies and top management positions.

To further improve the headhunting process, the interpersonal relationship of the headhunter with the customer and the potential candidate should be taken into account. And the headhunter must constantly develop and adapt to new conditions in their activities.

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