

The Covid-19 health crisis has disrupted business – an obvious understatement. However, Sockwell Partners has helped our clients navigate the challenges Covid-19 has placed on senior-level recruitment. We have learned how *recruitment can still happen in the era of social distancing*.

Some observations you may find relevant:

Video interviewing is different – Many find building rapport and trust through a computer screen more difficult than meeting in-person. When going digital, it is important to spend more upfront time “breaking the ice” to put a candidate at ease and create open dialogue.

Advance preparation can combat the “clunkiness” of video interviewing. Pre-test your speaker, mic, software, and hardware. Evaluate your lighting and background. Look into the camera, not the image on your screen. Allow a second or two when you finish speaking to help combat lag time “over talking.” Be sure the barking family dog isn’t interrupting your conversation. Make liberal use of the mute button. Know that recording a video interview without express permission is illegal in some states. Finally, consider scheduling several video interactions instead of one longer one. Recently, a client scheduled four video sessions before a final face-to-face meeting.

Social distancing makes candidates more open to talking and easier to engage – While candidates certainly have just as many obligations when working remotely, their work lives often include more solitary time at home. As a result, we have been able to connect more easily, given the privacy of working from home.

The challenge of relocating candidates may increase – Over the past several years, candidates have increasingly pushed back on moving for a new job. The pandemic has highlighted the “place” flexibility that on-line technology provides and will likely increase relocation reluctance. A recent McKinsey study ⁽¹⁾ finds that we have vaulted five years forward in consumer and business digital adoption in just eight weeks. This study further suggests that 75% of individuals using digital channels for the first time indicate they will continue to use them after business returns to “normal.” Clearly, an ongoing and growing reliance on digital communication will change the need for relocations and will impact candidate relocation decisions.

Companies should remain vigilant recruiters and not just assessors – As we wrote just three months ago (www.sockwell.com/attracttalent), you must vigilantly treat a prospective candidate like a prospective new client or customer. Keeping candidate’s health and comfort level front and center is vitally important. If this means adjusting your evaluation process, you should do so. If you can schedule an in-person interview, observe social distancing (perhaps a large conference table) and avoid shared documents, cups, glasses and pens. You may want to limit the number of your colleagues who participate at any one time. If a facility tour is included, use masks. The candidate will appreciate your concern for his or her safety. One of our clients found a creative outdoor spot for an interview.

Digitizing your recruitment and onboarding is possible – We’ve heard great stories of clients creating videos and creative engagement tools to highlight their cultures and onboard new employees. If a candidate remains remote, temporarily or permanently, consider a perk like a grocery delivery or online streaming subscription or a digital subscription to your town’s newspaper. Even old-fashioned postcards create camaraderie.

Even if your business has been impacted by Covid-19, we hope you, your family and your colleagues remain healthy.

(1) “The Covid-10 recovery will be digital: A plan for the first 90 days.” by Aamer Baig, Bryce Hall, Paul Jenkins, Eric Lamarre, and Brian McCarthy