

UNCATEGORIZED

# Opinion: The American hiring paradigm is broken

Staff Report

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Thanks to the “easy money” policies of the Federal Reserve and the insatiable greed of Wall Street, the 2008 Financial Crisis has unleashed the worst recession since the Great Depression. Tragically, this “Great Recession” has created an epidemic of long-term unemployment and underemployment in this country.

Incredibly, despite the plight of millions of long-term unemployed and underemployed Americans, many employers say that they can’t find the employees they need: They claim there’s a “talent shortage”. Considering the millions of talented, educated Americans who have spent the last few years searching for jobs in vain, I find the existence of a “talent shortage” highly unlikely.

On the contrary, I think employers “can’t find the employees they need” in the greatest buyer’s job market since the Great Depression because the *American hiring paradigm is broken*.

By choice or by company policy, a great many hiring managers have insulated themselves from the hiring process until the bitter end. Even at many small businesses, hiring managers routinely delegate candidate selection to HR, who in turn delegates it to robots that are as “clumsy as they are stupid”, as the great hiring manager Darth Vader said in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

The broken hiring paradigm is bad for American businesses, bad for the millions of long-term unemployed and underemployed Americans, and bad for the fragile Great Recession economy. In fact, it’s so bad that it’s humorous in its dysfunction:

Remember the “telephone game” in kindergarten? (One kid says something to another kid, that kid says something to another kid, etc.) The point of the game is to teach young kids that *the more channels a message has to go through, the more muddled the message gets*.

Well, imagine a hiring manager’s muddled message at, say, one of Charleston’s tech companies: The hiring manager knows exactly what he needs, but instead of looking for it himself, he tells HR that he needs X, Y, and

Z. Then, HR—who doesn't know how to accurately compare one candidate's X, Y, and Z to another's—, “programs” a dumb, buggy robot to screen applicants based on garbage parameters...

The end result is a hiring system that functions like a robot from a 1950s sci-fi movie.

While Economics 101 and common sense cast doubt on the existence of a labor shortage in a time of record-breaking unemployment and underemployment, there's little doubt as to why employers *think* there's a shortage: They've been connected to the labor market by way of HR's telephone game.

Not to mention that they've enabled HR to dispatch robots that systematically “eliminate” talented applicants based on arbitrary criteria. (This phenomenon has been a frequent topic of discussion on PBS' “Ask the Headhunter” as of late.)

The telephone game/1950s robot analogies might generate a chuckle, but there's nothing funny about long-term unemployment and underemployment. Millions of talented Americans have been unfairly sidelined for a very long time by a very bad economy, and their plight has been compounded by a hiring paradigm that's so broken that it's laughable.

The “punchline” to all of this is that fixing the broken American hiring paradigm is as easy as hiring managers getting back to doing an important part of their jobs: *hiring*.

Of course, many hiring managers complain that they're forced to hire through HR due to company policies and government regulations. But there's an easy solution to that, too: Instead of hiring employees, hiring managers could *hire companies that specialize in delivering the work that hiring managers need*.

When a hiring manager hires a business that specializes in performing the work he needs (as opposed to taking on a new employee), he doesn't have to worry about paying benefits or exposing the company to potential liabilities. And he certainly doesn't have to worry about wasting his time playing HR's telephone/robot games.

In order to fix America's broken hiring paradigm, hiring managers have to take a stand. They need to either: 1) stand up to HR and hire the people THEY want, or 2) circumvent the silly HR telephone/robot games all together and hire businesses that specialize in the work they need.

Any competent hiring manager knows that there's no room in business for kindergarten games or sci-fi robots.



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