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Those of you who have followed this process over the last ten years know that we survey the Top-Consultant.com consulting recruiter contacts and candidate readership to gauge likely hiring activity for the following year and to highlight recruitment channel trends over time.

Historically, the first part of the report – the recruiter report - has proven to be an extremely accurate predictor for what has gone on to occur within the management consultancy hiring market. In the last 5 years, only the onset of the Eurozone crisis has caused hiring volumes to differ from what recruiters predicted via our survey at the beginning of the year.

Barring any major economic upsets, this year’s survey will no doubt prove to be a similarly accurate barometer for the state of the hiring market over the coming year. Overall, the report paints a picture of an improvement in recruiting volumes for the coming year that while not spectacular and somewhat patchy should build on the growth in recruitment we saw last year compared with the tail-end of 2011.

The second part of the report focuses on the ways that candidates set about their job searches. Over the last decade our readers have predicted and charted their changing use of the established recruitment channels as well as the new channels that have become available to them, including the fall in the use of newspapers and the rise in the use of internet job sites.

What’s most striking perhaps is that contrary to media hype and speculation only a minority of candidates are using the latest channel - social media - to actively apply for consulting jobs. This is despite almost all consultants having a profile on LinkedIn and characterising themselves as active users of social media.

And it seems that consultants are already becoming less responsive to being approached through social media with in-house recruitment teams reporting they’re having to make more direct approaches to deliver the same volume of interview applicants. There are also growing instances reported of candidates joining a business via a recruitment agency when the in-house team had already approached the candidate but failed to gain any traction with them.

This report is published at a time when the double-digit annual growth that the industry enjoyed prior to the financial crisis of 2007-8 seems an age ago. The 5% growth forecast in the MCA’s recent report ‘Consulting in 2013’ would be most welcome, if realised. However, readers of our news site www.consultant-news.com will know from the often contradictory indicators that the industry generates that a consensus for a better year this year is not as widespread as we’d all prefer. Nevertheless, we certainly look forward to 2013, with fingers crossed.

Once again, over a thousand individuals took part in the annual survey and our thanks go to each of the 91 recruiters and 963 candidates that completed the two separate polls, without whose responses this unique data and analysis could not have been produced.

Bryan Hickson
Managing Director
Top-Consultant.com
Recruitment trends

Data collected from 91 management consultancy recruiters
Expectations are certainly positive for the coming year, in spite of continued unease about the ongoing economic outlook, with 85% of consulting employers reporting they are looking to hire staff this year at least as fast as they did last year.

While hiring expectations taken across the UK consulting industry as a whole are favourable, they are also patchy with the rebound not expected to be felt across all industries and functional areas.

Attracting enough candidates with prior consulting experience is proving a challenge. Despite there being many candidates with industry experience who would like to break into consulting, recruiters continue to favour experienced consultant hires.

Overcoming risk aversion within the candidate pool is a continuing issue for recruiters to overcome. Many potential candidates are reluctant to swap a "secure" role and established reputation with their existing employer for the modest career advancement on offer to them if they switch to a competitor. This is expected to be another barrier to firms wanting to primarily hire from competitors rather than bring in hires from outside consulting.

There’s very much an ongoing pressure from the businesses for recruiters to deliver ‘just in time’ recruiting; making hires as resourcing shortfalls are identified for forthcoming project wins.

At the same time, hiring processes are becoming very drawn out and fragmented, as confidence within practice areas yo-yos. Recruiting teams’ ability to deliver on hiring requirements is being undermined by this lack of commitment and see-sawing interest in candidates.

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**SUMMARY**

**Recruitment Trends**

Why not try advertising for consulting candidates on Top-Consultant.com?

Our low priced advertising packages allow you to see for yourself the types of results that recruiters are experiencing by placing their job listings on Top-Consultant.com.

Click [here](#) to find out more
Perhaps the question that we are most eager to learn the answer to each year is how employers’ hiring volumes will compare this year to last. We are pleased to report that the targets that recruiters face have once again grown.

This year 67% of recruiters polled expect to make more hires this year than last year (up from 63% last year) with over 28% of employers this year looking to increase their hiring aggressively. It should be stressed however that this is against a backdrop of the relatively low hiring volumes that the profession has been experiencing for the last five years and taken in historical context this year’s findings suggest we will see a modest rather than spectacular improvement in hiring volumes.
The hiring rebound will not, however, be seen across the board. We ask recruiters to identify the areas they expect to be undertaking the most hiring and in the chart that follows, a score close to 1 indicates firms expect to undertake little or no hiring in that practice area; while the greater the number the more hiring is expected compared with the previous year.

Amongst recruiters the expectation is that the strongest hiring is expected in Financial Services - the largest source of private sector consulting spend by far – followed in 2nd and 3rd places by Energy & Utilities and Information Technology. Up from 6th to 4th year comes Healthcare and Pharma and more hiring is also expected in the Telecoms, Media & Entertainment and Retail/Consumer Goods sectors once more this year.

Not so very long ago in 2009 the Public Sector was the area of strongest hiring demand within management consulting, before falling spectacularly off a cliff. While we would by no means suggest there are significant signs of a resurgence in Public Sector hiring as yet, employers have reported increasing appetite for making hires in this sector and this year it moves from 14th to 10th in our scale.

Figure 3: Recruitment activity by practice area
This year, recruiters' collective view is that the type of consulting that will see the strongest hiring is Technology followed by Project/Programme Management and Business Process Improvement (BPI dropping to second place having been at the forefront of hiring for the previous 3 years). As a result, it is likely that filling open roles in these functional areas will cause recruiters the greatest stress.

Interestingly, strategy consulting, historically a functional area that recovers quickly in hiring terms when the economy emerges from recession has declined for two consecutive years.
Looking now at who recruiters are looking to recruit over the course of the coming year, it is clear that those most in demand will be candidates that bring prior consulting experience to the firm. This is a time trend that we have seen over the last four years as is immediately visible in the accompanying graph. Once again this preference was also strongly reinforced in recruiters’ individual feedback within the survey forms.

Those from government or public sector bodies remain the least sought-after though more recruiters said they would be interested in hiring these candidates this year than last year. Fewer recruiters will look to make their hires from those coming from industry but there’s a continuation of the trend for firms to recruit more candidate from Business School and University.

Figure 5: Desired hiring profile 2010 – 2013

Experienced hires increasingly attractive

Recruitment Trends
To consider the other side of the equation – the career intentions of the candidates for 2013 – recruiters will be relieved in part to see that there's been no further fall in the proportion of consultants most likely to move to another consulting firm this year. But if as we have seen recruiters are increasingly favouring experienced consultants, a rise would certainly have been preferred. It may well be that a softening in recruiters’ preferred hiring profiles will occur later in the year as the shortage in experienced consultants starts to bite.

We can also see a decrease in the attractiveness of moving from consulting into the City and an increased appetite amongst consultants to move client-side.

Figure 6: Candidates’ career intentions for 2009 - 2013
Part TWO

Recruitment channel use
Trends are based on data collected from over 11,000 management consultancy candidates over the last 12 years. Candidates from all the major consulting firms have participated, together with consultants currently working at niche consulting firms and potential industry hires looking to move into consulting.

Profile of the 963 respondents to the 2013 candidate survey:

Most this year were Business Transformation / Change Management consultants (28%), IT/ Technology consultants (20%), Strategy consultants (19%), Project / Programme management Consultants (15%), Business Process Improvement (12%), HR consultants (4%), Outsourcing (2%). 37% of respondents had spent more than 3 years with their current firm, 15% between 2 and 3 years, 18% between 1 and 2 years, 13% between 6 months and 1 year and those that had joined their current firm within the last 6 months accounted for 17% of the responses.

Survey responses this year were generated via direct mailshots to the Top-Consultant.com readership; an invitation sent to all screened consulting candidates on the Get-Headhunted CV database; promotions via Twitter, LinkedIn, Google News and Yahoo News, Forum posts and by invitations sent to candidates by recruitment agencies.
Let us now look back at candidate activity over the last 12 months and specifically the channels used to look for new career opportunities. Every year we ask candidates to record the channels they used and the number of applications that they made through each. Collating the data allows us to analyse the penetration performance of the channels (how many candidates used each channel to make at least one application) and the share of applications achieved from each of the six major recruitment channels:

- Newspapers
- Recruitment agencies
- Internet job sites
- Social media
- Personal Contacts / Referrals
- Corporate Websites

Our candidate respondents confirmed that there are huge variations in the saturation enjoyed by the different application channels with three of the channels being used by a far greater proportion of candidates than the others.

Recruitment agencies have been used by a greater number of candidates than any of the other channels, with Personal contacts and Internet job boards scoring nearly as highly. Social media and Corporate websites generated applications from just over a third of candidates with Newspapers falling to 11%.

What’s apparent from these channel penetration figures is that no single channel alone will reach all candidates and that a multi-channel approach is essential to saturate the market.

Recruiters must consider both market penetration and share of applications when deciding on the balance of channels to use. Though internet job boards generate lots of applications, they still do not reach all candidates. Put another way, what the channel penetration figures show recruiters are not just the percentage of candidates that they are reaching via each channel, but also the percentage of candidates that they are failing to reach.

![Application channels used last time to apply for a job](image)
Our 963 respondents were also asked to record how many applications they made through the six major channels. This produces another measure of importance of each recruitment channel within a recruitment strategy – the share of CVs produced per channel. What is immediately apparent is that internet job boards and recruitment agencies are critical in generating candidate applications – together they account for 57% of applications made (no change from last year).

Corporate sites account for 14.4% of all applications made (down slightly); Personal referrals are up slightly with a 13.4% share; applications made via Social Media are up again this year but still only account for just over 10% and the share of applications made as a result of adverts placed in Newspapers continues to slide – this year down to 4.6%, bringing up the rear.

Candidate activity over last year

Recruitment Trends
Candidates were asked to score the likely channels they would use when next hunting for a new job, both to allow them to change their bias to allow for dissatisfactions with their most recent job hunt and also to factor in new developments that they have seen affecting the market such as Social Media.

As you can see from the chart candidates clearly intend to modify their jobhunt strategies only marginally during their next job search. Comparing this year’s responses with those from past years shows little change with a slight fall in the propensity for candidates to use personal contacts and corporate websites.

Given this, it seems likely that the share of applications that employers will receive from each of the hiring channels is likely to remain fairly constant for the foreseeable future and that in contrast to the hype and speculation in the media, using social media to make careers approaches is not high on consultants’ agendas - there’s still no dash to social media as a jobhunting channel.
Historical trends in recruitment channel use and Recruiter & Media awards

*Data collected from 963 management consultancy candidates*
In the main the historic newspaper advertisers (direct employers and recruitment agencies) have continued to switch spend to other channels. Newspapers have suffered most in the last 13 years with candidate penetration having fallen very considerably indeed from a figure close to 50% to just 10% of candidates making an application via this channel. Share of applications has fallen in a similar way and may have now bottomed out at just 5% of applications being made in this way.

![Figure 10: Newspapers and publications consultants read regularly](image)

![Figure 11: Penetration - Newspapers](image)

![Figure 12: Share of applications - Newspapers](image)
Internet job sites continue to enjoy a high share of candidate usage with just under two thirds of all candidates making approaches to new employers via this channel, just behind referrals and recruitment consultancies. The shape of the evolution of job sites’ penetration for the last six years suggests a plateauing, as does its share of applications which is also stable with just over a third of all applications coming from online advertising on job boards.

It is worth noting here, and as will be seen later, a significant proportion of candidates (23.9%) that make applications direct via corporate websites do so having first seen the role that they apply to advertised on an internet job site.
The 963 candidates surveyed were asked to reveal the job boards that they regularly review; and the job board they rate above all others for finding a consulting job. As can be seen in this matrix, Top-Consultant clearly retains its lead in this sector with LinkedIn being the only other significant source of consulting candidates. Other niche sites such as Consultantsboard and Consulting Ladders appear in the ‘All Others’ section and barely register in the survey responses.
Bounty schemes have consistently achieved high market penetration, generating applications from 69% of candidates this year, a figure that has been stable for the last few years and is now the greatest penetration figure of any channel. What’s more, they have also been the most highly-preferred way for candidates to make recruitment applications in management consultancy.

But while personnel referrals will never be able to generate a massive share of applications – the natural limitations in the size of individuals’ personal networks prohibits this - we have seen companies using innovative means such as advertising job referral programmes through 3rd party media to eke the maximum share of applications possible through this channel. This year we have recorded a further if slight rise in share of applications to 15%.
Unlike the other major recruitment channels that we have been tracking in these annual reports, we have only been gathering data on consultancy candidates’ use of social media for making job applications for the past three years. While this makes trend commentary more difficult this year’s data on social media is striking that while it records a continued growth in share of total applications – albeit to just 10.5% - the percentage of candidates that make any application through the channel has this year stayed static at 37%, halting the rise we have seen previously. So it continues to be the case that only a minority of consulting candidates are using social media to apply for jobs.

Given the stated importance of social media as a recruitment channel in some industries it is clear that this remains a medium that will tap into only a very small proportion of the consulting audience.

While the vast majority of consultants have an active profile (defined as being accessed at least once a week) on a social media platform – with LinkedIn being the favourite by a clear margin – the percentage of active users on both LinkedIn and Facebook has fallen for the first time this year.
That so few applications are being generated via social media channels, even with nearly 90% take-up of the leading professional channel, is surprising and to try to better understand this we asked respondents what they use social media for.

The picture that emerges is one of consulting professionals using social media to expand their professional networks and to stay in touch with colleagues, friends and families. Use of social media to proactively approach recruiters or respond to advertised vacancies is far less common.

The most obvious conclusion to draw from this is that social media is most potent for recruiters as a channel to use to proactively approach candidates deemed to be of interest; and correspondingly less effective as a channel to advertise openings and sit back and wait for a response.

Figure 19: Main uses of social media by consulting candidates
Over the last few years we have seen a fall in the number of candidates making applications directly via corporate websites. Penetration figures have fallen from a high point of 51% in 2005 to just 36% this year.

Corporate sites seem stuck in a rut of being able to generate only 14-17% of application volumes. This year a figure of 16% of all applications made to management consultancy employers through their websites was recorded.

But how do candidates find themselves making applications direct via corporate websites? It should not be assumed that all candidates navigate directly to company websites to make their applications.

Each year we investigate the different sources of visitor/application traffic that corporate websites enjoy so as to be able to quantify as best possible the ‘indirects’ that the other channels drive to the corporate sites.

Most candidates (51%) that made applications to corporate websites already knew the firm and navigated straight to their website to make the application – interestingly this figure has dropped from 60% in 2009 when we first asked this question; 23.9% of candidates made direct applications to firms they had seen advertising on internet job sites; nearly 17% were prompted to make a direct application by a personal contact; just over 12% found their way to the corporate site following a search engine listing; 12% were alerted to opportunities via Social Media adverts before making their corporate website application; and 3.5% following adverts seen in newspapers.
Recruitment agency candidate penetration continues to hold up well – much better in fact than it did in the dot-com downturn. It appears to be plateauing at around 70% penetration and 30% share of total applications made. What’s more it is likely that as consulting businesses continue to prefer ‘just in time’ recruiting they will continue to make good use of agencies who can sustain pipelines of prospective new hires at no cost to the consulting employers – until such time as a hire is actually needed and made.

We ask candidates to feedback to us on the different recruitment firms that they’ve used. A ranking of firms that received the most praise and the least complaints was then produced. Congratulations to all those firms listed.

Our special congratulations go to BLT who have secured the top slot for the fifth consecutive year – an outstanding achievement.

![Figure 22: Penetration - Recruitment agencies](image)

![Figure 23: Share of applications - Recruitment agencies](image)

![Figure 24: 2013 top recruitment firms by praise](image)

1. Beament Leslie Thomas (BLT)
2. Consulting Point
3. Selecture
4. Michael Warwick Nicholls (MWN)
4. Prism
6. Huntswood
7. Comms Point
8. ChapmanBlack
9. CNA Executive
Alongside the rankings of recruitment firms, we asked candidates to help us identify the best individual recruiters they had worked with. We asked them:

“If you have been particularly impressed with an individual recruitment consultant you have worked with in the past, please provide their name & company so that we can give them special recognition”.

Eleven individuals stood out as receiving the most praise and we warmly congratulate them all for their success. They are listed in no particular order.

Figure 25: Best individual recruitment consultants 2012

- Becca Nelson (Selecture)
- Chris Sale (Prism)
- Craig Milbourne (Comms Point)
- Darren Head (Selecture)
- David Lancefield (Selecture)
- Don Leslie (BLT)
- Luke Mulholland (Selecture)
- Paul Brown (Chapman Black)
- Rakesh Pabbi (Consulting Point)
- Ruth Radnan-Skibin (CNA Executive Search)
- Sasha Kemp (SK Consultancy Solutions)
Find out how your firm could attract consulting hires by:

- advertising on our websites
- advertising in our consultancy-focused publications
- accessing our CV databases
- running bespoke careers events

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