



# How to Effectively Recruit Interactives

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# Who Are Interactives?

Before heading out into the marketplace to find prospective employees, managers should review the variety of interactive job roles and their respective responsibilities so they can effectively hire a team that will meet their business-specific needs. One of the highly sought-after groups of interactives are web designers, who determine the layout of a company's website, incorporating graphics and text to achieve the target appearance and impact. These specialists need a firm grasp of HTML (hypertext markup language), FTP (file transfer protocol), computer languages (such as Javascript) and browser-server compatibility<sup>(1)</sup>. One of the numerous available graphic elements is animation. Many animators started out as graphic designers or as employees of the film industry, and employ an advanced knowledge of Macromedia Flash and Adobe LiveMotion<sup>(6)</sup>.

## How to Effectively Recruit Interactives

As technology continues to rapidly evolve, the way companies interact with prospective customers has become an ever-changing landscape. Staying on the cutting edge of new apps, social media sites and web interfaces can position a brand as a leader in its field. Businesses must partner with interactive talent in order to leverage this specialized arena of creative resources. Interactives include professionals with a wide variety of web design and development skills, such as mobile app development, search engine optimization, web analytics, user experience, link building and information architecture.

Sourcing the talent needed to launch a captivating campaign can be difficult, as it requires a set of technical abilities that only a select group of workers have mastered. This in-demand sector of the workforce generally isn't readily accessible through traditional job boards, requiring the assistance of specialized employment agencies with strong relationships in the industry. Hiring managers and corporate recruiters who are looking to enlist interactives for their organizations need to know the ins and outs of what these roles entail, where to find qualified professionals to fill these positions and how to present themselves as ideal employers.

User experience (UX) designers make platforms easier for consumers to operate. The user is the center of importance for a UX designer, who will ensure that the launch of a product or campaign meets the needs and expectations of the target audience, while taking into account that these preferences will change over time<sup>(2)</sup>. Information architects (IAs), who are responsible for organizing online content into easily navigable categories, are integral components of web design and development projects. They're able to structure information so it addresses a specific problem in an efficient manner<sup>(3)</sup>. Web content writers work closely with IAs and provide the written information that will be featured on a site<sup>(5)</sup>. Mobile application developers are in high-demand, but the number of skilled professionals is low, given the relative newness of the field. Applications for devices, such as Androids, iPads and iPhones, are driving this market and present a unique interface for businesses to reach out to customers<sup>(4)</sup>.

Interactives differ from traditional designers because they structure their thinking to incorporate all elements of the process from UX to IA, instead of assessing their tasks linearly. The old standards of design were geared toward the printed page and constructing a story around a single image or set

of images, whereas the World Wide Web enhances and requires flexibility. Interactives are experts at Responsive Web Design, which takes into account the user's behavior, screen settings and platform. That is to say, a website should not have the same sizing and scripting on a tablet as it does on a desktop because it should be malleable enough to accommodate different resolutions and sizes for optimal visuals. This emphasis on user behavior separates high-traffic sites from those consumers rarely visit, as a webpage that is designed to look, operate and function at the highest level in a variety of settings will increase loyalty<sup>(8)</sup>.

## The Value of Hiring Interactives

Having an in-house interactive staff offers a business a number of competitive advantages. The customer experience is increasingly determined by the accessibility of online materials, and the face of a company has shifted from print to the Internet. More than one-fourth of companies hired more interactives in 2010, and one-third decreased their print spending<sup>(10)</sup>. A company website is now a must-have, while additional technology platforms, such as social media and mobile applications, can further advance the outreach and public image of an organization, as well as boost profit. Mobile application downloads skyrocketed in 2010, reaching 8.2 billion. Industry experts expect this number to continue to increase at a blistering pace - in 2011, revenue from this sector is predicted to exceed \$15 billion<sup>(7)</sup>. Cross-functionality and cohesion among these sectors is key, and an in-house team can boost this sense of unity.

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Additionally, in-house expertise can lower overhead and improve quality, as an in-house team will be inherently familiar with the company's brand and goals<sup>(12)</sup>. Some interactives decide to organize as an agency within a business and charge other departments for their services. Leveraging this internal talent costs 20 to 40 percent less on average than hiring a third-party firm. This in-house agency model brings an additional advantage to businesses because they can require their internal team to bid against outside groups for projects, which enhances competition and quality<sup>(13)</sup>. Establishing partnership and trust is essential when working with creatives, and having a group of professionals dedicated to one organization facilitates this relationship building. Recruiting the best talent for the right job can position a company as an industry leader. Managers need a thorough understanding of the skill set they should be looking for - employees should know more than basic copywriting and design techniques<sup>(12)</sup>. In addition to researching the roles of interactives, hiring departments can levy the expertise of specialized staffing agencies, which are deeply connected in the field.



# How to Find Interactives

After outlining the creative capacity that a company needs, hiring managers need to find professionals with the necessary knowledge as well as personality traits to compliment the cultural climate. Most interactives are passive job seekers, requiring a bit of insider knowledge on the part of employers to find them. Company directors may not be familiar with the interactive space, nor have the time to learn it in advance of making a hiring decision.

Evaluating unfamiliar technical skills can be especially challenging. In order to access the necessary recruiting tactics for this field, as well as be able to evaluate one applicant's competencies over those of another interactive, resourcing a specialized staffing agency may be the most effective approach. When selecting a staffing provider, hiring managers should consider the provider's talent evaluation and screening process. Skill sets for interactive positions are highly technical and should be stringently qualified.

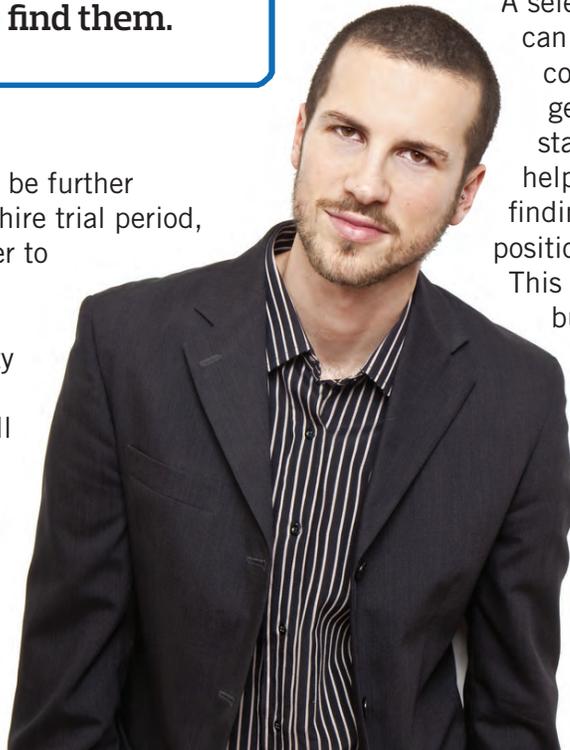
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Additionally, candidates can be further qualified through a temp-to-hire trial period, which will allow the employer to evaluate a candidate's skills and fit in action, on the job. Partnership with a third-party can even help recruiters develop job postings that will attract the right talent and position their organization as an ideal place to work.

Not only do staffing firms dedicated to the creative sphere provide a wealth of knowledge and resources, they can facilitate the tax filing process for contingent workers. Businesses risk accidentally classifying temp employees and independent contractors incorrectly when they handle W2s and 1099s on their own, which could make the IRS question whether illegal co-employment is being practiced, but staffing firms are adept in these matters<sup>(15)</sup>. Not all talent agencies will be able to provide the same level of service. When partnering with freelancers, it is important to foster a close relationship in order to receive high-quality content. It is much more difficult to establish this personal connection through a large agency. Although contingent workers are hired across many aspects of a business, procuring creative talent is an endeavor separate from the rest. It requires much more trust and communication in order to be effective. This pool of interactives can help a business during a seasonal rush or when a member of the full-time staff has to take time off from work<sup>(14)</sup>.

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A select team of high-level specialists can bring much more value to a company than a large group of generalists<sup>(10)</sup>. Sourcing advanced staff can be facilitated with the help of industry specialists, but after finding them, it is up to a company to position itself as an attractive employer. This sector is in high-demand and businesses need to stand out from competitors to draw in the best of the best.



# Incentives to Attract Interactives

Although many companies want an in-house interactive staff, many are unable to provide a working environment with which creatives are satisfied. Businesses that have developed solutions to common problems faced by this workforce have a higher retention rate and ability to bring in coveted expertise. The unpredictability and quantity of overtime is one stressor for many creatives, as almost half worked up to 45 hours a week in 2010, and a quarter worked up to 50 hours a week. While overtime may not be avoidable, management can offer flex time, provide advance notice of days that will have a heavier workload and offer the option of swing shifts. Businesses should strive to keep required tasks at manageable levels while increasing efficiency through cross-functional groups. If interactives have to handle a set of projects that could be automated by using a template program, their employer should seek to provide them with the necessary technology to minimize redundant work<sup>(10)</sup>.

According to employee feedback, companies with the highest rates of turnover failed to provide adequate opportunities for advancement, offered uninteresting projects and didn't provide attractive compensation<sup>(10)</sup>. To prevent regrettable attrition, management should take steps to incorporate the development of interactive teams into company goals. Establishing a job-tracking system and project metrics can help interactives present tangible results of their successes, which can increase the acknowledgment of their efforts within the company, as noted by executives from in-house interactive departments in the Atlanta, Dallas, New York, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. regions at Cella's 2011 CreativeExecs® Roundtable conference<sup>(11)</sup>. Marketing and creative directors should also look for areas within their organizations that will allow interactives to advance so they don't look elsewhere for career development. This requires positioning the interactive department as a strategic advantage to the company. Well-outlined career paths can help prospective employees imagine what their trajectory will look like at a particular business<sup>(10)</sup>.

In the Chicago area, many businesses have been expanding the incentives they offer interactives, ranging from luxurious beach house stays to free technology. Some employers are promoting lavish celebrations for work well done, including Lollapalooza-styled festivities. One company demonstrates its desire to leverage staff creativity with an open-door policy that encourages providing feedback and pitching ideas to executives<sup>(9)</sup>. Making a dedicated effort to demonstrate that the business values interactives can help hiring managers reach out to prospective employees.

## Conclusion

In-house creative directors and human resources departments that are looking to expand their organizations' creative talent must understand the nuances of hiring this highly-prized sector of the workforce. As demand increases for interactives, the number of skilled professionals has stayed relatively stable, making it difficult to locate and attract available potential applicants. Looking for interactive professionals using traditional recruiting techniques may prove to be an ineffective use of time and resources. To launch a successful campaign for these in-demand employees, a specialized approach is required, often best accessed through staffing agencies that target the creative market specifically. By leveraging the contacts, knowledge and advice of these firms, businesses can expand their industry influence with well-developed web interfaces designed by professionals dedicated to their brands and goals.



## Footer/Company Profile

The BOSS Group is an award-winning, boutique provider of interactive, creative and marketing talent. We've been supplying temporary, temp-to-hire and direct hire professionals to leading organizations across virtually every industry for more than 20 years. Our clients attest to our expertise in creative staffing, the high caliber of our talent and our track record of service excellence. The BOSS Group has local offices in many major metropolitan markets and is a certified Women's Business Enterprise.

## Our Proven Talent

The BOSS Group's top-of-the-line talent selection process includes meeting with each candidate in person, a thorough interview process, and proprietary computerized and written tests designed to simulate actual real-world projects in graphics, web, animation, page layout, print production, proofreading, editing and other related skill sets. Our testing program is led by our instructional design specialist whose experience includes creative direction as well as college academia developing curriculum and assessment methodologies for the latest creative software and standards. Tests incorporate extensive industry knowledge, client feedback and independent research and are graded by our in-house team.

## Our Expertise in Recruiting Interactive Talent

Through our exclusive focus on the interactive niche, we've developed a wealth of industry contacts, an intimate knowledge of the employment climate and effective strategies for sourcing top interactive talent for our clients. Our recruiters have delved into our geographic markets, actively networking and matching talent with opportunities. We engage our talent through several effective mediums like social media outlets, a well-developed community presence, as well as rewarding talent referral and retention programs.

To start leveraging The BOSS Group's interactive recruiting capabilities, including up to same day placements:

[www.thebossgroup.com](http://www.thebossgroup.com)

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