

Attracting Clinical Research Talent in a Highly Competitive Market: Best Practices for Resourcing Clinical Teams

Adrea Widule

Director, Business Development

Kimberley Ball

Senior Clinical Recruiter





Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
The Recruitment Landscape	3
Attracting High-Quality Talent by Optimizing Online Presence	3
Engaging Candidates with Clear and Concise Job Ads.....	4
Generating Interest with a Career Page That is Easy to Find and Navigate.....	4
Making the Application Process Mobile, Easy and Responsive.....	4
Treating Shortlisted Candidates Like Clients	5
Conclusion: Best Practices in Recruitment.....	5
About the Authors	6
References.....	6



Abstract

The job market for clinical research professionals is more competitive than ever. In this environment, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies and other clinical trial sponsors need strategies to address resourcing requirements and to flexibly support their research teams with the most qualified professionals. Companies must incorporate effective recruiting strategies or risk losing qualified candidates to more agile competitors. In this insight brief, experts from Advanced Clinical discuss proven recruiting techniques that sponsor companies can apply to attract more—and better qualified—candidates and to convince them to accept offers quickly all while creating an engaging experience for talent.

The Recruitment Landscape

With the number of ongoing clinical trials doubling since 2015, according to [ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov),¹ challenges in recruiting clinical research staff have dominated the current landscape. Approximately 85% of life sciences and healthcare employers say that talent scarcity is one of their biggest business concerns, and 80% of life sciences talent leaders say that “baby boomer” retirements are already impacting their ability to meet staffing goals.²

Added to these challenges, the introduction of new technology into how research is conducted today requires clinical research teams to possess new skill sets and include new roles. Companies are now required to hire new staff with a combination of technical and clinical skills or reskill existing staff to take over these roles. The amount of outreach to qualified candidates continues to trend high as a result of the number of vacancies.

Attracting High-Quality Talent by Optimizing Online Presence

Candidates typically carry out extensive due diligence on a potential employer before applying for a job. They will generally visit the company’s website and career page, research its social media presence and examine job postings and Glassdoor reviews. Companies wishing to recruit new candidates must keep in mind the need to impress candidates long before any interviews take place, and this means reexamining the entire online footprint through the lens of the candidate.





Engaging Candidates with Clear and Concise Job Ads

Clear and concise job ads are also essential, including high-level descriptions of the open position and the recruiting company, with the goal of convincing candidates that this company is a great place to work. The company culture should be described along with the main features of the job, employer benefits (such as flexible or remote working) and career development opportunities. While avoiding becoming too specific or detailed, the ad should also provide a bullet-point list of responsibilities, a brief description of requirements and a one-click option to apply.

Research shows that only 60% of women but as many as 100% of men apply when they do not meet all the required criteria for a job opening.³

Generating interest with a Career Page That is Easy to Find and Navigate

Even if candidates find details of the opportunity on a job board or via LinkedIn, they will likely be directed to the company's career site to submit an application. Having a compelling design for the career site—and making this easy to find from the company's home page—can encourage potential candidates to spend time reviewing open positions.

Graphics and simple language should be used to convey the company culture and values, with easy-to-use tools to search for job openings, including industry specific job titles.

Making the Application Process Mobile, Easy and Responsive

Most job seekers use mobile devices, with an estimated 75% of LinkedIn inmail messages being opened on a mobile device.⁴ In addition, according to CareerBuilder, 60% of job seekers abandon online job applications without finishing them due to their length or complexity.⁵ Therefore, it makes sense to streamline the application process, making it quick and easy to complete and not asking candidates to type in information that is already in their resume. To engage job applicants, companies should respond promptly to applications with automated messages, and send a custom response to attractive candidates as soon as possible. They should also explain the review process, set timing expectations and notify candidates that are not selected in order to create a more positive experience for these individuals and making them more likely to apply again in the future.

Social media can have an important role in “soft selling” to candidates, giving a positive impression of the company overall and showcasing working life through pictures and stories. Postings can profile high-performing employees, give recognition to teams for meeting goals and highlight company events. These can also focus on corporate commitments to diversity and inclusion by sharing compelling examples. Positive impressions can be extended by encouraging employees to like and share these posts on personal accounts.

Glassdoor reviews are another important source of company information for job candidates, with one study finding that 55% of job seekers will not apply to a firm with bad online reviews.⁶ However, by responding actively to address bad reviews with positive feedback and solutions, employers can avoid bad impressions. A Glassdoor survey found that 75% of active job seekers are likely to apply to a job if the employer actively manages its employer brand.⁷

60% of job seekers abandon online job applications without finishing them due to their length or complexity.



Treating Shortlisted Candidates Like Clients **Tips for a positive interview experience include:**

- > Treating shortlisted candidates like clients, and staying closely connected with them
- > Reducing the number of interviews when possible, by bringing multiple stakeholders to the table in order to maximize interview time
- > Making sure the interview panel is diverse and reflects the candidate pool and team dynamic
- > Having someone from the team on the interview panel and giving the candidate a chance to talk with them about what the job would be like
- > Training interviewers on etiquette, purpose and legal requirements
- > Talking about benefits, culture, diversity of work portfolio, motivation for helping patients and how this drives your team or company
- > Setting clear expectations for hiring managers to complete interviews and make decisions within a set time period and sticking to them
- > Ensuring timelines are communicated to the candidates; it is imperative to keep them informed of the process

Even after the successful candidate has been chosen and has accepted the job, the remaining pool of applicants should not be neglected. Companies should keep in mind that:

- > Any candidate with a compelling resume has the potential to be a future hire

- > These candidates have already shown interest in your organization, and have already been evaluated, which can accelerate hiring for a future position
- > Remaining candidates should be kept engaged. Their contact details and resumes should be added to the corporate recruiting database, with periodic efforts to connect and share updates, including future job postings, before these are made public
- > Job applicants who do not receive a job offer are 80% more likely to apply if they already had a positive impression of the hiring organization⁸

One option for accelerating recruitment is to partner with a specialized agency. If this route is chosen, the agency should be treated as an extension of the company's team and provided with timely updates and feedback on any corporate changes that might impact the recruiting process.

Conclusion: Best Practices in Recruitment

Looking ahead, demand for life sciences talent is going to continue to increase. Companies who wish to attract the best candidates will need to allow remote working if possible and should remove any wasted time in their recruiting process to create a compelling and engaging experience.

Three key steps that any company can implement today to support recruitment efforts are:

1. Create a strong online presence
2. Make the application process easy
3. Move quickly in the hiring process, with a high level of organization and constancy



About the Authors



Adrea Widule

Director, Business Development

Adrea Widule is a Director of Business Development for Advanced Clinical. She has more than seven years of staffing experience with the organization. Originally from northern Wisconsin, Adrea graduated from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee with a master's degree in Cultural Foundations of Education before obtaining an MBA in International Business from The University of Scranton. She is excited about the clinical research industry's digital transformation and its potential to dramatically improve new therapeutic options and patient care.

Kimberley Ball

Senior Clinical Recruiter

Kimberley Ball is a Senior Clinical Recruiter with Advanced Clinical. Kimberley holds a degree in Marketing from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and is originally from central Illinois. Prior to joining Advanced Clinical in February 2014, she worked in market research for the financial industry, with a focus on e-commerce initiatives. Kimberley is passionate about supporting clinical research and trials and finds the relationships she builds with those positively affected by life-changing developments to be particularly rewarding.



References

¹ <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/resources/trends#RegisteredStudiesOverTime>

² <https://content.randstad Sourceright.com/hubfs/Global%20campaign/TTR/2019%20TTR%20Life%20Sciences/Randstad-Sourceright-2019-Talent-Trends-Report-Life-Sciences-Healthcare.pdf>

³ LinkedIn Customer Learning Webinar: How to Attract Diverse Talent to Your Organization. Hosted by Talia Fujita, Customer Success Manager 23 July 2020. ~18:07 mark. <https://training.talent.linkedin.com/recording-how-to-attract-diverse-talent-to-your-organization/572489>

⁴ <https://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/product-tips/inmail-myths-busted> (2017 data)

⁵ <https://get.fountain.com/posts/is-your-application-form-keeping-candidates-away> (2016 data)

⁶ <https://www.inc.com/adam-robinson/more-than-half-of-job-seekers-say-they-wouldnt-apply-to-a-company-with-bad-online-reviews.html>

⁷ <https://www.glassdoor.com/employers/resources/hr-and-recruiting-stats/>

⁸ <https://www.ibm.com/downloads/cas/YMOARJJG>

About Advanced Clinical

Advanced Clinical is a clinical development and strategic resourcing organization committed to providing a better clinical experience across the drug development journey. Our goal is to improve the lives of all those touched by clinical research—approaching each opportunity with foresight, character, resilience and innovation. Based on decades of experience, we help our clients achieve better outcomes by conducting candid conversations and anticipating potential issues through our customized solutions.

Visit our website to learn more: www.advancedclinical.com