

Talent Recruitment

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Purpose: To help educate National Apartment Association (NAA) members on overcoming the challenges of hiring talented individuals while considering whom to target, what message to convey and how to staff recruitment efforts, with the goals of reducing job vacancy, finding higher-qualified candidates and enhancing company reputation. The overall goal of this best practice document is to offer suggestions to increase awareness of company recruitment efforts. We will explore a variety of recruitment strategies and opportunities, including job advertisements, a focus on company brand and reputation, benefit offerings that stand out in a competitive industry and partnerships that include colleges and the community.

Applies to: Property managers, maintenance supervisors, regional managers, human resources personnel and all other NAA members who are involved in the recruiting and hiring process.

Overview: Low unemployment rates and recent industry growth have conspired to make recruitment a big challenge. To catch the attention of top talent, employers will have to do more than simply advertise a great job. They will need to craft an enticing job description and provide a memorable interview experience while being strategic with how and where they look for candidates.

According to NAA Education Institute (NAAEI) Apartment Job Snapshot, nearly 40 percent of available real estate jobs in the nation during Q4 2019 were in the apartment sector, well above the longer-term average of 30 percent. During that period, property management positions were the jobs in highest demand, while leasing consultant job openings had the largest *growth* in demand year over year, with an increase of 0.8 percentage points. Also, during Q4 2019, Dallas, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., continued to experience the highest level of apartment industry job availabilities. According to Reis, Washington, D.C. ranked third among markets, with the greatest change in vacancy from Q3 2019, decreasing 0.2 percentage points. D.C. also saw an increase in effective rent growth of 5.1 percent since Q4 2018, enabling owners and operators to increase hiring plans. Leasing consultants and maintenance supervisors had the highest growth in demand during the past five years, increasing by 1.9 percentage points.

Guidance:

1. **Online Advertising** — Job seekers are looking for easily accessible information about what it really means to work at your company, seeking details such as salary and benefits in a job advertisement. Job advertisements should be published with mobile accessibility for on-the-go job seekers. In the war for talent, today's candidates are harder to source and engage, so your job descriptions need to be easy to digest and must sell both the position and your organization. The description should include a job title, task summary and desired qualifications. Your company job description template should include the following:

- **Job Title** — Use keywords like “Property Manager,” “Leasing Consultant,” “Maintenance Supervisor” or “Marketing Director” to help place your job opening in front of more job seekers. Avoid using eccentric keywords like “Guru,” “Superstar” or “Hero,” as job seekers are less likely to use those in their search. When possible, extend the job title to range in length from 51-60 characters; this range has been shown to outperform other job title lengths, with a higher click-to-apply ratio.
- **Location** — List city and state, or country if appropriate. Note if the position is at company headquarters or at a division or overseas office. If the position is remote or open to the candidate’s location, please specify.
- **Role Details** — Describe how the open position ties into your company mission and culture. Include major job responsibilities and any exciting projects the position will entail. You may also include salary and benefit information in this section.
- **Company Information** — Describe your company culture and perks. When possible, link to your company website, blog or other digital formats to showcase what it is like to work for your company and include employee testimonials and videos.
- **Candidate Requirements** — Provide minimum job qualifications and skills. This will set a clear expectation of job performance for potential candidates. Optional requirements such as education level, experience and prime candidate characteristics should be included, too, but separated from the required qualifications.
- **Application** — Include a button or link to your careers page, applicant tracking system (ATS) or email contact for candidates to apply. There should be a clear call to action on the advertisement. After an applicant applies, send that person a thank-you email or submission notice to confirm receipt of the application.

A variety of federal laws prohibit employment discrimination based on:

- Age
- Citizenship
- Race/color
- Disability
- Genetic information
- Family and medical leave use
- Military service
- National origin
- Pregnancy
- Religion
- Sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation)

When listing any advertisement for recruiting, it is important to comply with state and federal laws, including Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE) regulations. Below are a few general EOE examples to consider in your advertisement:

- “[Name of company] is an equal opportunity employer and does not make hiring decisions based on age, race, gender, religion, disability or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.”
- “[Company name] is an Equal Opportunity Employer M/F/Disability/Veteran.”
- “[Company] is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We are committed to providing the same opportunities for employment to all qualified people, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, religion, gender, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, uniform service,

veteran status, genetic information, or any other characteristic which may be specified in such laws and regulations.”

2. **Job Fairs** — All job fairs should be marketed in advance. When hosting a job fair, you should decide beforehand the parameters for the event. For example, will this be an industry-specific job fair to help boost your employer brand among candidates who are interested in your field? A college job fair or career day to promote entry-level roles or paid internships? Or an event to connect with military candidates and family members, such as a veterans’ job fair? You should note whether the event is public or private, whether appointments are required and if candidates should bring their résumés.

Ensure that you have staff on-hand to conduct on-the-spot job interviews. Staff should be a representation of your company brand in terms of appearance, personality and professionalism and be prepared to review résumés, ask candidates questions and share information about current job openings. Items such as brochures, business cards and other promotional items, including pens and branding décor, should be present. Also, have applications available (via paper or electronic means) so that candidates can apply for open positions.

3. **Word of Mouth** — Word-of-mouth recruiting can be an effective tool to create a superior workforce. Keeping current employees happy is a great way to find new talent. Satisfied employees have the potential to become the best brand ambassadors for the property management firms for which they work. Thanks to the power of social media, word-of-mouth marketing can be as simple as an employee posting a picture of his or her team, apartment community or a team lunch or company event to attract interest in the position. This can lead to more conversations with potential candidates, opening the opportunity for new talent recruitment. Additionally, companies are finding success with handing out recruitment cards to those from whom they receive great professional service, such as employees in the hospitality, retail and restaurant industries.
4. **Employee Referral** — Encourage employees to refer potential candidates by offering incentives such as employee referral bonuses through an organized and structured employee referral program. This program asks existing employees to recommend candidates for open positions. Unlike sourcing, employee referral is an internal method used to find and hire the best talent from employees’ existing networks. Referral programs benefit both the employer and current employees. Generally, the value of the employee referral bonus ranges from \$250 to \$1,000 but differ for each company depending on the open position. Incentive programs can include anything from PTO (paid time off) days or cash bonuses, to employee-wide recognition. Remember, there’s no one-size-fits-all approach to referral incentives or motivators. Match rewards and recognition to employee interest and expectations whenever possible. Participation in the referral process should be made simple for employees by providing an easy way to track referred candidates.
5. **External Recruiting** — External, or agency, recruiters work outside a company. They’re hired by firms to find good employees for multiple corporate clients. At times, there will be a need to contract a professional recruiter for your company. Employers use external recruitment to attract individuals with the necessary skill sets that are not found in-house, or when seeking to grow the business or take it in a different direction. Recruiters help fill openings that may include a position requiring a specific expertise, an executive position or even a position difficult to fill based on location or time. According to a Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) research report, 83 percent of HR professionals reported having difficulty recruiting suitable job candidates in the past 12 months; using an external recruiter can assist with this process. The average commission paid to a recruiting agency varies and may include a flat fee and/or percentage. You and the recruiter should agree on costs before going forward.

6. **Internship Program** — Partnerships with educational institutes continue to be a solid strategy. Balfour Beatty Communities in Pennsylvania recently partnered with Drexel University on an internship program that introduces undergraduate students to the apartment industry. Internships introduce these students to the company, and during the course of several months exposes them to many aspects of the business. By sponsoring internships, you and your staff also get to know the students firsthand, while the student gains on-the-job experience that cannot be taught in any classroom setting. This puts you in the best position to recruit top talent as students graduate. Offering sophisticated internship programs for college or university students can get competitive, so plan on a budget that allows a multi-site transition for maximum experience, housing for interns and competitive hourly pay. In addition, you should become familiar with the school's program to ensure the student's success in receiving internship credits after completing the program. The end goal is for the intern to consider working for your company full-time after graduation should he or she be a good fit for your organization.
7. **Talent Pipeline** — A talent pipeline is a pool of candidates who are ready to fill a position. These can either be current employees who are prospects for advancement or external candidates partially or fully prequalified to take an open position. Candidates are considered because they have skills, experience and traits that may match a particular role for which there is no immediate vacancy. Often, property management professionals will meet potential candidates through other forms of recruiting or in daily business life where their skill sets and personalities are a fit for your organization's culture. A pipeline is created to hold a candidate in place until the correct position is available that best matches that person's needs and career goals. If set up successfully, the pipeline will become a main focal point for your recruitment needs, allowing for a "bench of talent" to be readily available at all times for immediate placement. Your company will need to decide if candidates will go through initial employment screenings to be allowed into the pipeline or after the employee is matched to a specific job vacancy.
8. **School Partnerships** — Junior colleges, technical schools and high schools can be good places to market available positions at your company. Introducing residential property management (RPM) as a viable career option to students who otherwise might not have known about this field can help fill entry-level positions that accept candidates with little to no previous experience and provide on-the-job training. Focusing on competitive pay, reasonable work schedules and comprehensive benefit packages is a great selling point when introducing people to the rental housing industry.
9. **Company Ratings** — Online reputation is not just for apartment communities but also for the companies that manage them. Employer reviews and employee review sites are an invaluable resource for today's job seeker. People searching for a job and wondering what it's like to work at a prospective company can take advantage of websites where they can hear directly from employees who leave user reviews about their workplace.

Potential candidates review these sites to better understand an employer's culture, brand, fairness in compensation and pay and leadership insight, as well as learn about benefits and company policies. The most familiar review site is Glassdoor, but other notable sites include FairyGodBoss, Indeed and Vault, to name just a few. While employees post their firsthand experience, which cannot be altered by anyone, employers also have an opportunity to respond to the ratings. Most important, employers can gain valuable insights from current and past employees. In addition, social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn should be reviewed routinely for feedback so potential problems may be properly addressed according to your company policy.

10. **Sign-on Bonus** — A signing bonus is a lump sum of money that an employer provides to a prospective employee. Its purpose is to offer the applicant an extra incentive to sign-on with that

employer. This strategy may be most effective for immediate positions that are in critical need of being filled. It is also a competitive method to overcome the war on talent in the rental housing industry. It adds an enticing method for candidates to decide more quickly. While the expense may be unbudgeted, you may break even financially when calculating the vacancy of the open position under payroll against the bonus expense.

11. **Networking** — Networking with other industry professionals is a great way to recruit talent to your organization. Networking events are hosted by your local, state and national apartment associations throughout the year. Whether you are attending an education seminar or eating dinner, there are events for everyone to make connections with similar-minded people. Networking events are also a good way to send out a positive message about your company culture: By attending a networking class, happy hour or conference, your onsite employees meet new people and share the good word about your company with others in the industry.
12. **Diversity and Inclusion** — Sixty-seven percent of job seekers consider diversity an important factor when they evaluate job opportunities, according to a 2019 Glassdoor study. People want to feel like they are a part of their workplace — and not just with coworkers. They want to feel as though they are a part of a company that shares their values by paying people fair and equal wages, staffing a diverse and inclusive workforce, and providing a company culture that supports and uplifts these values. Tips to consider include:
 - When advertising for open positions, use gender-neutral language and include information regarding accommodations where applicable by law.
 - Reframe conversations when recruiting and evaluating staff to reflect how they can “add” to organizational culture as opposed to having to “fit” into it.
 - Recruit from diverse sources such as associations focused on leadership for minority professionals, veteran-focused programs for those with military backgrounds and virtual career fairs for those with disabilities.
 - Define what diversity and inclusion mean for your organization and put best practices in place to mitigate unconscious bias.

Related Links and Forms

NAAEI Apartment Jobs Snapshot – Q4 2019

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About NAA

The National Apartment Association (NAA) serves as the leading voice and preeminent resource through advocacy, education and collaboration on behalf of the rental housing industry. As a federation of more than 150 state and local affiliates, NAA encompasses over 82,000 members representing more than 10 million apartment homes globally. NAA believes that rental housing is a valuable partner in every community that emphasizes integrity, accountability, collaboration, community responsibility, inclusivity and innovation. NAA thanks its strategic partners Maintenance Supply Headquarters and Yardi. To learn more, visit www.naahq.org.