

TALENT TERRITORY

How to Unlock Hidden Talent

Passive candidates might be happily employed but open to a better job if you approach them thoughtfully.

BY STACY PURSELL, CPC, CERS

If there's one thing I can say with absolute certainty after working close to 30 years in the animal health industry and veterinary profession, it's this: If you're relying solely on job boards to fill open positions, you're missing out on a huge portion of the talent pool. That's because top performers often aren't looking for a new job. Instead, they're content where they are but open to a compelling opportunity if someone approaches them the correct way.

These professionals are known as passive candidates, and they represent a massive, untapped resource, often far more experienced and engaged than active job seekers. In fact, industry research suggests that as much as 70% of the global workforce is made up of passive talent who aren't actively job hunting but could be receptive to the right opportunity.

For veterinary practices struggling to recruit in a tight labor market, learning to find, engage, and influence passive candidates is essential. Here's how practices can do so effectively in eight steps.

1 Know the Difference Between Active and Passive Recruitment

The first step toward reaching passive candidates is recognizing that traditional job board recruitment doesn't



resonate with a highly skilled, experienced veterinary audience. Active recruiting relies on candidates coming to you and is how you capture professionals looking for a change.

In contrast, passive recruiting is proactive. You go to qualified candidates and build relationships with them before they even consider leaving their current employer. This tactic requires a shift in mindset and a

willingness to spend time building relationships rather than just posting openings and waiting for responses.

2 Build a Strong Employer Brand

Passive candidates rarely respond to generic outreach. They're more likely to engage with organizations that stand out because of their culture, reputation, and values. Here's how to elevate your business's brand:

- **Share your story publicly:** Showcase your practice's mission, culture, patient stories, and impact. Candidates want to see something that touches them emotionally.
- **Be visible where they live professionally:** If your ideal passive candidates are on LinkedIn, Instagram, or industry forums, ensure your practice has a presence there and that you're sharing meaningful content.
- **Highlight career development:** Experienced professionals are often intrinsically motivated. Show them that joining your team could help them grow, lead, or refine their craft.

3 Source Candidates Where They Are

Passive candidates aren't sitting on job boards. Find them with these tips:

- **Leverage professional networks:** LinkedIn is a goldmine for sourcing passive talent. Use search filters to identify people with relevant backgrounds. Participate in industry groups and discussions to become recognizable and approachable. Beyond LinkedIn, utilize forums, professional associations and email lists, and specialist groups' social platforms. Being active in these circles helps you connect with professionals before you reach out.
- **Revisit your talent pipeline:** Don't overlook candidates who once applied for a job at your practice

but weren't a proper fit then. Many of them have grown professionally since the last engagement and could be open to new opportunities.

Keeping a database of strong past applicants and staying in occasional contact with them can pay off when an appropriate role opens.

4 Personalize Your Outreach

Avoid sending generic recruiting emails to passive candidates. Get their attention by recognizing their specific accomplishments or skills or offering insight into why a job opening aligns with their professional goals.

Your message might begin with a compliment about a recent project they led or a shared connection in the profession, followed by a compelling reason your practice's job opportunity matters. Personalized outreach shows respect and signals that you're offering something worth the candidate's time.

5 Build Relationships

Passive recruiting is relational, not transactional. It means:

- ▶ Engaging in dialogue before pitching a role
- ▶ Asking about career aspirations
- ▶ Providing value even if a candidate isn't immediately interested

Nurturing relationships builds trust and keeps your practice top of mind when an opportunity arises.

6 Highlight What Makes Your Practice Exceptional

When a passive candidate hesitates to leave a comfortable role, your value proposition must be meaningfully different. While higher pay might matter, the "why" can also include clear pathways for leadership or specialization, a supportive culture, a better work-life balance, and ongoing professional development.

To attract successful passive candidates,

you must articulate what makes your organization stand out in ways that resonate with their professional identity and personal goals.

7 Streamline the Experience

Passive candidates don't want to jump through hoops to explore a new opportunity. Long, drawn-out hiring processes can be a deal-breaker. Streamline the experience by offering flexible interview options, clear communication about expectations and timing, and fewer unnecessary steps in the hiring process.

An easily explored opportunity shows respect for candidates' time and increases the likelihood that they'll stay engaged throughout the process.

8 Use an Experienced Recruiter

Passive recruiting is time-intensive, nuanced, and often outside the expertise of busy practice owners and managers. A seasoned, industry-specific recruiter has:

- ▶ Established relationships with high-performing passive candidates
- ▶ Deep knowledge of industry labor markets
- ▶ Insight into candidate motivations, compensation expectations, and career drivers
- ▶ The ability to approach passive professionals discreetly and credibly

Because passive candidates are not actively looking for a new job, who delivers the message matters just as much as what is said. Recruiters act as trusted intermediaries, opening doors that employers often cannot open on their own. In addition, experienced recruiters handle the most time-consuming aspects of the recruitment process, allowing employers to stay focused on their core tasks and operations while gaining access to top-tier talent they would never reach through job boards alone. **TMB**



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IT AIN'T EASY, BUT IT'S WORTHWHILE

Reaching passive candidates isn't a quick fix. It requires intentional effort, thoughtful communication, and strategic relationship-building. But the reward is access to deep reservoirs of talent — professionals who bring experience, stability, and long-term value to your veterinary practice.

By going beyond job boards and investing in proactive, personalized outreach, practices can build stronger talent pipelines and accelerate hiring in ways that competitors who rely on job postings simply can't match.

Passive candidates aren't waiting for you to find them on a job board. It's time to go directly to them.