

Where Did All The Resources Go?

If you are private company in the professional service space with under 500 employees, then you are likely feeling the pains of a resource drought. In today's environment, the resource constraint on professional service organizations (PSOs) is prevalent across several industry sectors and job categories. It is putting a wrench into the recruitment process due to a lack of people with: (1) the right work experience, (2) lack of the right soft skills and (3) competition from other employers. So how do you supplement your workforce and meet the demands of your clients?

The Right Work Experience

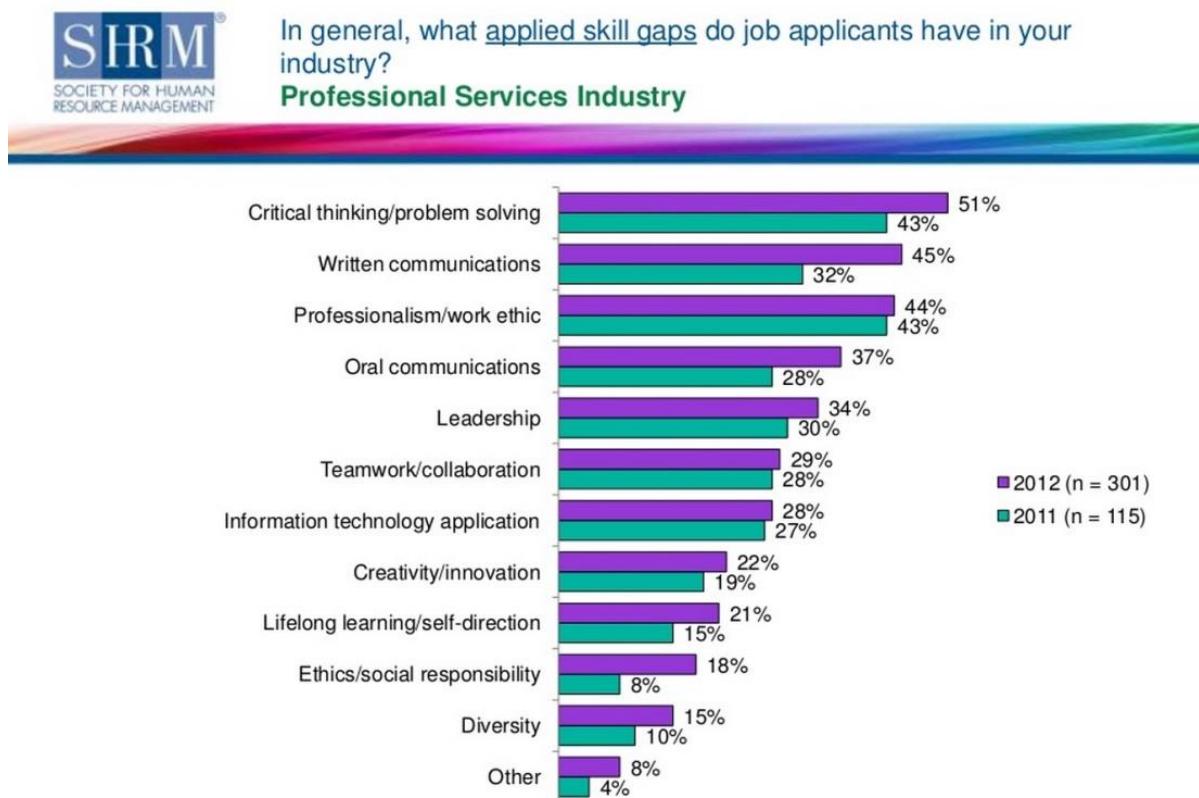
Acquiring experience has become more difficult as students stay in school further into their twenties and even thirties. As competition grows the need to acquire multiple degrees and accreditations is pushing out the opportunity to acquire the right work skills earlier in life. Instead of having 10 years of experience under their belts, prospective employees have no experience. So how do you get new graduates real work experience?

Creating internship programs and partnering with higher education can create a great pool of new candidates to pick from. It provides a chance to mold a person to your corporate culture. As well, it also provides a test-period prior to onboarding them. This approach takes a lot of investment of time, money and resources to manage the recruitment process effectively. But done right, year over year you will always have a new resource pool to go back to.

Another alternative is to supplement your mature workforce with channel partners. The benefit of this program is that it enables a services organization to grow its revenues without having to incur additional costs like payroll, health insurance, etc. Moreover, you can be assured that the partner will have the right qualifications and experience to meet your requirements, provided you have gone through a careful screening process.

The last approach is with re-training of existing resources. Developing a plan to promote from "within" creates a culture of wanting to achieve more. It benefits both the employer and the employee. For employees it gives them an opportunity to move up the pay scale and achieve further career fulfillment without leaving their existing organization. For employers, succession planning fills open spots that may be hard to recruit for.

Lack of the Right Soft Skills



Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to multiple response options. Only respondents whose organizations were having a difficult time recruiting for certain types of jobs were asked this question.

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A September 2013 survey from [SHRM](#) found that one of the largest barriers to finding the right employees has to do with the lack of the right skills. 10 out of the 13 skills described were around the soft skills area like problem solving, written communications and professionalism. Certain soft skills like written, oral communications and problem solving can be learnt, with lots of practice and daily usage. However, skills like professionalism, ethics and creativity are inherent to someone's fabric weave. In a world centered around relationship building and trust, the ability to connect with your clients is essential. It is easier to train someone with the right fabric weave versus someone with the right credentials but lacking the right soft skills.

Competition from Other Employers

In a digital, social, and mobile era you would think that recruiting would be easier. But with fierce competition bidding for the same resource, getting that person over to your side of the fence becomes hard. You can always throw money at the problem, but this is a short term fix. A person who focuses primarily on salary will always be open to getting more compensation at some point, somewhere else.

Professional development and personal growth provide a big return on investment for both the employers and employees. But many companies are opting not to choose this route because of cut backs or fear that they won't reap the benefits in time because an [average employee's tenure in the professional and business services is about 3.8 years.](#) Nevertheless, a culture that actively invests in training for its employees will see an increase in staff morale, productivity, and retention rates. By developing each individual, the organization ensures that its team members are marketable and competitive. Staff members who actively participate in developing their skills are also more adaptable to a continuously changing work environment. In a competitive services environment, resources must be saleable with their skills that are in demand and up to date.

In addition to training and development, another benefit which may entice a person to join your organization is through a Wellness incentive. Outside of fitness and good health, providing flexible work hours to accommodate a person's work – home life is invaluable. It allows one to take care of their childcare, elderly parents, or other obligations without impacting on the work schedule with unforeseen absenteeism. With this kind of support for an employee's personal life, productivity increases with more dedication and willingness to work harder to protect this benefit.

Providing piece of mind to employees' results in positive outcomes felt both internally and by your customers. Organizations who offer a well-rounded, compensation package including a competitive salary, professional development and wellness programing will reap the benefits of: a stronger corporate culture that provides better customer care and less employee churn.

By retooling certain policies and tapping into alternative types of resource pools, PSOs can establish a buffer during periods of drought. And regardless of the current hiring climate, a culture that fosters and promotes individual growth will attract top talent. Employees who are fulfilled in their careers and feel cared for will strive to perform more. This mindset will percolate throughout your organization and create a competitive, productive and adaptive culture to meet the expectations of your client's demands.

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