Hiring critical talent 2X faster

How Celonis is using Prioritization and Agile Swarming to hire critical talent 2X faster, partnering with SocialTalent

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The hiring skills platform

> **Using the SocialTalent platform has been one of the keys to our success. It helped empower my TA team with all the hiring training they needed to excel at their jobs and to drive results.**

About Kevin Blair

Kevin Blair is the VP of Global Talent Acquisition at Celonis and Co-Founder of Join Talent. Committed to using innovative and data-driven methods to improve recruitment, Kevin is a veteran of the industry having previously worked in global hiring leadership roles at IBM and Cisco.

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Introduction

When looking at a business, we know that some roles add more value than others. And some roles are also harder to recruit.

By weighting your recruitment efforts and budget to the most valuable and complex positions, you're ensuring that these important roles are hired for quickly and with quality in mind. Prioritizing in this manner then forces a company to optimize recruitment elsewhere. This results in improved metrics in your hiring endeavours across the board – all without having to increase overall investment.

In this white paper, SocialTalent's Johnny Campbell speaks to Kevin Blair, VP of Talent Acquisition at Celonis, on how to maximize the value of your recruitment efforts, increasing the speed and quality of key hires by using Kevin's Requisition Value Model.

Challenge

How do you ramp up hiring at scale without increasing your cost base?

As we begin to emerge from the global pandemic and subsequent recession, many recruiting teams are finding that they are busier than ever. Some are finally seeing an uptick after months of cutting back, whereas many others have been very busy the whole time in sectors such as online gaming, consumer goods and distribution. Whatever the reason for this burst in hiring activity, many talent acquisition leaders are facing a new challenge: how do you ramp up hiring without ramping up your cost base at the same rate?

In normal times, as companies ramped up, hiring budgets would follow and leaders would start scaling out their team by adding more tools and technology to support this growth. New requisitions were being opened every day and allocated to the next available recruiter as the team ramped up sourcing and delivery to meet deadlines.

For many leaders, 2021 is different. CFOs are more cautious after presiding over huge cutbacks and efficiency drives. Having been forced to prioritize across the business in 2020, the executive team is now asking the entire business to act in the same way.

> **While we know that all requisitions are not created equally, do we actually apply that knowledge into how our teams recruit?**

We spoke to Kevin Blair, VP of Global Talent Acquisition at Celonis, the Enterprise Management System unicorn that is growing impressively right now, to understand how he allocates resources in his growing team to achieve maximum efficiency, speed and quality. He should know all about scaling on a budget having previously led a 1,500 person team at IBM and over 300 recruiters in Cisco prior to that.

Approach

Requisition Value Model

In his previous role, and currently in Celonis, Kevin developed what he calls the Requisition Value Model to help him distribute recruitment efforts.

> **In its essence, the model allocates more resources to requisitions that are of high business value with a high degree of hiring complexity, and less resources to lower value requisitions that are less complex to hire for.**

With the exact same overall resources, you can achieve massive improvements in speed and quality for your most important reqs without sacrificing overall speed and quality across the business. In short, more from less (or, more from the same to be precise!).

The model starts with business value. Each role within an organization is not created equal. Some roles drive significantly more value than others and are therefore more "important" to hire for than others. This is true of every business whether you're in food delivery, banking or deeptech and applies to businesses that hire 100 people a year or 50,000.

Prioritization as a skill in the recruiting organization

Prioritization of roles into high, medium and low – based on their value to the organization

The first thing you need to do is organize all of your roles into three categories: high, medium or low priority. High priority roles are often revenue generating roles, leadership roles or critical customer facing roles. Low priority roles are typically more administrative, manual or repeatable.

However, it's important to point out that one company's low priority role could be another's high priority. This has to be done on a company-by-company basis. An increasing number of large organizations have begun formerly splitting out critical roles from non-critical roles.

In fact, the International Standards Organization recently published the first ever global standard on HR reporting, entitled ISO 30414 – "Human resource management – guidelines for internal and external human capital reporting" in which it recommends that organizations, large and small, publish metrics across employee engagement, learning and development, diversity and inclusion and talent acquisition not just for the whole organization, but also for what it calls "critical roles."

Having done this several times, Kevin has some key recommendations on how you approach this.

"It is essential that the business defines what is critical, not talent acquisition. Ideally you start with the most senior leader in the organization, the CEO or Managing Partner or equivalent. At the highest level they will clearly be able to tell you if, for example, sales is more critical than operations or if engineering is more critical than sales."

"If you just asked each leader about their own team, every single leader would tell you that their team is the most critical."

Once you have clarity over which parts of the organization are most vital, you can move on to discussing with each functional head which roles within their team are most critical. This gives you a broad overview of critical functions and critical roles within each function. From here we can start segmenting roles along the axis of "business value."

While Kevin recommends you group everything into one of three buckets: high, medium and low value, he adds a note of caution in terms of messaging. "Never use language like "medium and low value" internally as nobody wants to describe a colleague's role as "low value." In the past I've used descriptions like "standard, configured and custom" to ensure everyone buys in.

"Typically the business will rank around 40% of all roles as critical or "high value."

It would be tempting to stop here and allocate your resources appropriately, but you are only half done at this point.

Prioritization of roles into high, medium and low – based on hiring complexity

The second axis that Kevin looks at is "hiring complexity." In short, if a role is critical but "easy" to hire for, it doesn't deserve an oversized share of your resources. Why? Well, it's "easy" to hire for, so why waste the resources? But what defines whether something is easy or complex?

Although Kevin firmly believes that the business should define the criticality or importance of roles, it's the job of talent acquisition to define complexity.

On this, Kevin recommends you look at three core facets of complexity: Market scarcity, your employer brand and the hiring process.

1. **Market scarcity:** this is fairly obvious; if the demand for a skill or set of experience is high and availability of that talent or skill is low, then the role will be more complex to hire for.

2. **Your employer brand:** whilst there may be a high degree of scarcity for blockchain developers, for example, a crypto currency company will find it relatively easy to hire these skills as most blockchain developers will prefer to work for a crypto currency. However, traditional banks will find it much harder to attract that talent.

You therefore need to factor in how hard or easy it is for YOUR company to attract talent with the skills you are looking for. Remember, you can't just say that your employer brand is strong therefore everything will be less complex. Most organizations with a strong employer brand find it easier to hire for the roles they are most well-known for, but this will not represent 100% of the roles they hire for. Big 4 accounting firms may find it easier than others to attract accountants but difficult to attract software engineers.

3. **Hiring process:** this is a function of how confident you are that your hiring process for screening and assessing a certain skill or role is predictable. If you feel, for example, that your process for screening and hiring sales people is excellent, measured by high offer rate and high success rate, then the complexity will be less. If you have, conversely, never hired a lawyer before, then expect complexity in the process.

Additionally, your ability to be competitive in the marketplace from a compensation standpoint will affect the level of complexity. The more competitive you can be with offers and compensation, the less complexity you can expect.

Having applied the lens of hiring complexity to the critical roles assigned by the business, it is likely that you will be left with approximately 20% of all roles that are both high priority AND high to medium complexity.

These are the roles that really, by definition, move the needle in your organization.

If you are to start out-performing in talent acquisition, you will be best served putting your efforts into these roles first.

It is likely that you will identify up to half of all roles as medium priority and complexity (medium business value with medium to high complexity) whereas for the lowest priority roles, it doesn't matter what the hiring complexity is, the business value just isn't high enough to justify allocating too many scarce resources. Therefore, we do not have to review low priority roles through the lens of hiring complexity.

Capability Realignment

It's all too easy to distribute your recruiters evenly, or perhaps more towards where there are higher numbers of open roles – namely, the medium or low priority roles. This is not the approach Kevin takes.

Leaving things unchanged for important, but non-critical roles, with medium to high complexity

It's important to remember that Kevin had to maintain the same overall budget, or sometimes reduce the budget every year, in previous roles, so the extra resources being invested in high priority roles had to come from somewhere.

Requisition Value Model
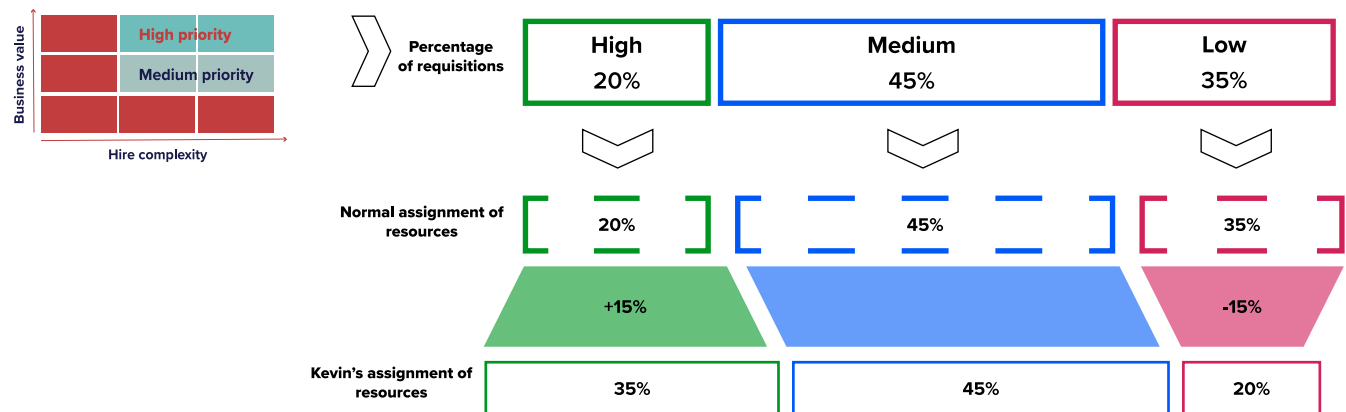
Doubling the resources for high priority roles, with medium to high complexity

Kevin moves the effort from the high volume, low value hires and instead over-dimensions on the effort and resources allocated to the high priority/medium to high complexity roles.

> In the Requisition Value Model, priority roles were allocated nearly twice the resources in terms of people, technology and budget compared to any normal model where resources are allocated evenly.

Typically, but not exclusively, more experienced and high cost recruiters were assigned to the priority roles. This team also had access to more advertising and job posting budget, better sourcing tools and were more likely to leverage recruiting software that might be otherwise out of budget if he needed to roll it out to the whole team.

Generally speaking, Kevin left things alone for the great middle – those roles that are important, but not critical and relatively complex (medium to high), knowing that trying to overhaul everything all at once in a fast-moving TA team is probably a bad idea. Therefore for 40-50% of open requisitions, nothing changes.

Halving the resources allocated to lower priority roles

Halving the resources allocated to low priority roles might at first seem like you are dooming these hires to failure, but what it really forces you to do is drive efficiency and scale.

The need to drive efficiencies when hiring lower priority roles

When hiring low priority roles, you can't afford to have a huge number of different hiring processes. You have to condense this down to a much smaller number of agreed hiring processes based on strict role families where it is optimized and scaled.

You also can't afford to source from scratch for every single role, you have to look at options, such as persona-based pipelining, so that you can achieve the economies of scale that come with such approaches. Similarly, on the tech side, you are likely to actually make new investments but will focus on things like scaled screening and assessment tools, asynchronous interviewing, automated response management and tech solutions for reference and background checks.

How to allocate your best Talent Acquisition resources

When it comes to your own talent, many of your most experienced and highest paid recruiters may end up working on the priority roles.
But you will still need very capable people to take responsibility for driving and managing efficiency at the lower priority end.

After all, you can't expect your least experienced people to be able to achieve the enormous efficiencies required to make this work. Also, your "great middle" will still likely represent your highest volume of requisition, so you'll need people you rely on to continue delivering great service and quality at this level.

Partnering with SocialTalent to enable, train and support the Celonis Talent Acquisition team to drive results

Paramount to implementing this kind of hiring model is empowering and enabling everyone in the hiring journey with the right hiring skills. This is where SocialTalent, the learning platform for hiring excellence, came in.

Kevin leveraged his partnership with SocialTalent to ensure his TA team had the appropriate hiring training, and the learning and development they needed to do their job. He aligned the new strategy with the accompanying learning paths on the SocialTalent platform.

By focusing on the critical skills that each member of the team really needed (for example, business partnering on the critical end and volume sourcing and efficiency on the lower priority end), he was able to equip each of his recruiters with the right skills for the job at hand, strengthening the team and benefiting the business.

Business Impact

Halving the time it takes to hire the most critical roles

Kevin's hypothesis was that the team would get much better at hiring high priority roles, stay roughly the same for medium priority roles and potentially get a little worse at low priority. A risk he was prepared to take.

> **By adopting this model, one of the results was that high value roles were hired in half the time, and the team developed the expertise required for recruiting these more difficult requisitions.**

This was expected. However, most surprisingly were the results for the low priority roles.

Improving hiring velocity, candidate experience and hiring manager experience for lower value roles

Despite now only having half of the previous resources allocated to them, Kevin was able to see an improvement in hiring velocity, candidate experience and hiring manager experience in the low priority roles too.

Whilst it is unlikely to be the outcome for every business, it was a pleasant surprise and testament to the ability of Kevin's team to develop skills and adapt to the new structure with enthusiasm and excellence.

Marginal improvement in hiring metrics for medium priority roles

Hiring metrics for the medium priority roles stayed roughly the same, with some marginal improvement due to better team-wide knowledge, learning and development and experience through the SocialTalent platform.

Conclusion

There are still gains to make in the business but hiring metrics have improved across the board and most importantly, for the roles that the business considers to be most critical. Overall, the improvements have been outstanding.

A year after Celonis moved to remote onboarding after the beginning of Covid-19, they now employ more people who started post-pandemic than were employed pre-pandemic. Such is their pace of growth that developing a hiring culture across the business, backed up by an efficient, high quality TA team that is now perfectly aligned with the business' priorities, will be essential to the company's continued success.

"SocialTalent was integral in supporting my application of the Requisition Value Model. It allowed me to focus my TA team on the high value hires with confidence, knowing that they would receive a universal foundation of expertise, and all the learning and development they needed to excel at their job and drive results, through the SocialTalent platform."

Kevin Blair, *VP of Global Talent Acquisition, Celonis*

About Celonis

Celonis is the leader in the Execution Management System (EMS) that helps companies unlock capacity to maximize business performance. Based in New York and Munich, Celonis helps industry-leading companies around the world achieve breakthroughs in business execution.

About Join Talent

Join Talent provides businesses with the technology, manpower and expertise required to enable them to hire, onboard and manage the talent they need to meet their growth plans.

Their agile and bespoke model helps you avoid expensive agency fees, enables you to build your own employer brand quickly, and is both fully agile and completely scalable – enabling you to flex up and down to meet with HR and hiring demand levels as you see fit.
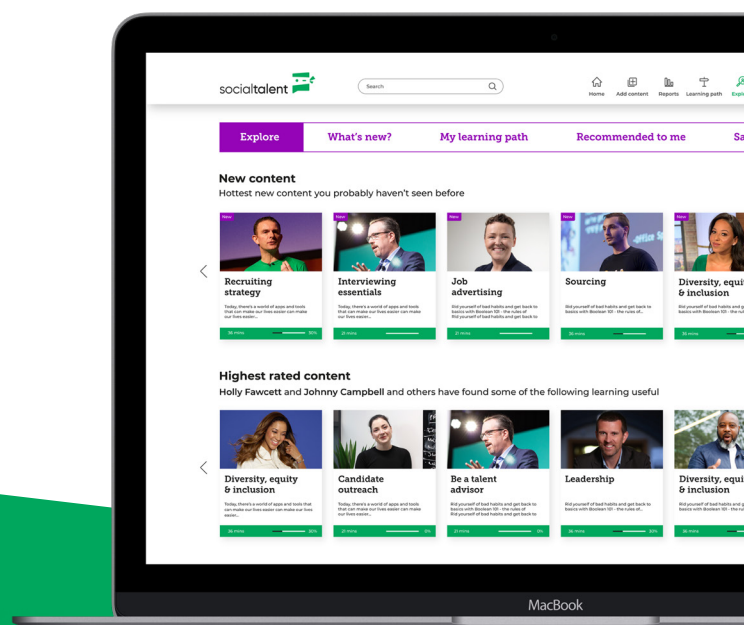
About SocialTalent

SocialTalent is the world's only learning platform dedicated entirely to hiring. We give teams the skills and knowledge to find, hire, onboard and engage great talent. Learn from leading industry experts on an intuitive platform that can be easily tailored to your specific needs. SocialTalent is the solution for hiring excellence.

If you would like to **learn more** about how SocialTalent can help you and your organization to develop your skills to find, hire, onboard and engage with top talent, contact us today.

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