



# INSIGHTS IN HUMAN RESOURCES

Empowering the BioAg Industry

## The Race for BioAg Talent

by Nancy Hintz, Global BioAg Linkages and Primary BioAg



Nancy Hintz

BioAg companies everywhere need talent — now more than ever. The future of our land and farm production depends upon this. Unfortunately, filling those open positions and finding that right person for the job is difficult in today's job market. Fortunately, there are a few things we can do to make it easier for ourselves in finding and keeping valuable talent.

Around the world, open positions in crop protection are on the rise. We conducted our own research on various job sites such as LinkedIn and Indeed and analyzed main needs in the BioAg industry. Currently, we are seeing a surge in research and development, with the bulk of the openings going to scientists and research engineers.

Companies are racing to find new meaningful technology to use in crop protection. Time is critical for them to assert their stake in the growing market as one financial analyst projected an annual 16% industry increase for the next several years.

But these companies are not only racing against each other, they are also racing against chemical resistance. Products that were affective against disease, pests, and weeds a decade prior are quickly, if not all together, losing their effectiveness as DNA recombinations create a resistance and a more robust species. This problem begets the need for farmers to add additional products and in turn weakens the health of the soil. Soil health is critical for sustainable farming and global food production in a world with a growing population. For this reason, they are racing for all of us to continue to be able to put food on our table.

The second largest need for talented employment, with little surprise, is in the Information Technology sector as the world resets with a new pandemic normal. We know business is not able to thrive without clear consistent communication and have now learned how to operate affectively in a digital world. With the new COVID variant, businesses are investing for long-term for an ever-evolving future.

In an exponentially growing industry, there is a gap to find well experienced candidates. Technical people are even harder to find. The option of leaving positions open and burdening current employees is not sustainable for a healthy business. Despite the challenges, some companies are rising well above their peers and are able to attract, hire and retain good talent. " Advancing in stages: creating a company, a growth plan, healthy bottom line allows you to bring, incentivize, motivate and inspire. A winning team creates a lot of synergies, emotion and alignment." Antonio Zem, Biotrop. Based on my conversations with leaders in the industry, companies showing success in sourcing, recruiting and hiring talent are implementing the following techniques:

### 1. Know the specifics for the talent you need.

Job titles and their qualifications mean different things to different people. To achieve the best results, start with writing down all the tasks for the position. Once completed, write down what you would like the new hire to accomplish within their first year. Be sure to include measurable results with each achievement like "close five new clients in first six months. An added benefit to having written key performance indicators is for the candidate to be clear on the key objectives for as well as to use them in reviewing performance after the hire.

**2. Use social media to help build your brand and source talent.**

This can be done in places where your target audience is found online. It's a great way to develop your company and employer branding. A few social media and platforms that you can tap into to streamline your sourcing: (perhaps provide links?)

- LinkedIn:** a social network for professionals
- Indeed:** one of the largest job boards in the world
- Facebook:** users are potential candidates
- Twitter:** offers various functions to help source candidates
- Meetup:** facilitates meetings and groups for people with common interests
- Industry-Specific Job Boards:** hosts talented professionals actively looking for work

**3. Implement an employee referral program**

New hires that come via an employee referral program are more likely to stay with your company and tend to generate more profit (an estimated 25%) than employees sourced via a different channel.

**4. Create compelling job descriptions**

Draw and inspire candidates to your posting by introducing the company and position. Clearly define the role in one sentence and highlight the required skillsets for the position.

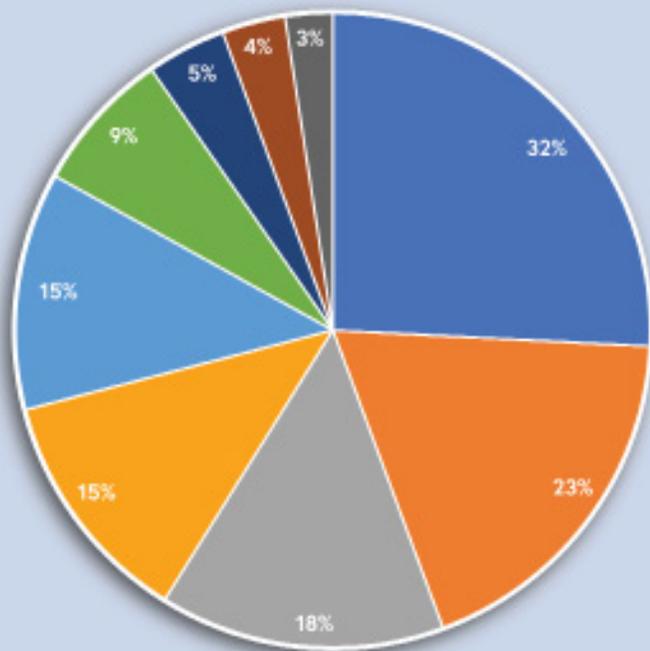
**5. Consider past candidates**

Candidates who applied for your company previously are four times as likely to consider your open position. Compile all candidates in a CRM to keep track and reach out to as the need arises.

**6. Attend or host industry related events**

Get creative on how you source and hire. Join or host your own event. Companies have removed the professional attire and instead host a casual mixer alone or in collaboration with other companies to get to know potential new candidates before they apply. Other events to consider are networking, open houses, job fairs, college campuses and conferences. The key is to determine your goals first, before hosting or attending an event.

**The Most Wanted Professionals in the BioAg Industry**



- Research & Development
- Finance
- Marketing
- Manufacturing
- Information Technology
- Supply Chain
- Engineering
- Analysts
- Sales & Business Development

**7. Include peers in the interviewing process**

Candidates feel more relaxed when talking with peers. Also, peers can provide value in talking with potential candidates as they are often able to provide a clear picture of the day-to-day tasks associated with a position. To their manager, they can also provide an honest assessment of the capabilities of a potential candidate to succeed in the position.

**8. Consider candidates in other industries**

A frequent mistake is to dismiss candidates in similar roles in adjacent industries. Putting aside the technical knowledge and focusing more on the right behaviors could help fill empty positions.

**9. Grow your own people**

Invest in the next generation by hiring and training them early in their career. If they see a bright future ahead, they are likely to stay. As one company said, "We are doing a lot more university outreach and showing students the opportunity in our industry, looking in more details about the total package not just salary...creating a clear succession of development." (Kevin Walsh, Head of Commercial Germain Seed Technology)

**10. Ensure your company is attractive**

A happier work environment makes happier employees and happier employees perform better and stay longer at their companies. What makes a company attractive? Many factors go into making a positive workplace: Do employees feel that they have the resources to do their job? Is management honest and ethical? Does the company give back to their community? Do people care about each other? Do employees have a flexible schedule? The bottom line: a workplace where employees trust in leadership, have pride in what they do and enjoy the people they work with makes all the difference in attracting and retaining talent.



**11. Be efficient in your interviewing process**

We all know that "A" players do not stay on the market in our small BioAg industry. Therefore, when "A" talent becomes available we need to be swift and decisive in our interviewing approach. To aid in the process, gather as much information as possible on the candidate's background prior to the interview and distribute the information to all those interviewing. When you can, reduce the number of steps in the interviewing process to avoid delays. I have clients who reduced their interviewing process from three separate interviews to one in-depth panel interview to save time avoid missing out on talent.

**12. Finally, understand what is needed to retain your employees**

It is a costly expense to lose good employees after the investment of time and training. Compensation and benefits are important, but that is not what really keeps employees engaged. The highest level of retainment is achieved where employees experience passion for the work they do, pride in the company and a personal connection with their coworkers. It takes a great deal of effort to create a workplace that attracts and retains talent, but the payoff is higher employee engagement allowing your company to focus on the great contribution it provides to the BioAg industry.

We're committed to advancing companies in the BioAg industry and are here to help in sourcing talent and providing human resource services. For more information: [www.bioaglinkages.com](http://www.bioaglinkages.com) or contact me at [nancyhintz@bioaglinkages.com](mailto:nancyhintz@bioaglinkages.com) 🌱