

Integrated recruitment, a new era

 By [Alex Martin](#)

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Recruiters, in general, get a pretty hard time, and there's always a beating drum in the media signalling the end of the recruitment sector. We've been tossed onto the pile along with travel agents - the notion being that the growth of the web, social media and networking sites such as LinkedIn will hammer the nails into the coffin.

It's a big shout, and to be honest it's probably quite accurate. Numerous industries have been affected by this scenario. It's not a new concept for technology to replace human function, from robotics replacing automotive factory workers, to automated phone systems replacing call centre agents, and online software literally eating into industries such as retail, for example, with online stores requiring far fewer shop assistants than high street ones!

In respect of the recruitment sector, this argument is largely based on the reasoning that companies can hire themselves, directly, using online methods in order to track, source and recruit staff, essentially having access to the same tools that us recruiters use.

Personally, I've never believed that the recruitment industry exists because we had tools that hiring companies didn't. After all, many years ago before the rise of the internet, newspapers had the lions share of recruitment advertising, and were available to both recruiters and hiring companies. With the emergence of the web came job portals and again were open to both parties, and now LinkedIn - also available to both. It's always been a fairly level playing field when it comes to resources.

Sourcing in the 80% pool

The point that people often miss is that job advertising is actually largely ineffective and only reaches about 20% of the candidate pool - those who are 'actively' looking. Hence why we're still here. Recruiters (the better ones anyway) exist because we source in the 80% pool - the 'non-active' job seekers. This is where the real talent is found, and whilst we do advertise (to cover bases), the real value is found by using a blend of traditional and modern recruitment methods to search, select and acquire the talent that's otherwise out of reach.

Whilst I believe there will be a profound impact on the recruitment sector, I think it's come at the right time and believe it's for the greater good of the sector as a whole. The recruitment industry is littered with non-pro-active generalist recruiters, those that have missed the very essence of what recruitment is all about: people and relationships. It's through establishing, and building relationships that allows us to deliver where internal HR departments and online advertising simply can't. Having the inside track on peoples' movements, the relevant sources for industry information and the reputation to unlock key roles and candidates breeds a constant supply of otherwise inaccessible talent - those who prefer to work exclusively, in a discreet manner, through a recruiter they trust. As much as technology can replace a lot of human function, it cannot build literal relationships and it's this particular element that can never be replaced, not by a website, and not by any networking/crowd-sourcing tool or technology.

Working in an evolving marketplace

The niche, specialist, pro-active recruitment companies - those with the strongest of these relationships will prosper and can raise the bar as far as service delivery and intrinsic market understanding are concerned - acting as tangible business partners, not just another outdated paper shuffling recruitment agency.

The digital industry in South Africa is a rapidly changing, evolving marketplace with so many spirited entrepreneurs and innovative business concepts. There is high investment, rapid business change and huge growth - and so the need for switched-on, intuitive recruiters to compliment them has never been greater.

I believe the future of recruitment is integrated. It involves getting to the very beating heart of an industry, understanding the people within it and building lasting partnerships through the strength of these relationships and our reputation. By combining these fundamental, human qualities with emerging technology and online innovation, we have ourselves a powerful combination, and long may it continue.

ABOUT ALEX MARTIN

Alex Martin is founder and MD of Recruit Digital, a specialist recruitment consultancy focused on the digital sectors throughout SA. After a successful career in London and Dubai, he is fast becoming a recognised name in the recruitment sector, working with leading online start-ups, corporates, marketing agencies and digitally-focused businesses. Alex is a leading consultant in the field of executive search & selection. Email him at alex@recruitdigital.co.za.
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