

## **Firms Enlist More Recruiters As Demand in Hiring Slowly Increases, Companies Fill Headhunter Positions**

By JOE LIGHT

Some companies are beefing up their recruiting staffs as hiring demands increase, said employers and consultants.

Employers are responding to the gradual uptick in hiring this year and are anticipating further hiring next year, driven by growth in parts of their businesses and an expected increase in retirements.

"We're hiring [recruiters] not only in reaction to increased hiring but in anticipation of even more hiring at the company next year," says Arie Ball, vice president of sourcing and talent acquisition at Sodexo USA, part of food and facilities-management services company Sodexo SA.

In the past four months, Sodexo USA has added three recruiters to its staff of 55 and currently has two recruiter openings, Ms. Ball said.

Hiring overall is increasing only slowly. The hiring rate in October was only one-tenth of a percentage point above the year-earlier level, according to the U.S. Labor Department.

Still, some employers adding recruiting staff suggests they are planning to ramp up hiring more broadly. And outside search consultants said they have seen an uptick in recruiting activity, which often happens before companies increase in-house recruiting staff.

In a survey conducted this summer, CLC Recruiting, a unit of research organization [Corporate Executive Board Co.](#), found that about half of companies planned to increase their recruiting staffs and 19% expected to shrink them through May 2011. Last year, 6% planned to grow their staffs and about a quarter planned to shrink them.

In November, the number of U.S. job postings with recruiter in the title rose 20% from June to 5,306 on Indeed.com, which aggregates job posts from thousands of company websites and job boards.

The unemployment rate for human-resources, training and labor-relations specialists, which includes recruiters, was 5.4% in the third quarter of this year, according to the Labor Department, which doesn't measure unemployment among recruiters specifically. That is down from 5.6% in the second quarter and 7.1% in the year-earlier period, although still above the range it held in late 2008.

During the summer, Sodexo USA used an outsourcing firm to help build its pool of potential recruits in anticipation of more jobs to fill next year, said Ms. Ball. Normally, that work would be done internally, but the company's 55 recruiters had their hands full keeping up with outstanding hiring needs, she said.

Revenue from Sodexo's North American on-site service operations rose 1.9% in its latest fiscal year, which ended in August, from the prior year, driven mainly by growth from education and health-care clients.

That's led to high hiring demand in those areas. Since August, the number of job requisitions and hires made by Sodexo in environmental services, which would include a housekeeping manager in a hospital, has risen about 80% compared with the same period a year ago, Ms. Ball said.

Overall since August, Ms. Ball says her staff has received 12% more requests to fill openings, prompting the company to add the three recruiters to its staff and look to hire two others.

BASF Corp., the North American unit of chemical company [BASF SE](#), plans to add at least four full-time recruiters in the first quarter of next year, said Michael Kannisto, director of talent acquisition.

Executives are expecting a wave of retirements of key staff over the next few years, including chemists and engineers in their core research and development functions, Mr. Kannisto said. He expects a pickup in the coming months as more baby boomers reach age 65.

In response to those retirements and company growth, he said, the company has begun to build its database of possible candidates that could fill management, science and engineering roles, even before those positions open.

Its existing recruiting staff of 27, including temporary employees, is becoming more taxed. At the trough of the downturn last summer, the companies' recruiters were responsible for filling 12 positions each on average, down from the 40 positions per recruiter that was typical before.

This spring, that number increased sharply, and now, some of the company's recruiters are responsible for filling between 60 and 70 openings, Mr. Kannisto said. The company's recruiters are hiring across the board for positions at every segment of the company, he said.

"We have a lot of hiring activity to handle and need to retain and add people," he said.

Since July, McGladrey, a Bloomington, Minn.-based tax, auditing and business consultancy, has added the equivalent of about nine recruiters to its recruiting staff of more than 30.

Before the downturn, McGladrey had about 50 full-time equivalent employees working on recruitment, but the company shed more than half of them by not filling vacancies and by shifting people to other roles in human resources, said the company's national recruiting leader, Ken Bansemer. McGladrey, which includes McGladrey & Pullen LLP and [H&R Block Inc.](#) subsidiary RSM McGladrey Inc., has about 7,000 employees overall.

During the summer, the company began to see growth across its businesses, which increased hiring demand and led the company to bring more recruiters on board, Mr. Bansemer said.

Now, the company has openings for three more recruiters. "We think we're through the worst of the downturn. Everyone is optimistic that this hiring in the company will continue. So we're confident in bringing on full-time staff," he said.