

The war for talent

What are some of the biggest staffing challenges within the biopharmaceutical industry? NGP asked **Vinay Nayak**, Aerotek's Vice President of Sales for Life Sciences.

NGP. As a company serving the staffing needs of the biopharmaceutical industry, what are the benefits of partnering with an outside staffing company?

VN. We've found that a lot of our clients in the biopharmaceutical industry have an internal recruiting force focusing on direct hires. We often supplement this process by directing our resources and expertise toward filling the client's contingent workforce or contractual positions.

By partnering with an outside staffing company like Aerotek, a biopharmaceutical company can gain visibility and access to a workforce it may not be able to reach through its own direct efforts – particularly passive job seekers. Our recruiters are constantly networking among the many professionals daily trying to identify the right fit.

Staffing companies act as business partners and solution providers by delivering industry-specific insight, hiring expertise and access to the right talent while providing a customizable and efficient process that can increase a company's productivity while reducing costs.

NGP. What tips do you have for helping companies decide with which staffing agency to partner?

VN. First, the company should develop a formal process to fully understand the expertise of the staffing agency. I suggest obtaining factual background information about each staffing agency, such as references from clients and most employable skill sets the staffing agency has hired in the past. For example, does the staffing agency understand how your specific industry of focus works? Does the staffing agency participate with independent trade groups such as BIO, DIA, Pittcon and ACRPP?

I also suggest meeting face-to-face with the team that would support your staffing needs in your local markets. It is critical for a staffing agency to maintain a local presence in the communities it serves so residents are familiar with your company's locations as well as the talent pool in the area. A local presence also means the staffing agency has better access to local, passive job seekers.

NGP. If a pharmaceutical or biotech company decided to supplement its business model with a staffing company, how would the partnership work?

VN. At the outset, clearly set your goals and expectations with your selected staffing partner, such as the positions your partner will fill versus your in-house

staff. At Aerotek, we have a five-step process detailing from start to finish how our clients will be presented with the right candidate. Through this program, called the Perfect Fit Program, we reduce our clients' attrition costs from loss of productivity to re-hire and decrease the time associated with the recruiting process by effectively sourcing and screening the new employee.

Equally important, you should expect the staffing partner to find qualified candidates in a timely manner. Prior to presenting a potential candidate, the staffing agency should have a pre-screening process that ensures only candidates that meet the experience needed for the position are presented to you.

NGP. How does a staffing company screen and credential candidates for specific positions?

VN. Aerotek has dedicated recruiters, specific to both the R&D and clinical trial sectors of the biopharmaceutical industry. As a result, our recruiters understand the skill sets and qualifications needed to perform each job appropriately and how these credentials and experience levels can vary from lab professionals to clinical professionals.

NGP. What are some of the biggest staffing challenges within the biopharmaceutical industry?

VN. The war for talent continues to be the biggest challenge for the biopharmaceutical industry. There are many reasons that may be causing the war for talent including the retirement of baby boomers, career changes and lack of new people entering the workforce.

Today's business faces stricter FDA rules and regulations which potentially can impact the clinical trial process and how quickly a drug can get to market. With that said, contract work allows companies to respond to the changing business needs. Companies must begin partnering with colleges and associations to bridge the gap of knowledge between the experienced and those just entering the workforce.

As a staffing company, Aerotek is a business partner and solution provider for a complete talent pool for many industries, including biopharmaceutical. At Aerotek we offer hiring expertise, access to talent, flexibility and efficient processes that will help increase your productivity while aiming to reduce costs simultaneously. ■



Vinay Nayak, Vice President of Sales for Aerotek's life sciences vertical, works with potential and existing pharmaceutical and biotech clients to support their human capital management needs. Nayak has nearly a decade of workforce management experience specific to life sciences, particularly with R&D and clinical trial staffing needs.