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The Jacobson Group is the leading provider of professional and human capital services to the insurance industry. For nearly four decades, Jacobson has met the needs of its client organizations through three operating divisions: professional recruiting, executive search and interim staffing.

## PULSE of the Industry's Labor Market

*derived from the data released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*

- The total U.S. unemployment rate was reported as 9.5 percent for June 2010, down from 9.7 percent in May 2010.
- The insurance unemployment rate fell from 6.2 percent in May 2010 to 5.3 percent in June 2010.
- However, the insurance industry lost 6,900 jobs over the same period.
- Year-over-year, insurance industry payrolls fell by 3.1 percent. National non-farm payrolls fell by 0.1 percent in the same 12-month period.
- Health insurance is once again the only insurance sector to see growth in year-over-year employment, adding 1,100 jobs since May 2009. Despite this year-over-year growth, health insurers lost 1,000 jobs between April and May 2010.
- Two insurance industry sectors saw month-to-month growth: reinsurers gained 200 jobs and third party administrators gained 700 jobs. Yet, both sectors saw year-to-year declines. Reinsurers declined 7.6 percent from May 2009 to May 2010 and third party administrators declined 4 percent from May 2009 to May 2010.
- Other industry sectors saw payrolls decline from May 2009 to May 2010. Claims adjusters were down 12.1 percent, title insurers were down 6.7 percent, property/casualty insurers fell 4 percent, agents and brokers declined 3 percent, and life insurers were down 2.8 percent.
- Average weekly earnings for the industry's nonsupervisory positions were up in all insurance sectors from May 2009 to May 2010. Reinsurers saw the largest increase, jumping 16.7 percent. All industry sectors saw significant month-over-month growth. ▲

### **The Jacobson Group/Ward Group Insurance Labor Outlook Study is Underway!**

*This semi-annual study provides valuable information regarding current market trends and future staffing expectations.*

- Click here to participate in the brief survey. (Hurry, survey closes July 16!)
- View our press release for additional information on the study.
- Learn how you can register for the complimentary webinar revealing the results.

## industry executives ON THE MOVE



Congratulations and best of luck to the following executives who recently took on new challenges within the industry:

- **Thomas Asquino**, *Chief Underwriting Officer, Property and Casualty, Endurance Worldwide Reinsurance, Endurance Specialty Holdings Ltd.*
- **William Awad**, *Chief Technology Officer, The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc.*
- **Lauren Bailey**, *VP of Entertainment in Commercial Insurance, Fireman's Fund Insurance Company*
- **Richard Bates**, *President and Chief Operating Officer, Catalyst Health Solutions, Inc.*
- **Calvin Beyer**, *Head of Manufacturing Segment of the Middle Market Commercial Group, Zurich North America Commercial's Customer Industry Segments, Zurich*
- **Kirby Bosley**, *SVP and Health and Benefits Practice Leader for West Region, Aon Consulting*
- **Ronald Brichler**, *EVP, Great American Property and Casualty Group and Great American Insurance Company*
- **Roger Brunner**, *Head of Casualty Group for North America Commercial Specialty Products, Zurich*
- **Michael Cotton**, *President of National Health Plans, WellCare Health Plans, Inc.*
- **John Csik**, *Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, Safety National*
- **Greg Donovan**, *VP of Field Operations, United Heartland*
- **Irene Esteves**, *EVP and Chief Financial Officer, XL Group plc*
- **John Goodloe**, *SVP of Brokerage, Scottsdale Insurance Company*
- **Dan Guilbert**, *Chief Risk Officer, Aviva North America*
- **Steven Holstein**, *Chief Marketing Officer, Individual Products Distribution, Guardian Life Insurance Company of America*
- **Scott Krienke**, *SVP of Product and Marketing, Assurant Health*
- **Donald Larson**, *President and Chief Operating Officer, Great American Property and Casualty Group and Great American Insurance Company*
- **Mark Lonneman**, *Divisional President of Specialty E&S Division, Great American Insurance Group*
- **Dick Nenaber**, *Chief Executive Officer, Montpelier US Insurance Company*
- **Jonathan Niemeyer**, *SVP and General Counsel, Western & Southern Financial Group*
- **Bertram Scott**, *President of U.S. Commercial, CIGNA Corporation*
- **Connie Weaver**, *EVP, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, TIAA-CREF*
- **Michael Whitton**, *Chief Financial Officer, HealthPlan Services*
- **Carl Witkowski**, *Chief Operating Officer, GUARD Insurance Group*
- **William Wright, Jr.**, *SVP, Investment Strategy and Risk Management, Aflac Incorporated*

# Strategize Your Way to an Impactful New Hire

by Gregory Jacobson, *co-Chief Executive Officer*, The Jacobson Group

People are the most important factor in determining an organization's success. Yet, too often, the acquisition process of a company's most important resource resembles a disorganized fire drill instead of a well-thought-out strategy.

Rather than identifying the specific needs and skills required to meet those needs, a hiring manager's first thought is often "find me an underwriter," "I need a chief investment officer," or "get me a board member." Would you take the same approach to the underwriting business: "get me \$100 million in premium!"? It's not likely. There's more to the process than simply finding an individual who has the right qualifications. Applying strategic planning techniques to your organization's hiring process will help ensure alignment with the company's mission, vision and values, which will ultimately drive your organization toward success.

## Define the position.

Before deciding "what" you need, you must first explore the "why" and the "who." If an employee leaves the organization, what are you hoping to accomplish through his/her successor? Your answer should not be to merely replace what was lost. Start with a clean slate: evaluate the role and determine its expectations and desired impact on the organization. It's likely that your actual needs have changed since hiring the incumbent. Outline objectives for the position and compare them to your organization's mission and values – are they aligned?

Once you have determined "why" you need the role, it is time to narrow down "who" you need in the role. What are the core competencies that a top candidate should possess? Consider the specific objectives of the position and the skills necessary to meet those objectives. Develop a comprehensive position profile to ensure a clear understanding of the position specifications. Outline what you hope will be accomplished by the new hire in the first three months, six months and year. How will success in these areas be measured? Make sure that the expectations are understood and accepted by everyone involved in the hiring process: hiring managers, your human resources team and individuals currently in



the department. This formal approach should extend to all levels of the organization – not just the executive suite.

## Plan the recruiting process.

The next step in your strategy should be the development of a recruiting plan. The goal of this process is to develop a target list of potential candidates who meet the position's criteria. In order to create your list, review the necessary qualities and preferred backgrounds that were determined when you defined the position. Are there certain companies or roles where people with this type of background, skills and characteristics tend to be found? Answering this question will provide direction and efficiency in building your target list.

With your recruiting plan in place, you are ready to develop a marketing approach. Utilize the position profile to identify points to "market" your position to potential candidates. Your selling points should highlight the key drivers that would make target individuals

interested in your company. It is vital that all stakeholders involved in the hiring process are on the same page. Confirm that all parties – including any outside consultants that are involved – have aligned views of your organization, the position and its goals, the corporate culture, and the company’s values and mission. Further, it is imperative that everyone involved can articulate these messages.

**Create an evaluation process.**

It is likely that a number of people within your organization will be involved in the hiring process and candidate interviews. Develop an objective and strategic evaluation process prior to beginning interviews. Determine how candidates will be evaluated and who will be responsible for measuring these characteristics and the candidates’ suitability for the role.

Each interviewer should be prepared with a jointly-developed set of questions designed to gauge whether the candidate has the attributes necessary to (a) move the company toward its goals and (b) mesh with the corporate culture. Stress the importance of being familiar with the core competencies and skills that candidates are being measured against. Employ a variety of interview styles to best drill down on all factors required for seamless integration and achieving the role’s intended impact. Utilizing behavioral interview questions to evaluate past behavior is the best way to predict future success. Additionally, incorporating ethics-

based questions is key to identifying how the candidate’s personal values match with the company’s. Each interviewer should leave the interview room not only with extensive notes, but the ability to determine whether each candidate met the particular requirements of the role.

Your recruiting strategy should determine the process for making a final selection. Will it be based on the majority’s decision? Will one person have more say in the selection than others? Planning ahead will ensure the selection process runs smoothly.

Take the time to thoroughly evaluate your organization’s needs, create a comprehensive position profile and recruit with purpose. Utilizing a

strategic approach to recruiting will assist in hiring employees who excel in their roles and add value to your organization. ▲

**“If an employee leaves the organization, what are you hoping to accomplish through his/her successor? Your answer should not be to merely replace what was lost.”**

**About the Author:**

*Greg Jacobson is co-chief executive officer of The Jacobson Group, a national professional and human capital services firm serving the insurance industry. He would be happy to share his thoughts on recruitment best practices and can be reached at [gjacobson@jacobsononline.com](mailto:gjacobson@jacobsononline.com) or (800) 466-1578.*



**Additional Resources:**

- *Interviewing for Change Leadership: Easy-to-Follow Interview Suggestions for Hiring Leaders Who Can Make Change Happen* by Kirk Goeldner, CPCU, Senior Vice President and Managing Director
- *Career Wise: What Role Does a Well-Thought-Out Onboarding Process Play in a New Employee’s Success?* by Greg Jacobson, co- Chief Executive Officer, as published in *Best’s Review*