

COVID RECOVERY STRATEGY GUIDE

FOR STAFFING FIRMS



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COVID-19 HAS CHANGED EVERYTHING.

It has isolated, it has humbled, it has ground industries to a halt. But working through such challenges only makes us stronger.

THE STAFFING INDUSTRY HAS PROVEN ITSELF TO BE A SURPRISINGLY ADAPTABLE AND RESILIENT BEAST.

It has come up with a number of strategies that have turned out to be far more than temporary solutions. They are fast-becoming the future of the industry.

In this guide we'll take a look at these trends. We'll also offer up tips for implementation, and explore the direction the staffing industry will likely head post-pandemic.

Let's begin with that most reborn of technologies, the moving image.

THE POWER OF VIDEO.

IT'S ENDLESS

Social media platforms began to funnel all their energies into video years ago, and features like live streams, stories, and video calls have been pushed mercilessly ever since. **It was only in the face of COVID that many other industries, staffing included, realized the technology's power.**

In the attention economy, video grabs the eyes and holds their gaze better than anything else. It delivers information efficiently — a 50-page instruction manual can be condensed down into a short 'how to' video, for example. And most importantly in an isolated world, it retains the humanity of communication. You speak with people in real time, complete with body language and tone of voice, yet over vast distances and whenever suits.

COVID or no COVID, video offers more efficient and effective ways to operate. The right tech and strategies enable you to retain your human, personal touch, but deliver it virtually.



VIDEO TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGIES THAT ARE TRANSFORMING STAFFING

What form does the video revolution take? Here are five examples of the technologies and strategies that savvy firms have leaned on during COVID, and will continue to make use of in the future.

CUSTOM VIDEO OUTREACH

An email drops into a prospect's inbox. 'Hey Sophie!', it reads, 'just a quick message from me, John at ABC staffing. Let me know your thoughts once you've taken a look!' A linked, attached, or embedded video begins to play. It's John explaining an opportunity to Sophie; what it involves and why she'd be a great fit. It took 30 seconds to record and 30 seconds to watch, but it presents the information in not just an efficient, but also a compelling and perfectly personal way. It's shiny, new, and best of all, **effective**.

[Loom](#), [Vidyard](#), and BombBomb are just three of the many platforms that make custom video outreach not just possible, but incredibly easy.

VIDEO JOB DESCRIPTIONS

According to research done by [Ongig](#), job seekers spend an average of **55 seconds** looking at a text-based job ad. When that ad features a video, and when that video is played, the average increases to approximately **5½ minutes**. It's fair to say that prospects find video job posts engaging.

With a video job description you can communicate an opportunity in a far more compelling way. You can walk through the office, showcasing culture and friendly faces,

all of which helps to humanize your brand. You can then share the opportunity across job boards, social profiles and your website, gaining far more reach than a Monster ad ever could.

VIDEO IN THE HIRING PROCESS

How could we possibly screen, interview, onboard, and train people if we aren't physically present? Hand forced by COVID, recruiters have realized it is indeed possible. They have utilized video throughout the hiring process, often so effectively that there's no plan to switch back.

- ▶ **Candidate screening** is either automated or managed within teams over conference calls.
- ▶ **Interviews** are conducted via Zoom, making them more convenient and relaxed for both parties.
- ▶ **Onboarding** is completed through a combination of both live and pre-recorded videos, as is ongoing training (check out [this fantastic example](#) of an onboarding video by Google. But remember, it doesn't have to be Emmy quality.)

VIDEO-BASED VIRTUAL EVENTS

Virtual events took off in 2020. A wealth of industry conferences, career fairs, and networking nights were held over the internet, granting recruiters, clients, and candidates valuable face time (albeit over FaceTime.)

While the limitations of virtual events mean that they won't completely take over from in-person events, they certainly have their place, primarily because they are borderless. Attendees can log in from wherever they are in the world, granting each event a unique set of ideas and perspectives that it wouldn't have otherwise enjoyed.

SOCIAL MEDIA LIVE VIDEOS

Live video is authentic, entertaining, and endearing. It grants the audience a behind-the-scenes look at the real person or brand. As such, live video has become arguably your most powerful marketing tool. If you want to tell a story about your recruiter/employer brand, there's no more genuine and compelling way to do it than to hand a team member a camera and let them run free.

This was true before COVID, and will continue to be well after the pandemic dies down.

IT'S NO TIME TO BE CAMERA- SHY

Such a unique moment in time grants staffing firms the freedom to experiment — there's nothing to lose, and everything to gain. By embracing video now, a firm can build a solid foundation upon which a future-proof business can be built. The technology is here. All you need is the will.

MAN VS. MACHINE

HAYMAKER STYLE

As technology becomes smarter, faster, and more effective, what role will be left for humans to play?

This is a question that the staffing industry met head on in 2020. COVID saw the office traded for the home, in-person chats traded for Zoom, and manual processes traded for automated. The already fast-turning wheel of progress was further accelerated, leaving many staffing professionals to wonder about their future.

But recruiters aren't like factory workers. Tasked with building connections and relationships, staffing is one of the most human industries there is. As such technology simply isn't capable of replacing recruiters, no matter how artificially intelligent it is.

It is, however, capable of making recruiters better.



VIRTUAL VS. PERSONAL

Pre-COVID many staffing professionals felt that nothing could replace in-person communication. But in 2020 face-to-face communication, whether in the office, in the interview room or at a client's site, was no longer an option. The likes of Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and Slack took its place. *And it wasn't so bad.*

The key is that these platforms retain the humanity of communication. Video calls show body language, voice notes convey tone, even emojis and gifs ensure messages are received as they were intended. Meanwhile you enjoy increased convenience, more effective collaboration, and the ability to instantly contact anyone anywhere. In-person communication will remain the gold standard, but the future will see far more virtual interactions, and the industry will be all the better for it.

An example of this can be seen in the increased demand for proctoring solutions, which track applicants using webcams and keystroke software to ensure that nothing untoward goes on through the testing phase of the hiring process.

REMOTE VS. BRICK AND MORTAR

Lockdown also forced another major change: remote work was thrust upon many industries, and in the process

long-standing resistance from workers and employers was swept away. The perks were immediately obvious — no commute, creature comforts, cost savings, flexibility — but it soon became apparent that there were pitfalls too.

There were no water cooler chats or Friday night drinks. It was hard to get out of work mode with the office next to your couch. Often work life was simply incompatible with home life, whether because of kids, a lack of workspace, or feelings of cabin fever.

Post-COVID a balance between remote and in-office work must be struck, and ideally a staffing firm will offer a choice to its team.

DIGITAL VS. HUMAN

It's time for the big question: *will technology replace humanity?* In staffing at least, the answer is a firm **no**.

By breaking down technological barriers, COVID has spurred many staffing firms to consider automation, like using bots to clean up your ATS or to send out automated marketing and engagement emails. But these staffing automations aren't about replacing humans. They are instead about dealing with the monotonous and laborious stuff. Ironically, utilizing artificial intelligence and automations allows a

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staffing firm to become [more human](#), as recruiters spend less time acting like robots.

There's probably an extensive list of automatable tasks that currently serve to decrease the efficiency and effectiveness of your firm. Technology is like arming every one of your recruiters with a suite of diligent assistants, allowing a team of 10 or 20 to do the work of 100 or more.

MAN WITH MACHINE

What does the technology-dominated future look like? It won't be the dystopia that Hollywood makes it out to be. Technology will simply make the staffing industry better — this isn't an ending, but an opportunity. And thanks to COVID, it's one that innovative, agile, and forward-thinking firms are primed to make the most of right now.

An example can be seen in the increasing use of virtual reality. The best way to evaluate the on-the-job abilities of a candidate is to see them working in that space, and VR simulations grant recruiters/employers a perfectly convenient means to do just that. The simulation replicates the work environment, getting candidates to perform tasks and manage situations that they'll encounter on the job. This technology helps to remove the guesswork from the hiring process, revealing the true abilities of the candidate in mere minutes.

AUTOMATION AND ON-DEMAND.

HERE TO STAY

Staffing has never been an industry known for early adoption. While other sectors have embraced new tech, staffing firms have by and large resisted it. **As it stands, just one in 20 staffing firms is currently making use of automation.** This could be because for many recruiters, the word 'automation' brings up thoughts of factory workers being replaced by hydraulic arms.

Faced with the challenges presented by COVID-19, technology offered staffing firms a number of convenient and effective solutions. Conference rooms were replaced with Zoom and team huddles with Slack. Client visits, candidate interviews and a number of other traditionally in-person tasks were replaced with virtual equivalents.

In the process, the industry's resistance to technology began to melt away. It became clear that its purpose wasn't to replace us, but to make our lives easier. This is the core argument for automation.



**AUTOMATION IS THE
FUTURE OF STAFFING,
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MAKE USE OF IT.**

WOAH!

DOING LESS WITH MORE

Ask recruiters about the worst parts of the job, and they'll say the laborious, monotonous, low value stuff like data entry, ATS management and credentialing. They'd rather do the high value work, like building relationships and connections.

Staffing automations are designed to take care of the low value work like data entry and management. Freed from the more robotic parts of the job, recruiters can concentrate on the human. They can build connections and relationships, elevate experiences, and make more money.

The truth is that staffing automation technology won't replace recruiters because it can't. Staffing is the most human of industries, and bots aren't known for their elite soft skills. Automation technology can instead be thought of as a recruiter's assistant, taking care of the stuff that they'd rather not do, and allowing them to concentrate on the more valuable aspects of the job.

THE JOURNEY TO ON-DEMAND STAFFING

What happens when you fully commit to automation? Imagine measuring your time-to-fill not in days, but in seconds. That's the promise of on-demand staffing, a concept that delivers an incredible experience to clients

and candidates by utilizing a number of different automated technologies.

A job opening is received from the client and checked over by artificial intelligence. It is sent out to relevant job seekers via a proprietary app, and accepted by a candidate who fits the bill. The process is almost instantaneous - one firm recently set a record of four seconds from receiving a job to filling it. It delivers good work to the job seekers, fills openings efficiently, and frees the recruiter from data entry and admin, leaving them to create new relationships and nurture current ones.

YOUR STAFFING FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS

Automation is the future of staffing. Once you recognize that fact, you can begin to grow your capabilities. Begin by using a bot to clear your ATS of duplicate entries, or to send out an automated email to long lost candidates. Your automations will grow organically, and before long you and your team will feel the weight of drudgery being lifted from your shoulders.

With COVID helping to demonstrate just how useful technology can be, more and more staffing firms are committing to an automated future. *Will you be one of them?*

A NEW TYPE OF LEADER.

ALL FOR ONE.

You clock in, you clock out. You're a number, not a name. Employment is a privilege bestowed by the company. For much of recent history, these sorts of ideas informed the mindset of leaders. The worker was the lesser, the leader the more.

As organizations realized the importance of attracting talent, in recent decades the manager-worker dynamic changed, and a focus was put on employee perks and company culture. But in isolating team members, COVID-19 threatened to undo this good work.

With remote teams likely to become a permanent reality, leadership must again evolve. **Retaining a strong team and company culture, offering support, and balancing activity with accountability are amongst the challenges that post-COVID leaders must solve.**



**PERSONAL AND
PROFESSIONAL
LIVES CLASHED.
AND THE
PERSONAL
WON OUT.**

OFFERING FLEXIBILITY

The idea of work-life balance has been in ever sharper focus in recent years, but no one could've predicted how important it would become in 2020. Pre-COVID around 4.3 million Americans — 3.2% of the workforce — worked from home. Almost overnight that number exploded, in many states accounting for all but the most essential workers. [According to Upwork](#), 41.8% of the American workforce continues to work remotely.

Working from home might be comfortable, convenient, and cost-effective, but it can also be isolating, frustrating, and anxiety-inducing. No virtual platform can replace the positive impact of an in-person chat or a hug.

In an ideal world, employers will create a hybrid workplace, offering their teams the option of working from the office or remotely. To avoid the feelings of burnout that many recruiters are currently experiencing, leaders must also look at ways to relieve their workers of as much work as possible. As discussed above, automation is the perfect way to do it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPATHY

If 2020 was good for anything, it made staffing and other industries take note of the things that are truly important. Personal and professional lives clashed in a way that they never have before - toddlers interrupted Zoom calls, workers lost family members - and the personal quite rightly won out.

In the process, staffing industry leaders - perhaps not historically known for their understanding - have seen that there are times when work should be relegated to second spot on the priority list. Perhaps historically seen as a weakness, empathy became a strength.

Recruiters can't be asked to answer their phone 24 hours a day, or work hours after knock-off. Offering work-life balance is in the firm's best interests, as it enables a recruiter to concentrate their energies during the hours when they are actually at work.

DIVERSITY, EQUALITY, INCLUSION

Continuing the empathy theme, the importance of diversity, equality and inclusion was highlighted in 2020, less through COVID than the simultaneous BLM protests that swept the nation. It was a stark reminder

that proactive efforts are required if an organization is to achieve true DEI — to invest in a wider variation of talent, who have broader knowledge, experience, and expertise to match our complex global environment.

COVID too put DEI, particularly inclusion, into sharp focus. The most successful staffing leaders were those who regularly consulted their team, and worked collaboratively to solve problems rather than doing everything themselves. They were the leaders who brought genuine curiosity, and who supported rather than saved their teams.

They didn't give their team a fish, they taught them how to fish.

AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

For staffing firms, the ability to navigate the current challenges can be put down in no small part to the strategies that the industry developed in response to a similarly destabilizing crisis in 2008. Cultivating customer relationships in recession-proof industries, diversifying, even if it's within a single vertical — these are the things that can help to insulate a firm during an economic downturn.

The best time to plan for the next crisis is right now. Leaders should treat the current situation as a free pass to try the new and different; to test technologies and strategies that will allow their businesses to grow, no matter what lays ahead. Flexibility will prove key, so it's vital that we look for solutions that grant agility and adaptability.

At the same time, good business practice will remain as important as ever. **Redeployment continues to equal profitability**, as continually searching for new talent is a time-consuming and costly undertaking, even more so when resources are as scarce as they are right now. If leaders are to focus on one KPI, it should be redeployment, something that rests on improving your candidate and client experience.

COVID will separate the wheat from the chaff in the staffing industry. And those who do make it out the other side stronger will be granted a rare opportunity to grow and succeed.





EVERYONE DESERVES A GREAT FIRST DAY.

Able allows recruiters to simplify and automate the hiring and onboarding processes that prevent new employees from getting to work, so employees can start doing what they were hired to do sooner. We believe no matter who someone is, what job they do, whether they're temporary or permanent, every employee can and should be able to have a great first day.

We are trusted by some of the largest staffing agencies in the world, dealing with some of the most complex hiring workflows. In order to keep pace, we are continuously evolving ourself, and our product.

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READY. WILLING. **ABLE.**

