



# Talent Acquisition at Scale: Avature Sets the Pace

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Talent acquisition is one of the most complex operations in business. Companies are continuously looking for new employees and today the challenge is more dynamic than ever. Not only has every job been transformed by the pandemic, organizations are relocating jobs to new cities, changing job roles to accommodate new low-touch business models, and continuously competing for high-demand skills like AI, cybersecurity (the most in-demand role in IT), software engineering, and many roles in science, healthcare delivery, and functional operations.

And recruitment is a highly strategic function. It not only sets the stage for growth, it creates a brand in the market – inviting top people to join the company and creating an experience that not only attracts great people but also reinforces the company’s culture.

## Technology Platforms Are Fragmented

Technology plays a major role. If you think about the process like a supply chain, one would think talent acquisition is like an ERP application. But it’s far more complex.

We need tools to advertise and attract candidates from many sources; search and communicate with candidates; schedule campus visits and events; manage referrals from employees and others; assess, video-interview, and test people; and manage interviewing, background checking, job offer creation,

contingent recruiting, and onboarding. And today a new requirement has emerged -- tools that enable internal talent mobility through a talent marketplace.

The average recruiting function has more than 20 different systems and as they stitch them together the operations become complex, the data is hard to manage, and the user experience becomes difficult for employees, managers, recruiters, and job candidates.

And the innovation keeps coming. Each year there are dozens of startups in talent acquisition. Emerging are companies that source candidates in unique ways, provide talent networks of specialized people, sell new tools for testing and assessment, and offer AI tools for analytics and candidate communication. The technology ecosystem for talent acquisition has become so complex that most large companies have a technology team dedicated to talent acquisition systems.

Because the market is so massive, the space attracts hundreds of vendors and billions of dollars of venture capital. Broadly speaking, companies in this market fall into the categories of sourcing, assessment and testing, video interviewing, candidate relationship management, background checking, interview scheduling and offer management, onboarding and analytics.

## Avature: A Unique Player in the Market

Over the years, many vendors have tried to build end-to-end talent acquisition platforms, often with limited success. Taleo was one of the early leaders, but it fell behind other innovators and is now owned by Oracle. Kenexa built and acquired many

Finding Great Candidates	Bringing Candidates into the Company
Advertising	Creating job requisitions with hiring managers
Sourcing	Maintaining visibility of the pipeline
Assessment	Assessing candidates strategically
Screening	Creating competitive job offers
Pre-hire assessment	Selling candidates on the company and the job
Interviewing	Background check and reference checking
University events	Closing a new hire
Candidate communications	Onboarding and ongoing training
Analyzing sources, advertising, experience	Analyzing performance of hires

Figure 1: Examples of functional needs in talent acquisition

tools but also could not keep up and was eventually acquired by IBM (and essentially closed down). Lumesse was acquired by Saba and then Cornerstone; PeopleClick was acquired by PeopleFluent and then LTG. JobVite was merged with RolePoint and Canvas. Vendors like Greenhouse and many others continue to try to keep up.

Why such churn? These products take deep investment in R&D, continuous innovation, and lots of domain expertise.

ERP vendors such as Oracle, Workday, SAP, Ultimate, and ADP are all building systems, but they also have a hard time keeping up. Even the highly successful, focused vendors (iCims and others) struggle to stay ahead. And to the churn is that the talent acquisition leaders in global enterprises are continuing to replace their platforms to obtain more functionality.

One big problem is system adaptability. As a company starts to tweak, adapt, and expand its recruiting practices, there are always new workflows, business rules, and reports to add. Recruiting is not a transactional process – it's more like a continuous flow – so the platform has to be adaptable and easy to change. This means the architecture has to be built around a workflow engine, one that can be configured by users and customized for each company.

Avature was built for this. Originally designed as a candidate relationship system, Avature was architected to scale from the beginning. The founder realized early that the process of candidate communications was highly configurable, so he built a system which is easy to configure, adapt, and change. And now that Avature has expanded into all areas of talent acquisition (from sourcing to video interviewing to scheduling to onboarding and even internal talent mobility), it has emerged as one of the most adaptable platforms in the market. And this means it can scale.

## Customers Deploy Avature for Many Applications in TA

I talked with many of Avature's customers and I kept hearing the same thing. These companies had used tools from providers such as Taleo or iCims in the past but kept finding the systems limiting in some way. Imagine you want to hire people in a new country, and you set up a local recruiting team. The team will need language support, as well as custom candidate marketing, unique candidate leads, custom fields and manager dashboards,

simplified workflows, and all sorts of reports specific to the local market. Or what if a global pandemic suddenly turned your recruiting and hiring processes upside down?

Avature lets you create this customized solution yourself. As you'll learn from the stories below, building these applications does not require any work from IT. The system itself is designed so that anyone can add new fields, create a workflow, design a new screen or portal, create a report and set up alerts, various manager approvals, and set up thresholds and other business rules.

The market for recruitment is similar to the overall market for HCM. While vendors like Workday, SAP, Oracle, and ADP try to build end-to-end solutions, companies badly need customized, workflow-enabled employee applications, so they now buy ServiceNow as a layer in between.

Avature, similar to ServiceNow, can be configured to do almost anything and now has all of the core features any large company demands. In fact, the consistent story I heard in all my interviews was that with Avature, TA leaders now could do almost anything needed without having to hire an engineer or the vendor to modify the system.

## Cisco

Cisco fills about 15,000 jobs each year. Given the rapid changes in Cisco's business (product lines like WebEx are experiencing explosive growth), this hiring pipeline is always active, always changing, and always important. The HR operations team now uses Avature for the entire process of recruiting and has extended its workflow capabilities to automate candidate relationship management and manage "silver medalists" (great candidates who did not get the job but which whom Cisco wants to keep in touch). This workflow lets Cisco promote new jobs to these candidates because there are often new opportunities that can be filled by these highly qualified people. Cisco also uses Avature to manage alumni and automate communications and ongoing feedback for this critical talent segment.

Avature's workflows tools let Cisco manage many talent segments: external candidates, internal candidates, and executive recruits. The executive recruiting instance is separated to maintain privacy, but it also uses the flexibility of Avature for process management. When it comes to internal candidates, Cisco has pioneered the strategy of internal

mobility and has encouraged people to move internally for many years. As a result, 40% of open requisitions are now filled with internal candidates -- a very high percentage.

Since the platform is so flexible, implementation is not a process of “turning on the system” but rather one of walking through your processes and then “turning them on” in Avature. Cisco uses Webex for video and virtual interviews, Outlook for interview scheduling, HackerRank for technical assessments, and a third party chatbot – all integrated into the Avature workflow.

The candidate and hiring manager experience is also managed by Avature. Since some hiring managers don't frequently hire, the interface has to be simple and easy to use. For candidates, Avature is used to manage a wide variety of career websites that help candidates find the right job within Cisco's broad business.

One of the biggest benefits of Avature is its extensibility. Cisco's operations team is constantly asked by HR to implement new workflows (new managerial approvals, new job assessments, contingent work roles, skills-based hiring) and in almost every case, Avature can be reconfigured to meet these needs. The person I interviewed said about the system, “There's nothing Avature can't do.”

Finally, the Cisco team has found Avature to be agile and responsive to its needs, with new features being added on a regular basis. Last year, Cisco hosted a set of Avature customers to talk about talent acquisition needs, and the team has found the Avature customer network to be another great benefit of the relationship.

## Siemens Energy

Siemens Energy provides building and energy solutions globally with around 90,000 employees and revenues greater than €28 billion euros. As the company continues to grow and evolve this business, the talent acquisition team wants to make sure its recruiting is strategic, highly optimized, scalable, and built around a strong employment brand.

How did Siemens select Avature? The head of talent acquisition, Mike Brown, found Avature to be the most complete, integrated, configurable system he had ever seen. Initially Siemens was looking for a CRM system, but as the TA team looked at the functionality of Avature, it realized it

could automate and integrate the entire global process. Mike believes Avature is one of the most consultative vendors he has worked with. Similar to Cisco, the Siemens TA team found that Avature would sit down with them, help them define the processes they needed, and showed them how to build these workflows in Avature.

When I asked Mike the biggest benefit of Avature, he said it came down to two things, both of which are focused on moving from a “post and pray” to “seek and sell” TA approach. First, Siemens needs to free up recruiters to “sell Siemens” to candidates, so Avature simplifies their day so they can focus on listening to candidates and helping them understand why Siemens is a good fit. As many TA leaders have told me, great recruiters attract great candidates. Second, Mike believes Avature gives recruiters, candidates, and hiring managers the right experience so they all feel engaged, informed, and involved in the process.

Prior to Avature, managers had to input almost 35 different pieces of information to create a job opening. Now a hiring manager just opens a “hiring demand” through a portal and only needs to specify the job title and location. The recruiter then talks with the hiring manager and fills out all the information needed. Recruiters are aligned by business unit and function, so they get to know the jobs and the hiring managers well.

Once the requisition is open, hiring managers can use that same portal to track the progress of the hire in real time, which keeps the recruiter, HR business partner and hiring manager well aligned throughout the process. This frees up the recruiter to manage a process that features embedded video interview technology, job post editing tools, and LinkedIn sourcing tools.

Today, every recruiter in the world has access to the data they need to view all key activities and share global pipelines. This means recruiters can quickly collaborate on hiring projects or candidates and even work together on a senior requisition itself. Since the CRM and ATS are integrated, recruiters see campaigns, candidates, and all related processes in one system.

Now that the system is fully implemented, Siemens uses Avature for sourcing, referrals, event management, interview scheduling, as well as the end-to-end process of applicant tracking. Today Siemens globally hires more than 40,000 people per year, all managed by Avature. The next step is to

work with Avature on contingent hiring, which currently is managed by Fieldglass.

## L'Oréal

In the United States, L'Oréal hires and moves around 1,200 senior people per year in its corporate operations; the company has 30-plus recruiters and about 120 HR professionals overall. Recruiting covers all corporate roles including sales, IT, operations leadership, and engineering roles. The company had used Kenexa (acquired by IBM) and PeopleFluent (formerly known as Peopleclick) and used an on-premise solution, Encore, for candidate relationship management. In 2014, the company globally transitioned to Avature as these other solutions fell behind in the market.

Avature has now become L'Oréal's end-to-end platform for talent acquisition. What TA leaders like about Avature is the ability to customize the system easily and its reporting capabilities.

Prior to implementing Avature, it took weeks or months to pull together data and run reports which then quickly went out of date. In Avature, the same reports are all real-time and can be shared with hiring managers, recruiters, or anyone in the company to aid in decision making. Since Avature is an end-to-end platform, L'Oréal now has access to data across every step in the process and the team is able to analyze talent acquisition in more detail.

The company is also leveraging Avature to track gender and ethnic diversity through the recruiting process and to find areas where the diversity mix may change. For example, a TA leader may look at diversity by ad campaign, source, recruiter, hiring manager, role, geography, or source company. This helps the team modify its recruiting investments to continuously improve diversity, candidate quality, and cost to hire.

Because Avature is easy to use, L'Oréal has empowered its recruiters to do many of this analysis themselves. It only takes a few days for recruiters to learn how to use the system and, very quickly, they become highly effective at using Avature as their toolbox.

And if L'Oréal decides to capture additional information from candidates, Avature lets the company attach forms to ask new questions – customized by job, location or level. This helps L'Oréal dramatically improve its pipelining strategy to target

recruitment toward unique audiences. The system also lets recruiters ask candidates important self-select questions like “when are you looking to move?”, making its targeting even more effective over time.

## Bottom Line: Talent Acquisition Technology That Scales

I am an industry analyst and have no reason to push one product over another. For many years, I've looked at recruiting companies and have been amazed at the functional innovation and depth in their products, only to find later that the company was acquired by a larger provider. The reason for all this churn is that talent acquisition has three unique characteristics (similar to L&D):

- High complexity with many workflows and functional needs
- The need for customization, unique to each customer
- Constantly changing requirements as the customer company grows and evolves

One of the reasons Avature has been able to build a configurable and scalable platform is that the company is privately held and still owned by its founder, Dimitri Boylan. Dimitri has a long-term business view, and he is willing to build a platform (not a product) that scales. Over the last five years, Avature has fully built out candidate relationship marketing, video interviewing, applicant tracking, internal mobility, skills and job architecture, and tools for reporting, onboarding, and more. In many ways, it is a configurable talent management system as well; Dimitri and his teams are building functionality around goals and performance and learning as well.

While I know many companies will do fine with the other products on the market, Avature's unique blend of adaptability, flexibility, and ease of configuration and use is quite a unique offering. I encourage you to think about these issues as you look at HR platforms for your company.

## About Josh Bersin



*Josh Bersin is an internationally recognized analyst, educator, and thought leader focusing on the global talent market and the challenges impacting business workforces around the world. He studies the world of work, HR and leadership practices, and the broad talent technology market.*

*He founded Bersin & Associates in 2001 to provide research and advisory services focused on corporate learning. Over the next ten years, he expanded the company's coverage to encompass HR, talent management, talent acquisition, and leadership. He sold the company to Deloitte in 2012, when it became known as Bersin™ by Deloitte. Bersin left Deloitte in 2018..*

*In 2019, Bersin founded the Josh Bersin Academy, the world's first global development academy for HR and talent professionals and a transformation agent for HR organizations. The Academy offers content-rich online programs, a carefully curated library of tools and resources, and a global community that helps HR and talent professionals stay current on the trends and practices needed to drive organizational success in the modern world of work.*

*Bersin is frequently featured in talent and business publications such as Forbes, Harvard Business Review, HR Executive, FastCompany, The Wall Street Journal, and CLO Magazine. He is a regular keynote speaker at industry events around the world and a popular blogger with more than 800,000 followers on LinkedIn.*

*His education includes a BS in engineering from Cornell University, an MS in engineering from Stanford University, and an MBA from the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley.*