



Cornell University

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Allan Bishop
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and Employment
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Cornell University Uses Talent Management to Transform Academic Institution Recruitment Model

Cornell University is a leading private institution of higher learning with the main campus located in Ithaca, New York. Other regional sites are located throughout the state and across the globe. One of Cornell’s largest challenges is attracting and retaining high-quality diverse staff from inside and outside the Ithaca area. With almost 10,000 employees, ranging from entry-level staff to emeritus faculty, Cornell is a complex and decentralized institution that needed some innovative enhancements to its HR processes.

Cornell looked at improving its employment process in the late 1990s. Complicated by uncoordinated recruitment efforts and the absence of a centralized database, it was impossible to meaningfully measure searches, track their progress, or report the results.

“We really felt as if we needed to manage the process in an efficient manner in order to better assess our non-academic staff recruitment trends and become better citizens of the university’s resources,” says Allan Bishop, director of Cornell University’s Recruitment and Employment Center within the Office of Human Resources (OHR).

Business Case

Outdated Paper Processes

The paper-based employment application process was individually managed by each of Cornell’s 31 colleges and units. In addition, the paper-based Affirmative Action data collection process was proving to be ineffective with a low return rate.

Inconsistent Hiring Practices

Few mechanisms existed to effectively track search efforts—from requisition creation and approval to application receipt and hiring decision recording. Available information was stored in the hiring units and practices varied, impacting communication, reporting, and search effort metrics. Cornell was challenged by its decentralized organizational structure to develop and ensure consistent hiring practices and processes.

Cornell University Profile

- Fourteen academic schools and colleges.
- Almost 20,000 students at Ithaca campus.
- Close to 10,000 academic and non-academic employees.
- Unique land grant and private institution missions.
- Founding vision: “I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study.”
—Ezra Cornell 1865

“Our employer of choice image was suffering from lack of response to applicant material and inconsistency in the communication of opportunities at the University,” says Bishop. “Prospective applicants were not taking us seriously.”

Lack of Strategic Metrics

Critical to the success of any HR strategy is the ability to capture and review data so people can measure and improve the effectiveness of various recruiting sources and search processes. Cornell knew that implementing the right technology could enable measurable processes.

Cornell Modernizes HR Processes with Taleo

In 2001, Cornell University’s Office of Human Resources (OHR) evaluated several online applicant tracking systems (ATS) to help achieve the following goals:

- Increasing consistency and efficiencies in a decentralized recruiting environment.
- Automating Affirmative Action data collection.
- Moving the human resources organization from a reactive recruiting model to a proactive one via talent-connection, sourcing, and communication.
- Using reporting to create university-wide strategies for meeting more specialized recruiting needs and diversity goals.
- Raising awareness around university recruitment trends.
- Targeting areas of potential cost savings.

Cornell selected Taleo and began implementation in 2002. Cornell University’s decentralized organizational structure required that any automation have a certain amount of flexibility and provide various levels of access to many different users across campus.

“Moving from a paper system to an automated electronic process is a significant cultural and organizational change, because it requires a certain degree of consistency in practice and procedure. We were struggling with our hiring process. We knew we could improve it, but we had to break the mold—not just automate the old processes,” says Bishop.

Cornell chose to start with automating the hiring process for non-academic staff. “We came across some resistance to change, but Taleo took us from a process that needed improvement to one that strategically meets our current business needs,” says Bishop.

Talent Management Results

- All nonacademic and some academic opportunities are now posted to a central site, and a consistent employment process powered by Taleo is used across campus. Applications online have increased, now totaling over 35 thousand unique applications from over 10 thousand applicants.
- Now, approved users can create, approve, and post employment opportunities and then accept, view, and process job candidates across the board.
- Affirmative Action data collection in the application process has increased the response rate from 30 percent to 90 percent.
- Due to the overall success of the online application and search tracking process for non-academic staff, Cornell expanded the process to include all union-represented and selected non-professorial academic opportunities.
- Using correspondence features, Cornell has greatly improved the experience of talent who apply for jobs.
- Search-related data is readily available. Authorized users can access and report on current and /or historical data on requisitions and applicants, view diversity of applicant pools, and make informed decisions to meet Affirmative Action goals.

“We are an educator and employer of choice, and consider it a strategic responsibility to implement processes, procedures, and resources that leave both talent and our hiring managers feeling positive about their recruitment experiences. We continually seek to make greater progress,” says Bishop. “However, using Taleo, we are very pleased with our progress thus far.”



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ABOUT TALEO

Leading organizations worldwide use Taleo on demand talent management solutions to assess, acquire, develop, and align their workforce for improved business performance.

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