

Hiring in Saudi Arabia: What Our Members Say

By: Lisa Leander, Director, Member Services

Recently I was hiring a new employee in our Vienna, Virginia office. I needed to hire the right talent, someone who had both the technical IT skills, but also the soft skills to provide quality customer service. I was looking for the elusive all-around team player to pitch in where needed. Like most hiring managers in the U.S. I followed the standard procedures of updating an old job description, posting on the various channels (LinkedIn and Indeed), sharing with my network, and then combing through resumes. A few phone calls and in-person interviews, a reference check and an offer letter, I have secured the perfect candidate who started this month.

However, sometimes finding the right candidate can be much more difficult. When hiring in Saudi Arabia the recruiting process may not always be as straight forward as in the United States. With an increase in localization requirements, hiring your local team with the right skills is critical for success. One of the most often questions asked to the Council from our members is, **“How do I find and hire the best staff for our local office?”**

Along with sharing our own resources, I decided to explore what our members had to say about finding talent in Saudi Arabia, and what suggestions they would give to other Council members who are currently hiring. Below are some of the suggestions that they offered in successfully identifying, recruiting and hiring a new employee.

Referrals, Referrals, Referrals:

Beyond any other method, the top response to hiring by our members (and the top choice for how the Council hires for our Riyadh office) is through personal referrals of current staff. Word-of-mouth, networking and personal connections from current staff appears to be the standard and most successful method for identifying the best candidates.

What our Members say about Referrals:

Jensen Hughes identifies and recruits candidates in Saudi Arabia through multiple channels. Our usual methods include job advertisements on our website and LinkedIn. We have been able to make hires through these tactics, but the most successful source of candidates in Saudi Arabia to date has been through employee referrals. Current employees have been able to tap into their own networks to find qualified candidates that have successfully fit into the company.—Human Resources, Jensen Hughes

The local network of our existing team is a big source for new resources. Local talent pool is still coming into maturity in terms of using job portals and formalizing their CVs. Therefore, the referral method is quite effective.—Osman Qureshis, Proven SA.

We’ve had great success with local referrals from within our current labor force of young, talented Saudis. That’s generally one of our first sources of recruiting for entry level, professional positions. Our young Saudi employees have many friends and acquaintances that are well educated and looking for work. They are quite honest with their assessments—if they recommend someone, we’re pretty confident that it will work out.—Paul Damren, Leidos

Online Job Listings

Sometimes a referral will not always find the right skill set or experience. For companies unable to identify the right talent within their current network, or perhaps are early entry to the market and hiring for the first time, going beyond local connections will be key.

LinkedIn, Bayt, Naukri, and Naukrigulf were listed as some of the prevalent job portals members have utilized, outside of their own career pages listed on their website.

LinkedIn was a popular location for posting by members, with a total of 5,389 positions currently being listed in Saudi Arabia in a variety of employment levels.

Bayt.com was recommended as another leading job site for the Middle East, with 4,671 jobs in Saudi Arabia currently being listed during the month of August, with many positions posted in the entry to mid-level range level, although 20 executive level positions were also listed.

Naukri.com, is an Indian based job portal that operates in the Middle East. In August, 1,291 jobs were posted located in Saudi Arabia, with a large number of positions listed in the oil/gas energy, construction as well as medical/healthcare fields.

Naukrigulf.com is the regional equivalent of Naukri.com, with 50,000 job posts for the Gulf countries and Egypt, of which 3,159 jobs were listed in Saudi Arabia for Saudi and non-Saudi nationals.

Taqat.sa Positions are also found through the Human Resources Development fund, HADAF, and the National Labor Gateway (Taqat) initiative that is run by the Ministry of Labor and Social Development and the Ministry of Civil Service, www.taqat.sa. Taqat is an online platform for positions to be listed for both the public and private sectors, and recently has run e-job fairs for recruiting. Read more about these initiatives and their e-job fair in a recent article [here](#).

Social Media & Apps

Twitter is very popular in Saudi Arabia, with over 9.9 million users. Whether you are advertising the job on your own website, or through your staff's personal networks, advertising and amplifying the job posting through Twitter was recommended.

Mihnati (or "Career" in Arabic) is a local app that filters candidates based upon jobs only in Saudi Arabia. The employer creates an account, posts the job details and candidate requirements, then the app uses an algorithm to filter the CV posted by candidates. You can also search through the database of CV's then SMS, email or shortlist applicants directly from your phone. Members didn't list this as being a popular resource, but several Saudi job seekers mentioned it growing in popularity for job hunting, so this should be another site to watch for potential. The website for downloading the app on your mobile device can be found here: <https://hiring.mihnati.com/EN/employer-app>.

Snapchat and Telegram

Messaging app Snapchat (www.snapchat.com) has Arabic bloggers who will post positions on channels that young job hunters follow. Telegram (www.telegram.org) is another instant messaging app utilized by young Saudis that have job boards and channels for sharing job postings. Although not a formal network for recruiters, and most channels are in Arabic, these are great tools to be aware of for local staff looking to use referrals and connections to identify good candidates.

Print Media

Not unexpected, no members reported using local print media as an effective hiring tool.

Hiring Agencies

There are local and international recruiting firms with regional experience that can help with hiring, with various levels of success. However, a Council member reports that utilizing regional recruitment firms who do not have localized knowledge base or resources on the ground has yielded very poor results, particularly for mid-level roles requiring local talent. It is important to ensure a good fit prior to contracting.

Some additional companies include:

The U.A.E.-based head hunting firm, **Michael Page**, conducts highly customized search assignments for the region. Currently their job site lists 100 technical or high level positions in Saudi Arabia that they are recruiting for: www.michaelpage.ae/jobs/Saudi-arabia.

Proven, SA, a Council Member, has built a recruitment team as part of its business processing outsourcing offering. Their team works in a shared service model whereby it fulfills not only internal corporate recruitment needs but also requests from clients on retainer. <https://proven-sa.com/>

Other recommended head hunting and recruiting firms operating in Saudi Arabia include:

Gulf Talent: <https://www.gulftalent.com/>

BAC ME: <https://www.bacme.com/>

Mackenzie Jones: <https://www.mackenziejones.co.uk/>

Hays: <https://www.hays.com/>

Locally, **Team Time Co. (TTCO)**, based in Jeddah, provides clients with Labor Recruitment Brokerage Services and recruits labor force from countries authorized by the Ministry of Labor with competencies at various skill levels. www.ttco.sa

Career Centers

Universities

Although not widely reported as being utilized by members for hiring, some companies do have connections to local universities to support training and hiring students. One Council Member writes, “we do have some agreements with different universities to train their students during the summer break. Each university has to send to us CVs for talented students, then we interview them to make sure we choose the best students.”—Anonymous, Chairman Circle Member.

Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission, Center for Career Development

The Center for Career Development at the Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission (SACM) in Fairfax, Virginia was created to assist Saudi students in the U.S. in broadening their skills and experiences. SACM utilizes a job board and resume database to assist Saudi students who have recently graduated or are currently studying in the U.S. to find internships and positions in the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. A good resource to be

aware of to identify Saudi students who have studied in the United. For more information:
<http://sacm.org/Careercenter/CareerExploration1.aspx>.

Have you recently hired a new employee and have some success to share? Or have you hit some roadblocks? The U.S.-Saudi Business Council has helped members identify and navigate the hiring process and will help build your network of local connections. Looking to grow your professional network for hiring as a member of the Council? Please feel free to contact me for more information and to determine how we can help meet your business objectives in the Kingdom.

--Lisa Leander
Director, Member Services

Lisa Leander is an international development expert with over 17 years of experience managing international trade projects globally. In her role as Director, Member Services at the Council she oversees the engagement of member companies to ensure the successful completion of international transactions between Saudi and American companies.