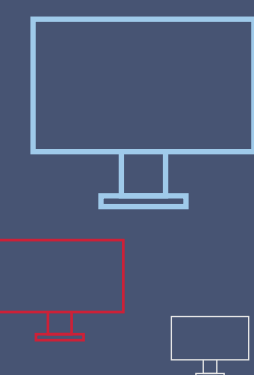


# 2022 Huntsville Hiring Outlook

Digital transformations, Shorter Life Cycles, and an Aging Retiring Workforce Force Companies to Change How They Hire



The Huntsville defense and technology sector has been sky-rocketing even through the challenges of the pandemic. While many companies and cities had to adapt to remote work, defense, tech, and engineering already had the skills needed to quickly adapt and thrive. Work may never be the same, but for companies to adapt to new market demands and grow to meet the needs of government and private sector companies, they are going to need to grow their workforce in new and challenging ways.

The defense procurement cycle is getting faster and faster forcing companies to bring new technology to market faster every year. With advancements in AI and computing a growing demand for digital systems is creating an unparalleled demand for hi-tech workers.

**Defense spending in 2020 increased, clocking in at over \$730 billion, a year-over-year increase of \$20 billion.** And much of the increases will go to digital products designed and built by Huntsville area companies.

As demand has increased, competition for workers has increased. According to Gartner.com Talent Neuron, while demand for high tech and defense jobs across the United States has put a strain on recruiting, in the Huntsville DMA, the demand is 4x that of the United States. Older workers nearing retirement are adding to the talent deficit.

**Employee recruitment has changed dramatically in a very short time.** For companies to win the recruiting war, they will have to adopt a new recruit-centric marketing strategy. When job fairs, college recruitment events and face-to-face meetings went away in 2020, companies quickly shifted to multi-channel digital channels to reach job seekers and recruits. In 2022, winning companies will double down on digital recruitment marketing to differentiate themselves **and win the talent they need to be successful in the future.**

### Defense Trends Impacting the Huntsville Market (PWC, 2020)

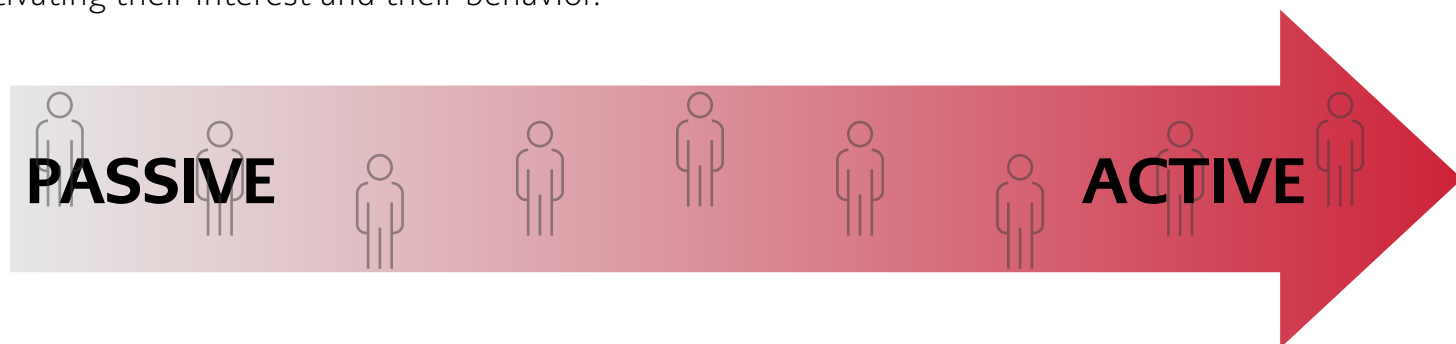
1. Digital Transformation – Artificial Intelligence, Autonomous Tech and Space
2. Procurement – Shorter life cycles for both traditional defense supplier and smaller tech firms
3. Workforce Demands – Many older workers are retiring creating unparalleled demand for skilled workers



## Moving Potential Candidates from Passive to Active

To meet the growing demand for skilled workers in defense and technology, there aren't enough workers actively seeking employment to meet the community's needs. But getting the attention of these non-active seekers or "passive" candidates isn't easy. The same tactics that consumer goods marketers use to create demand, engage customers, and turn them into buyers are what those companies need to do to create a demand for their jobs.

Moving a prospect from uninterested to interested or passive to active isn't like the flip of a switch. It's more of a spectrum, and workers tend to move up and down on that line based on several factors motivating their interest and their behavior.



Employees are influenced every day whether they are aware of it or not. Economic news and trends influence how workers feel about their industry and their job security. Uncertain economic news may move them towards the active seeker spectrum. Many influencers move workers either towards passive or active status – from social to economic to personal circumstances. All of these are outside of a company's control. But there a lot of things companies can do through recruitment marketing to move workers from the passive side of the spectrum towards the active.



## No Job Fairs, No Problem: What Winning Companies did in 2020 and 2021 and What They're Planning for 2022

### CASE STUDY: Intuitive Research and Technology, Arlee Holmes

The pandemic put a stop to many traditional tactics recruiters relied on in 2019 and early 2020. Job fairs, trade shows, and networking events were canceled abruptly. But that didn't stop some companies from engaging prospects and keeping the recruitment funnel active. Arlee Holmes is Director of Engagement and Communications at Intuitive Research and Technology Corporation (INTUITIVE). She says hiring managers are looking to the Communications department to drive leads through digital marketing.

Marketing is no longer reserved for business development. For companies to thrive, they must brand and market their workplace as much as they do their products and services. INTUITIVE has been a leader in this area effectively engaging both business prospects and job candidates through a robust social and digital marketing approach.



***We were always on this path – it just made it easy to move forward with digital. In the past, it was one of many tactics. Now it is critical, and we know we're doing the right things!***

– Arlee Holmes,  
Director of Engagement  
and Communications



***Before COVID, face-to-face meetings were standard. Now digital marketing is essential for growing our brand.***

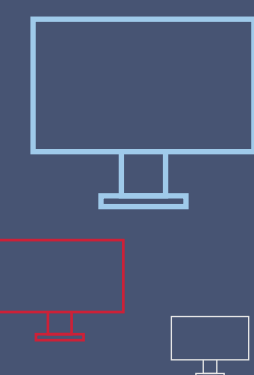
– Victoria Anderson,  
Business Development  
Communications Leader

### CASE STUDY: COLSA, Victoria Anderson, Business Development and Christina Guthrie, Corporate Talent Acquisition Manager

As the pandemic restricted typical recruitment activities, it also affected business development. For COLSA, marketing the workplace and marketing the business go together. While potential candidates see ads and posts promoting COLSA's company culture and capabilities to workers, industry procurement leaders are also influenced.

Victoria Anderson is COLSA's Business Development Communications leader. Successful business development used to be dependent on in-person meetings and trade shows.





Now, digital marketing is the cornerstone of a brand awareness strategy that is helping COLSA to grow their brand in places they haven't been before.

Christina Guthrie leads talent acquisition for COLSA. She says they've always relied on a robust mix of digital channels including digital display and social media for brand awareness, content marketing and social media to engage prospects and search engine marketing and job boards targeted to active job seekers. As a result, in 2021 they saw an increase in the amount of communication to COLSA's internal and external community.



***It's important for job candidates and current employees to know how much COLSA cares for our team members and what we're doing to support them in challenging times.***

– Christina Guthrie,  
Talent Acquisition Manager



## Talent Acquisition Doesn't Work Without Brand Marketing

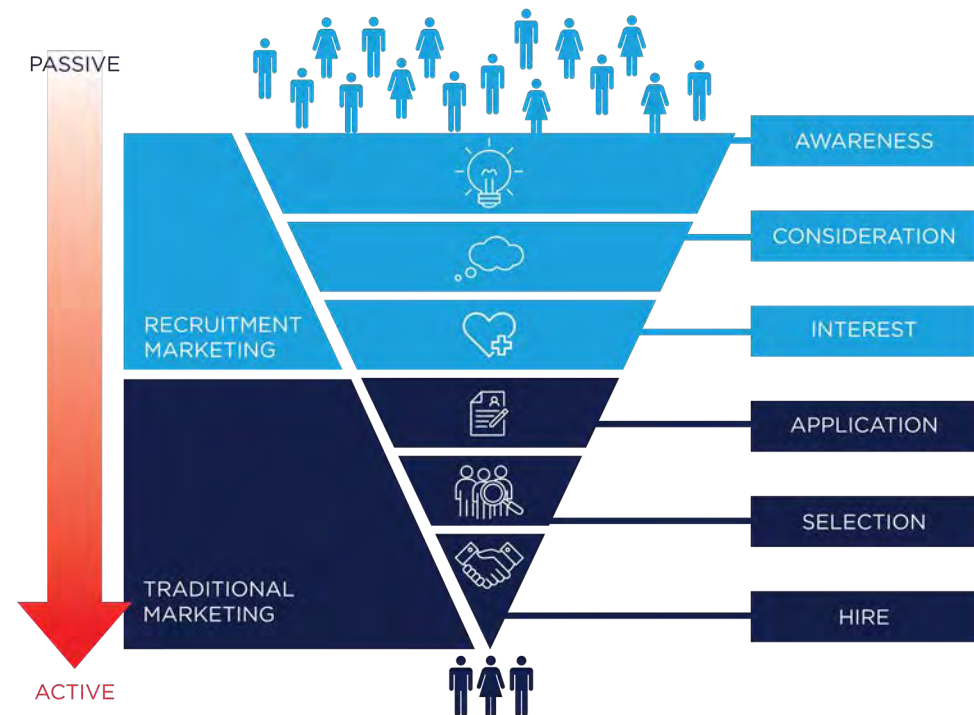
Many companies think marketing is reserved for business development. If companies are going to meet their talent needs, they must market their workplace the way a consumer goods company markets a brand. Workplace culture is a brand, and every company workplace brand has a reputation – good, bad, or neutral - that is either helping or hindering their recruitment efforts.

# The Talent Acquisition Strategy: Attracting Candidates from Passive to Active

A good talent marketing strategy launches tactics to reach candidates at every point along the passive-active axis. To meet the growth demanded by the defense-technology industry, the hiring pipeline should always be pulling in new candidates to create enough volume to find the right hires when the business needs them. Some candidates will enter as mostly passive, while others will be more active when they encounter your marketing. What is most important is that you have ad creative and messaging that **meets the candidate where they are in the process** to capture their attention draw them into a relationship with you as quickly as possible.

Some of the relationships will take longer to develop – those are the most passive candidates. Others will lead to active interest and an application more quickly. In each case, the wrong message will be ineffective and could repel the candidates you are seeking.

**Timing and targeting are everything.**



## 1. NOT LOOKING



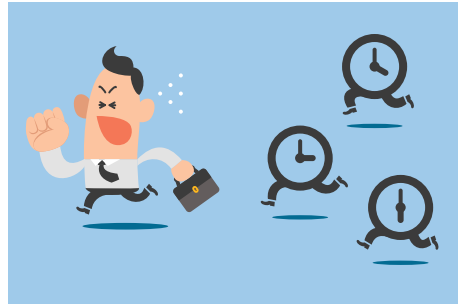
Aware but Not Interested

At the passive end of the scale, we find potential candidates who aren't thinking about new opportunities. Most days they are content with their current positions. However, they stay up with their industry and pay attention to what other companies in their field are doing through advertising, social media and their friends and family working there.



### What the Candidate is Doing

- Noticing Brand Ads
- Reading news articles about the company
- Browsing Social Media
- Clicking on a Blog post about your company event
- Impressed by your company's diversity post
- 'Liking' a post about a company volunteer day



SWIPE UP

COMMENT

SUBSCRIBE

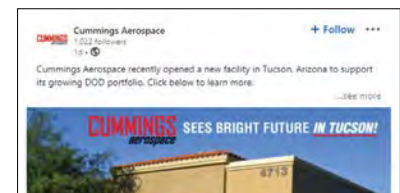
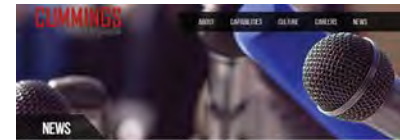
LIKE

## What the Marketing Should Do

- Introduce Yourself: Build Brand Recognition – Targets need repeated exposure to your brand name and taglines, so they start recognizing you.
- Grab their attention: with captivating creative imagery
- Say What You Do (Capabilities) - Differentiate your company's strengths to stand out from competition – Who you are and what are your strengths
- Call to Action: We're not looking for clicks, but if someone is ready to engage more deeply, invite them in with a "Learn more about us" call to action.

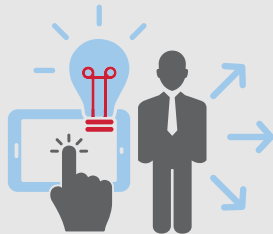
## Marketing Channels

- Organic and Paid Social Media
- Digital Display Advertising
- Sponsored Content





## 2. CURIOSITY



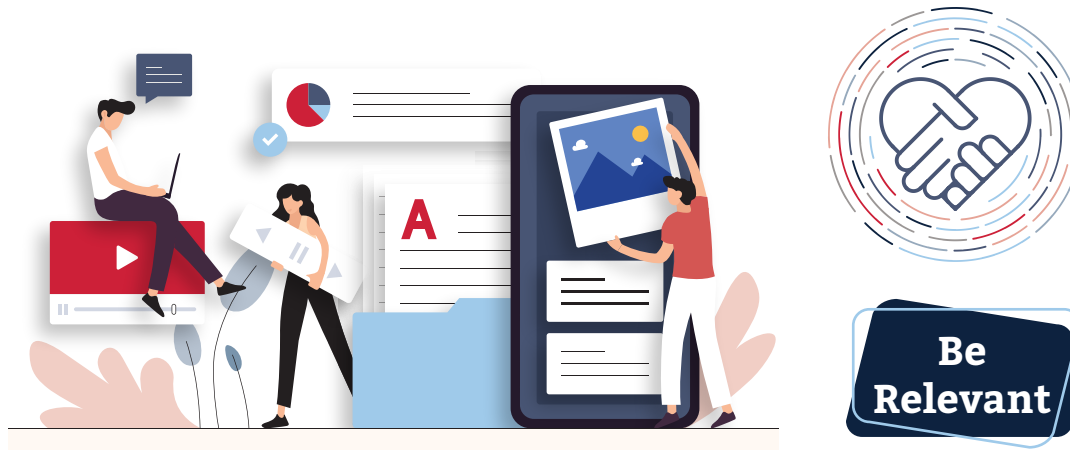
Exploring the Possibilities

Have you ever been surfing LinkedIn and seen job alerts? Do you get the occasional “Congratulate your friend” notice when they get a new job? Everyone does, and for some it tickles their curiosity. Even if its just for a short time, they become curious about the possibilities and open a bit to the idea of a new job. If your acquisition strategy includes the right advertising with the right messages, then you can get the attention of candidates as they start to become curious and draw them closer.



### What the Candidate is Doing

- Engaging with your company’s social media posts – mostly on LinkedIn and Facebook (Twitter for company news posts)
- Reading blog posts on new company initiative and capabilities they saw on social media or in a sponsored article on news website
- Browsing work culture sections of your company website – curious to see if you have a culture they would fit into

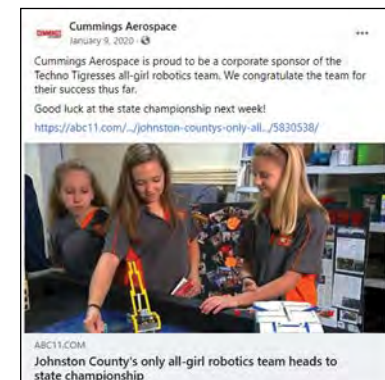
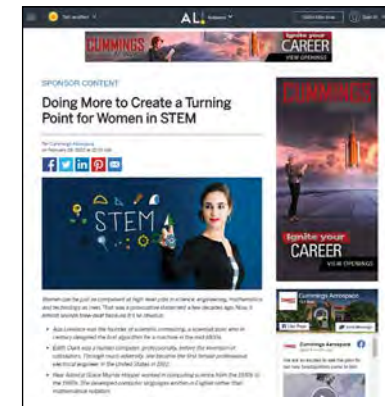


## What the Marketing Should Do

- Be Relevant to Industry and Talent Targets: Show how your company and culture is relevant to them...
- Be **the** Expert: create blogs and whitepapers that show you are the thought leader and
- Build Trust: Answer the question 'Why should I leave and come to your company' or 'Why should I do business with you'

## Marketing Channels

- Paid Social Media Boosting – get those articles and blog posts in front of candidates and industry decision makers through complex targeting
- Sponsored Content
- GeoFence research parks and businesses in target markets
- Digital Display Advertising to continue to increase brand awareness

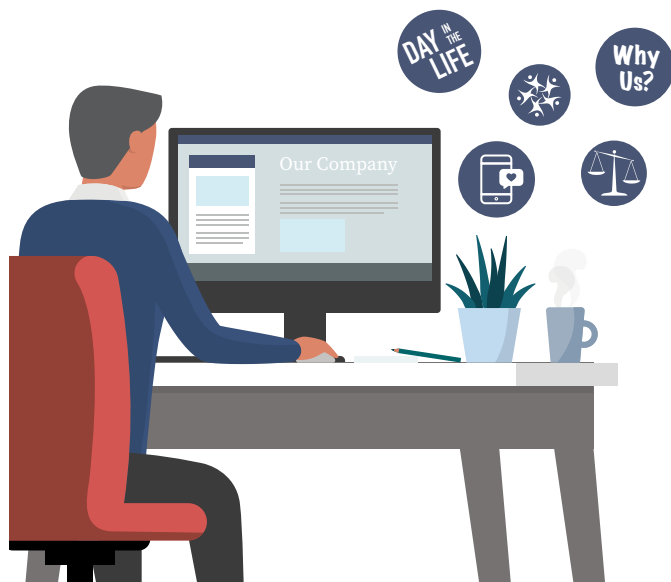


### 3. CONSIDERING



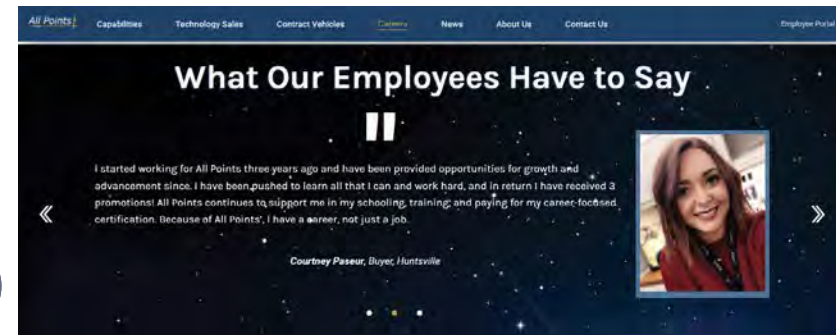
Digging Deeper

If a candidate likes what they see through the curiosity stage, they gradually start to dig deeper. If your company's marketing got them to this point, they already have a sense of loyalty to your company and your brand. Trust has been built, and they're diving in to answer the questions they have before deciding to apply – will I be happy here; how serious are they about \_\_\_\_\_ (cyber, infrastructure, aerospace); what will my life be like working for this company?



#### What the Candidate is Doing

- Reading as much info as possible about your company culture
  - “Day in the life” and “why I chose \_\_\_\_\_” themes
  - Diving deep to uncover your diversity initiatives
  - Trying to understand how you support employees’ work-life balance
- Reading posts about a specific team or department
- Proactively visiting your social pages and looking at past posts to get a better feel for your company’s brand and personality

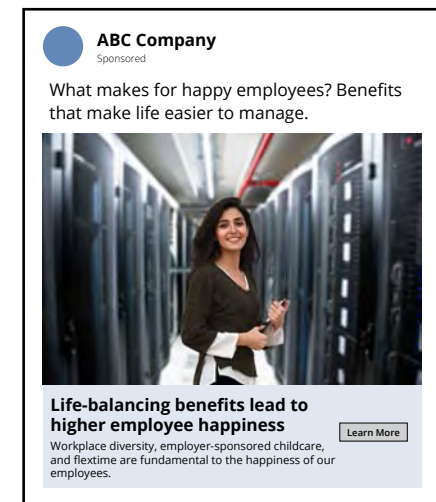


## What the Marketing Should Do

- Candidates should be able to find testimonials from people that look like them and have similar backgrounds and job titles.
- Remessaging campaigns should be segmented to fit the pages visited by the candidate
  - Company culture
  - Capabilities
  - Job testimonials
- Actively target candidates where they work by geo-fencing companies with similar positions.

## Marketing Channels

- Hyper-targeted responsive digital display featuring blog content and videos
- Remessaging with messages and creative based on the pages visited by the candidates
- Pre-roll/Mid-roll/Post-roll videos
- Paid social media videos on LinkedIn and Facebook
- SEM and SEO so your company is top of search rankings when candidates do deeper research on position titles and companies.



## 4. TELL ME MORE



Reaching Out for Advice

We're a culture of advice givers and advice seekers. We won't buy a waffle iron without reading the reviews. When it comes to job advice, candidates want to get the inside scoop, to know what your employees (past and present) have to say about working for your company. That's why it's important to tell your story, put your employees' testimonials front and center and provide candidates opportunities to ask questions before they get to the application and interview stage.



### What the Candidate is Doing

- Seeking someone on the inside that they know or can talk to
- Filling out a webform or short application
- Reading Company reviews on Indeed, Facebook, LinkedIn, Glassdoor and review sites
- Rereading company blogs and social media
- Watching or reading employee profiles on your site and social media channels





## What the Marketing Should Do

- Coordinate with HR to create a candidate advisor – someone who can talk with candidates before they apply so they can ask questions outside of the high-pressure interview process and before they submit an application.
- Create a short-form application or “learn more” form on your website for candidates who have high degrees of interest but aren’t ready to fill out the full application.
- Create a webinar or short video that answers the most common FAQ’s asked by applications. Use employees to narrate and answer team-related questions instead of professional talent or HR.
- Promote the short form application, application advisor program and FAQ videos through remessaging campaigns to website visitors who viewed worker testimonials, team and division “day in the life” blogs and other relevant pages.

## Marketing Channels:

- Remessaging to digital display networks
- Remessaging to Facebook



## 5. OK, I'M IN



Formally Applying  
for the Job

Once someone has decided to submit their application, there isn't a lot of marketing to do. However, the user experience is something every company should consider. E-commerce companies know user experience is everything. If they make it hard to check-out, customers will walk away – in an instant.

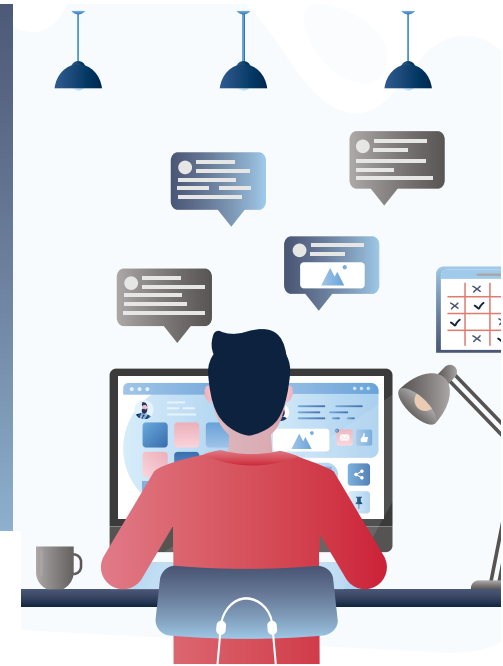
Your application process is no different. In tight labor market, candidates are in demand, and they know it. In the digital age, a poorly designed application process could drive away the best candidates. The candidate is our customer, and companies should review their processes from that point of view.



### What the Candidate is Doing:

- Looking for the information you require to apply
- Researching expectations on the full apply-to-hire process
  - How many levels of interviews for the position?
  - Who will I meet with?
  - How long should it take from application to decision?
- The application process is either reinforcing or changing the way the candidate thinks about your company

**NOTE: Does the process within your Applicant Tracking System (ATS) embody the experience you want them to have?**



### What the Marketing & HR Should Do

- Test the application process yourself.
- Ask colleagues and friends outside the company to go through the process and tell you how to make it more welcoming, transparent, and streamlined.

### Marketing Channels:

- Company website and applicant tracking system



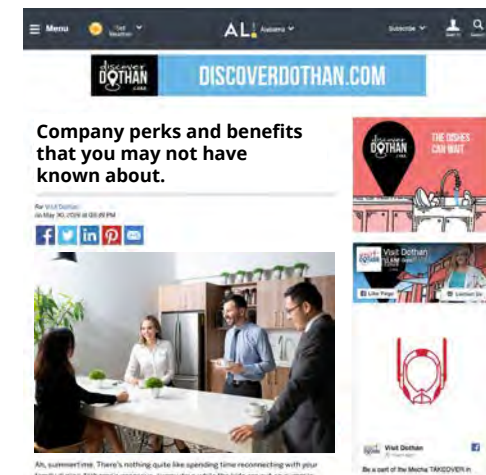
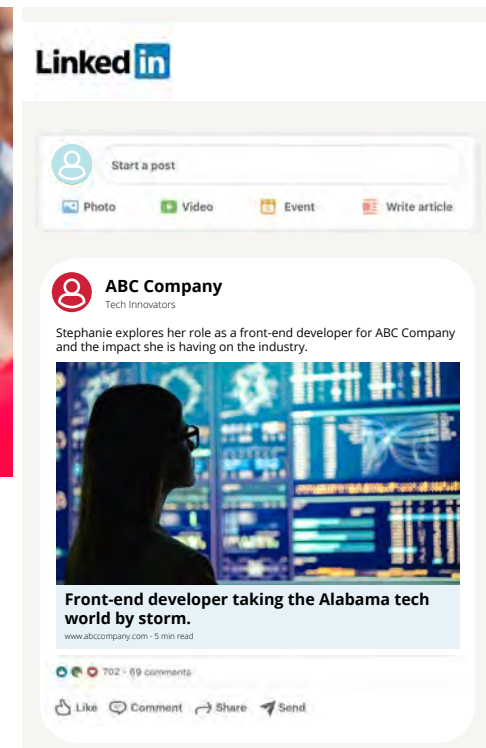
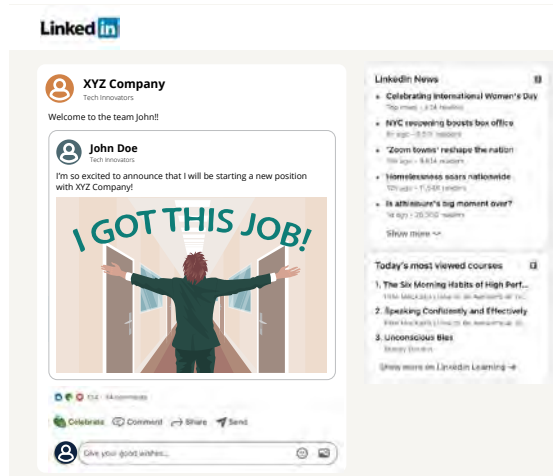


Once an employee is hired, most companies think that's it, we're done – aside from all the onboarding that HR needs to do. But for the employee, it's just the beginning. They are excited about you, about the position and about the future. If a company can capture that enthusiasm and support it, then other candidates will be drawn to you.



- Shouting out the new job on personal social media
- Coworkers comment and welcome them on social media

If there is additional clearance or background checks that is/are needed prior to on-boarding, how do you keep them engaged and not become a flight risk?



## What the Marketing Should Do

- Company Social Media likes and shares the employees personal shoutout
- After onboarding and trial period, use employee testimonial on blog/SM and promote to like applicants
- Connect employee to support groups (diversity based or interest based) and share their experiences on social channels

## Marketing Channels:

- Organic social media posts
- Paid post boosting to candidate targets
- Press release style blog for new hires





## Conclusion:

2021 was a unique year for Huntsville, and 2022 has the potential to break all the records. With record economic growth, Huntsville is a shining star that will get the attention of talent across the skill-set spectrum – even in the face of the great resignation. But, to maintain their growth companies will need to win at both the business development and talent acquisition game. The old days of networking events and job boards just aren't enough anymore. A company is defined by its brand, and in talent acquisition its brand is its work culture.

Is your talent acquisition strategy ready to compete? AMG is ready to collaborate with your human resources, marketing, and business development teams to create the best strategy for your unique needs. We're local, with national reach. We're hands-on and personal, with the latest, most up-to-date tech stack in the marketing industry.

Get in touch with us today! We can't wait to support your success in 2022 and beyond.

**AMG.**  
**DEFENSE TECH**

Contact us: [defensetech@al.com](mailto:defensetech@al.com)

