Mervyn Dinnen 0:00

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Mervyn Dinnen 1:18

Welcome to the HR Means Business podcast, which is part of the HR Happy Hour Network. I'm your host Mervyn Dinnen, today I'm recording live from the HR Technology Conference and Expo in Las Vegas, and we're talking about talent acquisition and talent acquisition in the world of AI. And I'm speaking with isolved, one of the main vendors here, and I'm speaking to Yutaka Takagi. Yutaka, would you like to introduce yourselves?

Yutaka Takagi 1:47

Yeah, thanks. Mervyn. My name is Yutaka Takagi, Principal Product Evanelist here with isolved. And you know, I come with, you know, 30 years of experience here in the HR technology space, implementing various solutions and selling and developing various solutions over the years, over these generations, from the mainframe days to client, server to web to now AI. So really, you know, really appreciate this opportunity to talk about how AI is impacting talent acquisition today.

Mervyn Dinnen 2:19

Okay, what would you say, looking back, before we get on AI, over the last five to 10 years, how would you say job seekers have changed their approach towards applying?

Yutaka Takagi 2:29

Sure, you know, I mean, you know, if we think back, you know, five to 10 years ago, really that this, it was really this transition from to, from, say, From the employer's perspective, I'll say, to from just automating recruiting processes to really start to think more strategic early around talent acquisition right to really the gradual shift of looking at things like skills, looking at, you know, How do they, you know, assess match, if you will, with your candidates. What we saw from candidate perspective is, you know, candidates constantly evolving their approach to how they applied for these jobs. And so as sort of the players in the in the in the marketplace evolved from say, you know, indeed, and LinkedIn and other sort of sources that people would go to to find opportunities. You know, all those tools have kind of continued to evolve as well over the over these, over these years and and so I think what we've come to as we approach this age of AI in our inner sort of history, look is, you know, tools constantly evolving on both sides. They employ the tools employers you're using to source, to screen, and the tools that the candidates are using to make themselves look good.

Mervyn Dinnen 3:52

Okay, in terms of from the employer, from the hiring company side, how have you seen that change? Maybe, over the last couple of years since AI has become a lot more embedded in a lot of the platforms they might be using.

Yutaka Takagi 4:07

Yeah, so from an employer's perspective, I think what we first started to see couple years back is this idea of finding some sort of an algorithm, algorithm, algorithmic approach, if you will, to rating candidates right to identifying, say, you know, this AI tool, being able to read quote unquote a resume, and also read quote unquote the job description, and then seeing how do those match. And you know, beyond just sort of keyword matches, but also understanding inference so that it knows that a coder is also a developer is also an engineer, right understanding some of those parallels and then applying that to come to some sort of an algorithmic score. I think that's the first sort of evolution we saw. I think now as the generative AI tools have come into bear over the course of the last. Like 18 or so months, we've seen employers leverage generative AI to help, again, do a little bit more the reading, if you will, of resumes and profiles, but also of generating job descriptions, generating the ads that they know are going to be more successful in terms of attracting the right candidates.

Mervyn Dinnen 5:21

Okay, springing forward to now where AI is kind of, you can't move in the world of work without people talking about AI and how it's changing everything. Are we seeing an almost an avalanche of applications, or is this something happening quite slowly, as I suppose, on one hand, job seekers, on the other side, hiring companies are kind of trying to, I suppose, almost like ease into this, AI, and the difference it can make.

Yutaka Takagi 5:51

Well, I think what we are starting to see is, is that avalanche, a lot of that certainly is going to be driven by so the overall labor market. And, you know, as we start to see, perhaps, the tightening of the labor markets, kind of we're not fully sure where we are yet, but what we're starting to see, maybe, is that is fewer jobs being advertised. And so what jobs do get advertised get a lot of attention from candidates, and those candidates are leveraging AI tools to help them apply to sort of as many jobs as possible. And so what we've heard from some of our customers is they post a job in what might they might have seen previously, 10s to, you know, 50s of, say, applicants. Now they're getting hundreds in a very short period of time, and so what they're looking to us for is, how do we, how do we make sense of this, right? How do we? How do we find the one person that is truly best in this environment where these AI bots, in some fashion, are helping candidates just get their applications out there?

Mervyn Dinnen 7:00

This must put a lot of pressure on HR teams, who sometimes are sitting almost as the intermediaries between the hiring managers and the applicants. What would you say to HR teams who possibly are themselves struggling to get their head around AI, generative, AI, and how that's impacting their day to day work. Because presumably, you know, they're going to get the pushback on, well, all of a sudden, you know, we bought this new platform, and we're getting hundreds of applications.

Yutaka Takagi 7:31

So, and one of the, I'll say, one of the things that we see again, particularly with our customers, because, you know, we focus really on small, mid size organizations here in the United States and and for many of those organizations, you're, you don't have a full time recruiter. Recruiting is but a part of, say, you know, a full sort of HR Payroll. They're also sort of the administrator for the business, you know. And so, you know, how do we help that person who's wearing multiple hats be able to handle these potentially hundreds of applicants that are suddenly coming in in the door, and a lot of that does it is a little bit of the AI versus AI, certainly using those algorithmic matching capabilities we talked about earlier to help find who are the candidates that look good, at least again on Paper, but recognizing that that's but one data point. And so when we get to, okay, we've sourced candidates now we've got hundreds of candidates. Now, how do we whittle that down to people who they aren't, who aren't bots, so to speak, right? Who aren't them? How do we validate that they're real people? How do we validate their skills? And so what we're finding is, is, is tying that sort of through the candidate journey to those screening steps, right? So, What? What? What's involved? There video interviews, for example. And what we've seen are cases where a candidate, a customer, will advance, say, a batch of candidates, to the video screening, and some of them opt out of the video interview that tells you something about maybe that's not a real person behind that, that that profile, and then put them through a skills assessment, put them through a background check, and and you know, our tool is one of you, and that really serves that, that that small business that has all those as options. And so as you move a candidate through through that process, we can whittle that list down to the three the hiring manager really needs to look at.

Mervyn Dinnen 7:33

What would you advise people, or HR people who are either putting together job descriptions or role descriptions or skill sets that they're looking for. What do they need to do? Do they need to be very specific? Or, which I know sometimes, historically, people have felt, if they're too specific, they're going to cut away people who could apply. Or do they need to be more general, in which case they're going to get this, as you said earlier, tsunami of applications.

Yutaka Takagi 7:33

Yeah, I think more specific is better today, and particularly depending, you know, depending on sort of what type of role you're you're filling, but if you're particularly filling for, say, frontline work, to really get specific about the skills that you're looking for, and and then, and then, and then, potentially assessing for those skills, whether that's in an interview, whether that's in a, say, an online test, or even an in person test, as it may be, to make sure that the person can demonstrate the skills that you're looking for. I think that's that, that that sort of layer of, sort of, yes, trust the resume, but also verify, I think that is, that's sort of the world we're in right now.

Mervyn Dinnen 7:33

Okay, and your job here in isolved, how is that evolving?

Yutaka Takagi 8:32

Oh, well, so my role, so my job is a is a Principal Product Evangelist. That can mean many, many, many things. But for me, a lot of that is, is, you know, how do I? How do I, how do I tell our story in an effective way that is that is engaging. And so that does involve using a lot of AI, actually. So, you know, leveraging these generative AI tools to brainstorm about the topics that are at hand, what's going on in the labor market. Broadly, compare that with, say, our survey results. So we do a lot of surveys. We publish a lot of white papers here at isolved, and I do, I do read them, but I also put that into, you know, chat, GPT and and have that, you know, help me, help me synthesize that into a story that that I can tell. And so definitely, my job, even in the 18 months that I've been here, has evolved a lot in terms of, how do I gain that insight that is hopefully interesting, intriguing to the audiences I talk to.

Mervyn Dinnen 11:53

What happens next? What looking ahead? Yes, as you're an evangelist, you've got one eye on the future. Yes, at the moment, we're talking about, you know, loads of applications, possibly, and candidates incorporating bots to multi apply. What do you think will happen next?

Yutaka Takagi 12:13

Boy, you know, I think so. You know, we're seeing, you know, we walk the floor here at at at HR Tech, and you see a sea of of startups and new entrants into this space that are using AI in different interesting ways. But all but you know, the interesting ones, I'll say, particularly, are the ones that are sort of understanding that there, there has to be some human element in there, again, whether it's sort of in that sort of verification stage or, you know, in the in the communication or the employer brand that you know, and then further upstream, I think those are the interesting ones. You know, we certainly saw say, you know, we've talked about chat GPT here Open AI announced that they're, they're maybe entering into this space with some sort of offering. We're not quite sure exactly what that's going to look like. You know, I it is. It's ever dynamic. I think that's the interesting thing, the thing, the thing that keeps me here in this in this industry, particularly around the talent acquisition, because, you know, at the end of the day, when every business is selling products or creating products or services that serve people, if that's the if that's the end result, then you're going to need people to be building those products, servicing those products. And so how do we help organizations find the right people? I think that's that's that's ever going to be this, this question. It's just, you know, I can't predict the future, but, but I but it is that it's ever evolving, and it's always fun to see the new entrance into the space. And how do they look at it? What are the tools they bring to bear? And and, you know, how do we help businesses evolve?

Mervyn Dinnen 13:58

Okay, one, last question, which, which is probably a topic in its own right, but some, some in HR, will be concerned that there could be bias in the systems. There could be bias in the AI. How can people go about kind of mitigating that is this very specific job descriptions, very specific role outlines, or is it something that they need to do to make sure that their technology is not ultimately leading to bias?

Yutaka Takagi 14:33

Well I think, the, one of the things that I like I think about when we think about sort of weeding bias out of the process is, you know, how open is your sourcing sort of strategy, right? So one of the tools that we've just announced here at isolved is a partnership with, Indeed in their talent scout tool, which is a agentic tool built for recruiters to help them source talent. And, you know, in that tool, you know, the idea is that we want, can't the recruiters to say, Hey, these are the skills I'm looking for. Not I'm looking for people who graduated from the school. Are people I want. I'm looking for people who, you know, went to the, you know, who live in this town. I'm looking for people with this skill, and, you know, I don't care what background they have, if they can demonstrate that skill, that's and so I think there's this opportunity here, as we start to to get into that more skills based hiring, and the tools that AI tools that help enable that, we have this opportunity, certainly to to start to think beyond sort of traditional credential based hiring. That's kind of what you know, where a lot of those biases can kind of come from, to truly skills based. Can you demonstrate the skill for me? I don't care how old you are, I don't care what your background is, I don't care where you went to school. Can you demonstrate the skill for me? And if we can do that, I think we're going to start to weed out, or certainly have the opportunity to weed out some of that bias.

Mervyn Dinnen 16:06

Okay, and so will it be AI that does the skills evaluation?

Yutaka Takagi 16:11

It's a component. I think, again, I think what I what I would really stress around any of this is AI is a tool. AI is itself, not a solution. So AI is going to be a tool that's going to help enable, right, but ultimately that hiring decision is going to be up to that person. And if that so, you know, if you leverage that tool to cast that wide net to to bring in candidates of, say, different backgrounds, etc, and then, and then, and then, sort of help you make that decision, to help assess the skills, help do the video interviews, things like that, but it is ultimately a data point that you're going to get out of AI, the decision rests with the human.

Mervyn Dinnen 16:56

On that note, I will say Yutaka Takagi, it's been an absolute pleasure to talk to you. Thank you very much for your time. And if anybody wants to reach out to you, what's the best way to contact you?

Yutaka Takagi 17:07

isolvedhcm.com is, is where we are!

Mervyn Dinnen 17:10

Okay. Thank you.

Yutaka Takagi 17:13

Thanks, Mervyn.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai