



*Whirlpool Career Site—Phase I*  
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**NEED/OPPORTUNITY** / Whirlpool Corporation is the global leader in the appliance industry with nine major brands and 40 percent of the market share. Headquartered in Benton Harbor, Michigan, Whirlpool is home to approximately 73,000 employees in 170 locations across the world.

While the company commands center stage in the consumer appliance industry and offers a first-rate leadership development program, Whirlpool struggles to attract top talent to its corporate headquarters in Benton Harbor and other U.S. locations. Because of the company's commitment to continued growth and desire to attract the highest caliber employees, Whirlpool needed to launch an aggressive talent acquisition strategy. A new recruiting web site would be the cornerstone of this strategy. Whirlpool's goal was to drive recruits to the site to explore and apply, but the current site was dated and did not accurately reflect the company's transformation into a high-performing organization.

Whirlpool asked PartnerComm Inc., its communication partner, to develop a world-class career site that provided comprehensive information focused on the candidate instead of the company that would reinforce Whirlpool's transformation and recognize that every candidate is a customer. Whirlpool wanted the site to appeal to recent college graduates and experienced candidates, target several high-need areas (such as marketing, IT, finance, engineering, human resources and supply chain), contain a "job search/apply" function and include interactive functionality. Phase I would target the U.S. audience. (Phase II would follow closely behind with a Whirlpool employee career site. Phase III would expand the site globally.)

**INTENDED AUDIENCE(S)** / Whirlpool seeks to hire approximately 600 experienced, salaried employees and 100 recent college graduates for its leadership development program each year. Whirlpool specifically recruits candidates in nine high-need areas: marketing, engineering, finance, design, IT, human resources, manufacturing, procurement and supply chain. Ninety percent of these open positions are at the world headquarters in Benton Harbor. Applicants range in age from 22 to over 60, and cover the gamut of ethnicity, gender, experience level, etc.

From this diverse group, Whirlpool targets candidates who embody its "top talent indicators"—are thought leaders; achieve extraordinary results; attract, develop and engage talent; and drive change.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES** / The overall goal for the site was to make over Whirlpool's image as a boring, ordinary place to work. PartnerComm needed to position the company as exciting and dynamic to better attract top talent who could take the company to the next level. Specifically, Whirlpool's goals were as follows.

GENERAL GOAL	SPECIFIC GOAL
Dispel myths and stereotypes about working at Whirlpool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Seventy-five percent of new hires will have more positive views of Whirlpool after viewing the career web site.</li> </ul>
Set realistic expectations about life at Whirlpool to screen out candidates before they are hired and decrease the offer-to-hire ratio.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Improve offer-to-hire ratio from 5:1 to 4:1.</li> <li>▶ Fill at least 150 open, salaried positions per quarter.</li> <li>▶ Hire at least 100 recent college graduates for the leadership development program.</li> <li>▶ After three months on the job, 75 percent of new hires will agree that the site was accurate in its portrayal of the company.</li> </ul>
Create a candidate-centric, “sticky” site that candidates will visit frequently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increase the length of site visits by 33 percent when compared to other sites.</li> <li>▶ Increase return visits from one and one-half visits per candidate to one and three-quarters visits per candidate.</li> </ul>
Set Whirlpool apart from its competitors by creating a unique site experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Have 75 percent of new hires agree or strongly agree that the site was a positive factor in pursuing a career at Whirlpool.</li> <li>▶ Have 75 percent of new hires agree or strongly agree that the site is innovative, interactive, informative and easy to navigate.</li> </ul>

#### SOLUTION OVERVIEW / GATHERING INFORMATION

**Planning meeting.** To understand Whirlpool’s culture and strategic recruiting vision, PartnerComm’s first step was to hold a planning meeting with key talent acquisition team members. The company’s values and current recruiting philosophy and obstacles were discussed. An array of Whirlpool’s current and previous recruiting materials and career site were also discussed in order to gain an awareness of the status quo.

**Formal research.** PartnerComm conducted research to further define Whirlpool’s performance standards and talent management philosophy and vision. Using a 2007 report from Bersin & Associates, a research and advisory organization in the talent management industry, the team gathered detailed statistics and data about Whirlpool’s goals and requirements for its leadership development and performance management initiatives. An online survey of 100 newly hired Whirlpool employees was conducted to ask:

- ▶ What’s one thing you wish you knew about Whirlpool before you started?
- ▶ What is it about the company that makes you want to stay?
- ▶ What are one or two things you know about Whirlpool that you think most people don’t know?
- ▶ What advice would you give someone in your field just entering the workforce?
- ▶ What could Whirlpool communicate better to job candidates?

**Best practices.** Finally, the team reviewed the career web sites to check out Whirlpool competitors and cull best practices. PartnerComm found that many existing career sites used the same organiza-

tional template and content. If the company logos were removed, it would be difficult for the user to tell the difference. PartnerComm realized that Whirlpool's site could represent not just a best practice, but a *next* practice, when it came to recruiting sites.

#### DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT

The concept was to create a dynamic, candidate-centric site that would answer candidates' questions before they were asked, recognize that every candidate is a customer and give candidates a glimpse of the true Whirlpool employment experience. Rather than rehash corporate statistics already available on the corporate site or in an annual report, the company sought to create a transparent, 360-degree representation of Whirlpool's culture—not only internally, but also as part of the community.

PartnerComm wanted to develop a “sticky” web site from which Whirlpool could mine talent and, ultimately, provide the breadth of information that candidates need to identify if Whirlpool is right for them. The data would provide real-life input that could affect the entire recruiting process, from creation and targeting of recruitment collateral to additional opportunities to engage prospects. **THE**

#### CONCEPT IN ACTION

PartnerComm designed the web site with a blend of traditional navigation for easy reference and dynamic content to provide a customized user experience. The site can be accessed at [www.whirlpool-careers.com](http://www.whirlpool-careers.com). Specifically, the site includes:

- ▶ **Topical organization.** Upper-level navigation is organized in sections that reflect candidates' top topics (based on Whirlpool-provided research). The following is a brief description of each page:

**Explore.** Employees show prospective candidates what their jobs are really like through quotes and photos. The *Whirlpool Insider* offers a glimpse of employees' opinions about Whirlpool by highlighting answers to “What do you like best about Whirlpool?” The application process shows candidates what to expect, such as, how long the process takes, what the interview process entails and how they'll receive an offer. For the college audience only, the page features a “Fast Track Your Career” button with information on specific management development programs and profiles of employees who have completed them.

**Growth.** Employee profiles let candidates meet potential co-workers, see how they got where they are and discover a little more about the job itself. “Mapping Out Your Career” shows candidates that many paths can lead to success. It features sample vertical, horizontal and cross-functional career paths and job descriptions. “Grow Your Career” includes management development, leadership development, Whirlpool University, professional development and diversity information.

**Rewards.** Candidates discover pay-for-performance, total compensation and benefits information. The interactive “How far will your salary go?” calculator allows candidates to see how the cost of living compares in their current location to a Whirlpool location.

**Locations.** Research identified Whirlpool's Benton Harbor, Michigan location as an obstacle to recruiting talent. To respond, PartnerComm created a site on its career page to address this issue. Information about additional Whirlpool locations was also included. The content was not designed to "sell" the location but to help candidates decide if the location was right for them—even if that meant screening out people. The page features employee reviews/journals with comments about the location, information about the Whirlpool campus, an area slide show and a tour service. The "Where do you live now?" interactive tool helps candidates compare Whirlpool locations to their hometowns. The "Is [location] right for me?" interactive tool lets candidates rate and compare different lifestyle factors. "About [location]" paints a picture of each location with things to do, places to eat, quick getaways and area homes/rentals.

**Apply.** This page allows candidates to search and apply for jobs.

- ▶ **Dynamic content.** The site engages candidates from the start by asking interactive questions on the login page that personalizes the site to the user. Candidates can also browse anonymously. But the more they tell about themselves, the better their site experience will be. Providing a customized experience required a data-driven site. The data needed to reflect the full spectrum of candidates—nine functional areas, various experience levels, different backgrounds. This resulted in a 300-page database to support all the variations. The site contains "cookies" and will remember the users' information if they return to the site.
- ▶ **Targeted writing style.** PartnerComm used different writing styles to appeal to different candidates: collegiate versus experienced candidates, Millennials versus Baby Boomers, engineers versus salespeople.
- ▶ **Interactive elements.** The communication team sought to engage candidates by including interactive elements on each page.
- ▶ **Two-way communication.** Candidates can provide e-mail addresses and request that Whirlpool send them additional information.
- ▶ **Key messages.** Site content was designed to reinforce the key messages that Whirlpool stands for—inspiring innovation, an enduring legacy, a global presence, authentic people, real rewards and commitment to community. It also focuses on "compelling experiences" such as challenging positions, employee empowerment and great teams.

**IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES /** The concept initially included real-time blogs and forums where employees could post comments, photos, videos and more, as well as subscriptions to podcasts and events. However, Whirlpool was uncomfortable with this level of transparency and the site administration that would be required. Therefore, the team brainstormed other ways to show real life at Whirlpool and keep the content fresh. To create a transparent feel, the team showcased employees' real words, included interactive elements to help candidates discover if Whirlpool was right for them,

added “wow” facts, and used a conversational style instead of a marketing writing style.

The other challenge was the four-month time frame from project approval to going live. The tight time frame, the fact that PartnerComm had never built such an extensive site, and the amount of data and photos that were required presented a true challenge and many long hours and weekends to meet the deadline. The team stayed on track due to a strict adherence to the action plan, a comprehensive content checklist, a logic-based data coding model and a numbered “punch list” for edits during the review process.

The total project cost for the site was US\$208,000.

**MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION** / To measure results, the communication team compiled data directly from the web site and conducted an e-survey with recently hired, salaried employees. The results reached and, in some cases, exceeded the goals. Following are the specific results:

GENERAL GOAL	SPECIFIC GOAL	RESULTS
Dispel myths and stereotypes about working at Whirlpool.	Seventy-five percent of new hires will have more positive views of Whirlpool as a result of viewing the career web site.	Survey results indicate that 79 percent of new hires had more positive views about Whirlpool after using the career web site.
Set realistic expectations about life at Whirlpool to screen out candidates before they are hired and decrease the offer-to-hire ratio.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Improve offer-to-hire ratio from 5:1 to 4:1.</li> <li>▶ Fill at least 150 open salaried positions per quarter.</li> <li>▶ Hire at least 100 recent college graduates for the leadership development program.</li> <li>▶ After three months on the job, 75 percent of new hires will agree that the site was accurate in its portrayal of the company.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The offer-to-hire ratio was improved to 2.5:1, indicating that the site effectively pre-screened candidates who weren't a good fit for Whirlpool.</li> <li>▶ One hundred sixty-three salaried positions were filled in 2008.</li> <li>▶ Forty-three college graduates were hired in 2008 for the leadership development program.</li> <li>▶ Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the site was very accurate in its representation of the company.</li> </ul>

GENERAL GOAL	SPECIFIC GOAL	RESULTS
<p>Create a candidate-centric, “sticky” site that candidates will visit frequently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increase the length of site visits by 33 percent when compared to other sites.</li> <li>▶ Increase return visits from one and one-half visits per candidate to one and three-quarters visits per candidate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Site statistics indicate that the average site visit (October – December 2008) was 5:31 minutes, doubling the standard 25 seconds per web page.</li> <li>▶ Average visits per candidate were 1.95, exceeding the one and three-quarters goal.</li> </ul>
<p>Set Whirlpool apart from its competitors by creating a site experience unlike other career web sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Have 75 percent of new hires agree or strongly agree that the site was a positive factor in pursuing a career at Whirlpool.</li> <li>▶ Have 75 percent of new hires agree or strongly agree that the site is innovative, interactive, informative and easy to navigate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Seventy-nine percent of new hires strongly agreed that their site visit was a positive factor in pursuing the application process with Whirlpool.</li> <li>▶ Seventy-one percent agreed or strongly agreed that the site was innovative, interactive, informative and easy to navigate.</li> </ul>