CUSTOMER STORY

ii **Handshake**

Handshake Elevates its Recruiters to Strategic Partners

Handshake is a job network for college students whose mission is to democratize access to meaningful career opportunities for students of *all* backgrounds—regardless of their demographics, their networks, or what schools they attended. The company empowers career centers at 1,400+ higher education institutions, including four-year and community colleges, boot camps, and minority-serving institutions. 650,000+ employers use Handshake to diversify their recruiting pipelines, boost their employer brands, and build relationships with entry-level professionals. Between 2018 and 2020, 49% of college graduates received job offers for roles they found on Handshake's platform. In January 2022, the company raised a $200 million Series F funding round.

> "When I heard about Gem, I was immediately excited. I knew it would allow me to be more effective, and strategically get better-quality talent in the door."
>
> **Sam Leveston**
> Senior Recruiter

Handshake

Company Overview:

- San Francisco (HQ)
- Job network for college students
- 600+ employees
- JoinHandshake.com
- ATS: Greenhouse

Pain points / Challenges:

Handshake's talent acquisition team is comprised of seasoned professionals who know the importance of both efficiency and data to the hiring process. They needed the bandwidth, and the data-driven insights, to be stellar business partners to their hiring managers—to shift recruiting's role in those relationships from an administrative to a strategic one.

Results with Gem:

- Gem's automation and outreach insights have allowed Handshake's recruiters to "exponentially increase" their impact by saving them hours on outreach and helping them optimize messaging.

- With Talent Pipeline, recruiters can bring full-funnel insights to their syncs with hiring managers. Rather than spending all their time discussing individual candidates, hiring teams can see, broadly, where candidates may be in holding patterns or dropping out of process. Syncs become more dynamic conversations around the holistic pipeline and how to improve the hiring process.

- Because they can drill down into Gem's data, teams aren't "playing the guesswork game." They can spot trends like best source-of-hire and answer questions like: Are our talent branding efforts paying off? Gem has become "the place for *all* our metrics."

"Needless to say, we're growing," laughs Sam Leveston, Senior Recruiter at the company. "In four years I've watched us scale from a team of 70 to 600+. Recruiting *alone* has scaled from two people to 37. And we plan to hire 350+ people this year." What that means, of course, is Handshake's Talent Acquisition team needs to be a well-oiled machine.

Collaborative Hiring: "I *wanted* to be a stellar business partner to my hiring managers and C-levels"

And they *are*—for many reasons. One of them is that, three years ago, the recruiting org brought Gem on. "I was responsible for that decision," Sam says. Recruiting was a team of two at the time. "It was clear that we didn't have the resources to source strategically and at scale for the number of roles we had open. And LinkedIn had some shortcomings that made it challenging to source at scale: it didn't automate follow-ups; you couldn't share links; you couldn't be sure talent would even see your outreach. So when I heard about Gem I was immediately excited. I knew it would allow me to be more effective, and strategically get better-quality talent in the door."

> "Leadership had a vested interest in visibility, and that was thrilling. No one wants the work they do to look like a black box to the C-suite. But prior to Gem, it meant I was manually creating reports and doing the math with a calculator."

Sam has spent nearly a decade in recruiting, and she knows about the power of two things in particular to great hiring: efficiency and data. So does Handshake's leadership team. In her early days at Handshake, "I *wanted* to be a stellar business partner

to my hiring managers and C-levels; I just didn't have the bandwidth or the resources to do so. In a small startup, every role you hire for is critical. Our VP of People and Talent wanted to be able to relay the finer points of our recruiting motion to our C-suite: *Here's* what's happening with *this* role. We started looking based on *this* job title; we recalibrated with the hiring manager after realizing we also needed *this* skillset; we sent this much outreach and got *this* response rate; we updated our messaging; now our response rate is *this*."

Naturally, leadership was constantly asking Sam about response rates, engagement, and whether the team needed to optimize their messaging. "They had a vested interest in visibility, and that was thrilling. No one *wants* the work they do to look like a black box to the C-suite. But it meant I was manually creating reports and doing the math with a calculator. At some point," she remembers, "it was like I was spending more time creating reports than I was talking to candidates. That's *not* where you want to be when an organization's hiring goals depend on you."

Once leadership realized the degree to which Gem could provide those valuable data insights, they jumped on a demo with the team. Internal acceptance was high. What Sam initially loved about Gem was that it allowed her not only to automate sourcing efforts, but also to pull valuable insights on that outreach activity—the insights leadership was also seeking out—"which meant I could exponentially increase my impact. Suddenly I had easy access to dependable metrics like time to fill and passthrough rates. I could go to a hiring manager and say, This is our response rate. Here's how I'm tweaking the messaging based on that data." Sam's ability to present leadership with actionable data "gave them a sense of control over things when we weren't getting the results that we needed. It's a remarkably frustrating position to be in when you don't know what's working and what's not. So that was the first relationship game-changer."

> "With Gem, I could exponentially increase my impact. Suddenly I had easy access to dependable metrics like time to fill and passthrough rates. The biggest game-changer has been the ability to give managers a high-level overview of their pipelines."

Candidate management with Talent Pipeline: "I'm having a different conversation with hiring managers now"

The *biggest* game-changer, Sam says, has been the ability to give managers a high-level overview of their pipelines. Gem's Talent Pipeline, an interactive and collaborative hiring dashboard of active candidates, fundamentally shifted Sam's hiring manager relationships—not to mention her workflows and the candidate experience. Before Gem, Sam was "opening up tabs in our ATS alongside each candidate's LinkedIn profile to prepare for my weekly syncs. With the tools we had, I could only see all the candidates in a particular stage—there was no higher-level view. And our ATS was so slow. So I'd prepare for meetings by opening all the tabs *first*, to account for loading time. At one point I stopped creating pipeline reports for my hiring managers; it was too time-consuming given the speed at which we were moving. Instead I would show them a *selection* of candidates." This meant that managers never saw the entirety of the work Sam was doing for every given role.

Without that quick, yet comprehensive snapshot, it's often easy for candidates to fall through the cracks—it's simply what happens "when you're overloaded on reqs and there's nothing to indicate that an action needs to be taken." But with Talent Pipeline, Sam explains, "there's no missing where candidates are. The moment I click in, I see, Oh, there's three candidates showing red. *This* one needs scheduling; *this* one needs feedback; this

one needs a decision. And because I can take all of those actions *in* Gem and it immediately reflects in our ATS, it's just done, done, and done. *That* part is key—I don't have to go back into our ATS and make the same change. If it happens in Gem, it happens

> "The moment I click in to Talent Pipeline, I see *this* candidate needs scheduling, *this* one needs feedback, *this* one needs a decision. And because I can take all of those actions in Gem and it immediately reflects in our ATS, it's just done, done, and done."

everywhere else." *Now*, Sam says, prepping for a sync requires just *one* tab: "Here's what the pipeline looks like. Here's all the candidates we have in process. *This* candidate's been sitting for four days, what do we want to do about them?"

Another thing Sam appreciates about Talent Pipeline "is the design, the UX." Each candidate tile contains all the information a recruiter or manager would need to know about that candidate—source, recruiter, how many days until the candidate's next interview, internal notes, and more—including their photo. "Which means I can put a face to the name again, and reorient myself to that candidate and their status. When I'm in the weeds with my hiring managers, I need to be able to talk in detail about every candidate—red flags, green flags, concerns they've voiced, and so on. Those details can get fuzzy as req loads increase. Those kanban cards hold all that detail for me *and* make recall more efficient."

Thanks to Talent Pipeline, Sam is having a different kind of conversation with her hiring managers now. "That's ultimately what it comes down to. I'm able to focus more on the strategic and less on the

administrative. I now have the full view, and the bandwidth, to say, We have x number of candidates in *this* stage and x number in *that* stage; so what do we need to lean into given our current pipeline? It's a more vital and dynamic conversation around the holistic pipeline, where to place our efforts, how to optimize our process. The majority of our syncs *used* to revolve around individual candidates, but we now have the data and insights to make sure we're addressing every stage of the funnel at *large* to ensure that our process is healthy."

Strategic Insights: "I'll dig into Pipeline Analytics if I need bigger-picture signal on any roles"

In her role as a full-cycle recruiter, Sam says she spends most of her time in Gem's Talent Pipeline; but "often I'll dig into Pipeline Analytics if I need bigger-picture signal on any roles, or if my manager is asking about bigger-picture metrics." Pipeline Analytics allows talent teams and hiring managers to monitor individual roles to spot candidate bottlenecks or

> "I now have the full view to be able to say: We have x number of candidates in *this* stage and x number in *that* stage; so what do we need to lean into given our current pipeline? It's a more vital and dynamic conversation around the holistic pipeline, where to place our efforts, how to optimize our process."

drop-offs. "Whereas Talent Pipeline lets me dig in by candidate," Sam explains, "Pipeline Analytics is great for high-level reporting."

Often, the metrics managers want to see involve conversion rates, so they can observe trends and diagnose bottlenecks. "For example, if we're screening a lot of talent but not many are entering

process, that's a sure sign we need to recalibrate on the profile because we're not aligned somewhere. So we look at passthrough rates. We look at where people are dropping out, along with rejection reasons. Here, *too*, Gem's color-coding is so thoughtfully designed. Recruiters have a lot in our heads; we can't keep industry benchmarks for every role in there. Gem *tells* me whether a conversion rate is good or worth digging into."

Because Pipeline Analytics allows users to filter on anything from job, to rejection reason, to gender and race/ethnicity, to location, Sam and her team aren't "playing the guesswork game," she says. "For example, I can click in to see the sources of all the candidates I have in each stage. I've been able to spot trends. Maybe the only people making it to onsite for a particular role are sourced candidates. That means the quality of our inbound is poor, and maybe we should close the role so we're not wasting our time weeding through unfit applications. On the flip side, last year we started to invest in talent brand. It's a function we didn't have before. So for certain roles we're now seeing more inbound applicants making it to the onsite stage. It seems there's a direct correlation there, between talent brand and the caliber of candidates we're reaching with our branding efforts. So *that's* a signal to keep those efforts going."

Ultimately, Sam says, "Gem is the place for *all* my metrics, regardless of what stage of the funnel I'm looking at. I'm in Talent Pipeline regularly to check the health of my pipelines, where all my candidates are, what needs attention. But I'm *also* using it to align with my sourcer and observe trends in the outreach we're working on." For example, Sam clicked into a project last week and noticed that "even though we

> "Gem is the place for all my metrics, regardless of what stage of the funnel I'm looking at. I'm in Talent Pipeline regularly to check the health of my pipelines, where all my candidates are, what needs attention. But I'm also using it to align with my sourcer and observe trends in the outreach we're working on."

have the same messaging for two roles, response rates are very different. That's a great example of Gem-data-to-the-rescue. I scheduled a meeting with my sourcer and we walked through the messaging and where we think it could be different. We decided to give one of the jobs a different title. Response rates are increasing now. So I'm looking into analytics within individual sequences."

Using Gem lets Sam feel like she has "an extra partner in my recruiting efforts. It's so clear to me when a company is doing things the right way. I've given so many other recruiting software providers feedback, and so few of them listen. So I really appreciate when a B2B software company actually cares about the individual user experience, listens to users, and engages with them. My whole experience with Gem has been very refreshing."

To learn more about how Gem can help your team, visit gem.com or contact us at info@gem.com