

How To Hire the Person You Want

By Joyce Brocaglia and Erin Fallon

When you're adding a new person to your team, it is often difficult to find a candidate who possesses the qualifications required and also fits the cultural dynamics of your organization. Finding the right person takes time and effort from you, your staff and your management – and often a recruiting firm. There are also many costs associated with hiring someone: the cost of everyone's time; the cost of having the position open for a prolonged period; and the cost of background checks, recruiting fees, and travel and lodging expenses. And too often, after all the time and effort you've put into identifying and attracting a candidate, they accept another position before you're able to offer them the job, or they turn down your offer in the end.

So what can you do to increase the odds of actually hiring the candidate you've determined to be the best fit?

Timing is everything in life

"The early bird gets the worm." "You snooze... you lose." These are just a couple of axioms people use in regard to the importance of *timing*. Hiring managers need to be aware of the hiring process timeline. From my experience as a recruiter, I can tell you the simple equation for failure: The longer the process, the more probable it is that the candidate will decline the offer. The more time taken to deliver the offer, the more likely the candidate will be contacted by other companies, reevaluate her current position, get promoted, or just plain lose interest. There's an inverse correlation between the average length of time it takes to extend the offers and the number of offers accepted. Consider the fast-paced world we live in. It's easy to see how this is the case.

When you decide to hire someone, the first step is to recognize that you and your team must make a commitment to devoting the proper time and energy to the process, regardless of your busy schedules. If you don't make this a high priority, both the candidate and the recruiter will recognize your lack of commitment and will lose interest.

Begin by setting in place a formal process and time frame for the coordination and scheduling of interviews and sharing of feedback. Specifically, define the role and responsibility of the position and ensure that everyone interviewing the candidates understands the exact skills they should be evaluating. Make sure that someone is designated as the final decision-maker. That person must have the authority and ability to work with Human Resources to ensure that all administrative minutiae are taken care of.

Keep in mind that your candidate is evaluating the company throughout the entire interview process, including the delivery of the offer. The smoother the process, the more likely the candidate will develop a sense of confidence in joining the team.

In summary, the longer the period of time from the first interview to the extension of an offer, the less likely you are to gain an acceptance from the candidate. The uncontrollable variables will increase, as will the probability of complications.

Perception is reality

Although a hiring manager may be convinced she has found her perfect candidate, if that enthusiasm is not conveyed to candidates in a timely manner, they will lose interest. Hiring managers must remember that it's also their job to sell the candidate on the benefits of the position and the organization as a whole. The best candidates are often ones not actively looking; so you have to make a point to show them your enthusiasm and keep them abreast of the process, or their interest level will diminish.

Good relationship management skills are critical throughout the process among the candidate, the interview team, the recruiter and Human Resources. Everyone must work together toward achieving the goal of gaining an acceptance. Once these relationships become adversarial, it's usually too late to recover. Communication is *key!*

Put your money where your mouth is

To ensure a successful hire, be proactive – begin working with the necessary authorities to get an offer approved as soon as possible and prevent an issue with timing. Everyone involved in putting together the offer should understand this great priority.

After a candidate has gone through the full set of interviews; a decision has been made to make an offer; and the candidate is equally enthusiastic about the client: Deliver! Producing an official offer after a decision has been made should not take more than one week. Any longer, and candidates start to question whether this is really the right next step for them; the enthusiasm and momentum wear off.

It's all about commitment

You now know that the longer the process, the higher the risk factor for something going wrong. For a successful track record in the hiring process, be consistent and decisive, and act fast. This holds true for both sides of the coin. If you as a hiring manager were to deliver a very competitive offer to a candidate, and the candidate took several weeks to make a decision, you'd naturally start to question whether you really wanted this person on your team.

The hiring process is a dynamic one, and everyone in it needs to work together as a team and deliver the same message to all parties. Most importantly, make the commitment up front with your team to recognize the time and effort necessary to complete the search. Get everyone's buy-in to truly cooperate, and make it a high priority to complete the process in a timely manner.

About the Authors

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