



THE WAR FOR TALENT-PART 1

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR RECRUITMENT PARTNER?

There is a war for talent in both attraction and retention currently. We will start a series of articles on how this can be challenged starting with what you should expect from your recruiter.

It is hard to justify any expense if it doesn't benefit your bottom line, especially in today's job market so how can you justify using a recruiter, after all sadly so many have a poor reputation? I was told by someone that "Life for recruiters is easy now it's all online." It might be if they simply do not care about the process, because as many are finding it isn't easy to interview online, the nuances that you get in person can so easily be missed and it is harder to build that relationship.

If you are driven purely by cost, fear of missing candidates drives you to using numerous agencies and have no interest in having a business relationship with your recruitment firm then please do not read further, stick with the blanket approach, receive multiple CV's many of which will not be relevant, poor information or mis-information on salary and expectations, and hope that something sticks because you will be doing the role a recruiter of worth should be providing.

What should a recruiter deliver to justify the costs?

Trust is not easily won but vital for both clients and candidates your recruiter should demonstrate an approach to Executive Search that combines specialist expertise with quality thinking and rigorous adherence to extraordinarily strict ethical and professional standards. This service engenders a level of trust and engagement that increasingly provides direct access to the very best talent. Hard work will ensure that they are valued and respected by clients, and candidates as well as in the wider social and business community.

Understanding your needs is critical to ensure success. Every firm is different, and a prescriptive approach is less likely to work, the approach needs to be adapted to your requirements and needs. To do that there needs to be engagement between the client and recruiter with a thorough brief because it helps everyone understand the challenges and opportunities they may encounter when representing you in the marketplace. The recruiter should develop an in-depth knowledge of your services and capabilities, your culture, financial performance, future ambition and direction, critical in a market where there is a war for talent. Being informed about these considerations enables the campaign to get off to the best possible start.

Defining excellence at the outset, it is vital to invest time with key stakeholders, gaining an understanding of the specific requirements and challenges of the role, as well as the business culture and working environment. This should not delay delivery as, in parallel; the recruiter will be



identifying relevant candidates. The insight gained will help the recruiter to engage executives who best meet the requirements for the role with advice and constructive challenge being provided along the way. At this stage, there should be a defined thorough assignment brief to share with suitable, engaged, candidates, a detailed research methodology and a clear delivery timeline.

Defining the talent pool there are many ways a recruiter creates the talent pool combining leveraging an extensive network, data sources and – when appropriate – advertising options with sourcing relevant candidates. You need to cast the net wide and rapidly home in on those executives who meet your specific criteria while embracing equality and providing diversity.

Engaging talent it is vital to treat candidates with respect and your recruitment partner should be direct, honest, courteous, discreet and efficient in every aspect of the candidate engagement and screening process. You should be kept closely informed of the progress through weekly progress reports and review calls. Your recruitment partner should promote your employer reputation, your employer brand proposition and work hard to ensure that every candidate has a positive experience. They should abhor the insensitive, expedient, and transactional behaviour, which has become all too common in our industry; we are regularly told by our candidates that a positive experience at this stage will set your campaign apart from your competitors.

Assessment the focus is on quality, not quantity. To assess competency, capability, motivation and leadership style, measured against your selection criteria, in addition to taking into account equality and diversity considerations, experience, qualifications, and location/remuneration expectations. The aim is to present a shortlist of outstanding candidates who meet the brief and provide you with choice and contrast. There should be a review, market insight and candidate profiles with you during the assessment process.

Supporting your selection process the recruiter should arrange all interviews and communicate detailed feedback to all parties. You should be very well briefed about each candidate in advance of your interviews. This will help you to make informed decisions so that comparisons and contrasts between candidates are based on fact, evidence, and sound judgement. You should be able to draw on the recruiter's experience in interview techniques, assessment and building consensus amongst key stakeholders. Whether individual or panel interviews are planned, they will build in time to prepare and advise those involved and are on hand to assess with you, should you require it. Enormous care needs to be taken at this stage so that candidate expectations are managed and so that all involved find it a worthwhile and positive experience.

Securing placement at this critical stage, attention to detail, timely reference checking and the ability to maintain both candidate engagement and momentum in the contractual negotiation is vital. Poor handling or seemingly small requirements can quickly combine to potentially derail the process. Changing roles can be a stressful undertaking, so there is a need to deliver pace,



thoroughness, and great communication. This is a key area where the trust built up by the recruiter and understanding of both the client and candidate pays dividends.

On board the recruiter should stay close to your appointed candidate through their notice period, their first year with you and beyond. This enables your recruitment partner to identify and bring to light opportunities or issues that may not be apparent in the day-to-day business environment.

Recruiters are not saints and rarely, though it can happen, a placement does not go exactly according to plan. It is how they handle it when it goes off the rails that differentiates them. It should not be a shrug the shoulders and give in because the retainer and the second stage of fee has already been paid, they should dig deep to ensure that the situation is rectified.

Our next article will cover the interview process and how vital it is that both candidates and clients are fully prepared.

Please contact Anne Harnetty or Martin Soulsby if you have senior recruitment needs.

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