

## ***A Candidate Hires Her Boss...a lesson from my daughter***

**By R. Gaines Baty**

She'd found her calling...as a teacher of kids with special needs. She loved her job, and enjoyed working for the person who'd graciously given her a start. She was constantly engaged, challenged, and acclaimed in this role.

Her commute to work, however, was two hours roundtrip...ten hours a week, forty hours a month in freeway traffic. For personal, economic and safety reasons, working closer to home made sense if she could find an equally rewarding position, and boss. After much encouragement from friends and family, my daughter Ryan reluctantly decided to explore alternative job options.

Ryan attended a district-wide job fair for the school system within her home community. She quickly went through second and third interviews, and was invited for final interviews for open positions at two nearby, high-quality schools.

In her interview with the first Principal, Ryan was very impressed...with his charisma and professionalism, his warmth, his apparent interest in her career. He explained how the role would be good for her career, and what was in it 'for her'. She left the meeting energized, and with a verbal offer. When she arrived home, ten minutes later, she checked her inbox. An e-mail from this gentleman had already arrived, graciously expressing appreciation for her consideration, and his enthusiasm about the possibility of her joining his staff.

Ryan felt compelled to defer her decision, however. The next interview was to be with an exemplary school with an excellent reputation and in a nice neighborhood. She knew fellow teachers there who were "begging" her to join up. It would be an easy position to accept. Ryan, while a little nervous about the interview, was well-prepared and excited to meet with the second school's Principal.

This discussion, however, was markedly different. Principal #2 seemed pre-occupied and distracted...not engaged in the discussion. His passion for the school, the role, and the talent sitting in front of him was noticeably absent. No "connection" was established. The interview left Ryan confused about how interested he was in her, and uncertain about what the position offered. He promised to call **tomorrow** to "let her know" her status. She departed the principal's office with a feeling of disappointment.

Late in the afternoon, *two days later*, Ryan finally heard from Principal #2. "Congratulations, I have an offer for you to join us."

"Thank you very much for your interest," she replied. "But I needed to make a decision. I didn't hear from you, and accepted the other position I told you I was considering."

The man's demeanor seemed to shift instantly. Obviously perturbed, he responded curtly "I was ready to offer the job yesterday but I got busy." No congratulations or best wishes were offered.

The delinquent phone call was perceived as confirmation of Ryan's gut instinct...that this prospective boss approached her important career decision (and likely her career) in a nonchalant fashion. This would surely be reflective of his management style, Ryan concluded. She'd have stayed in her current job, enduring the cumbersome commute, before accepting this one.

Ryan's experience was not unique. In fact, it is strikingly similar to that of many recruited executive candidates in corporate America. Countless excellent executives "slip away" due to prospective employers' indecision, procrastination, hesitation, over-confidence, and the inadvertent failure to "sell" the overall opportunity. Many potential employers neglect to emphasize the challenges, opportunities, and personal advantages for the candidate. Others fail to act promptly.

While some less-qualified or unemployed individuals may overlook an employer's interviewing/recruiting inadequacies, most successful candidates will experience the same gut reaction that Ryan had. This natural desire to be valued, respected and inspired holds true for teachers, salespeople, CIO's, consultants, doctors, presidents, and every person in between.

Strong candidates, especially those in high-demand/high-return professions, have good instincts and plenty of career options. Most will choose to go with the best "career package" ... where they sense good chemistry with the team and boss, a cultural match, an attractive role and challenge, potential for impact and success, career growth, compensation, etc. And with many, gut instinct overrides all other factors.

Effective candidate evaluation is, of course, imperative. In parallel, employers must be mindful that they and the opportunities they present are being similarly evaluated...by candidates.

In a competitive business, talent wins out. As the war for talent intensifies, aspiring organizations will be well-served by engaging with potential employees as "recruits", not as applicants. These "recruits" should be pursued proactively... with a **"What's in it for Them"** approach.

Which "Principal" will you be?

*According to Peter Drucker... "Of all the decisions an executive makes, none are as important as those about people, because people determine the performance capacity of the organization. "*