

Has your company ever lost the competition for a great candidate to a competitive offer? If so, there’s an excellent chance that your firm may not have performed well in the interviewing and recruitment of that candidate.

Proven executives are always difficult to find and attract; no recession exists for top performers. Competitive offers and offer “turn-downs” are more common now than ever.

Why should a firm’s leadership worry about such things? Let’s examine what’s at stake: First, the shortage of capable leadership inhibits optimal performance. Second, hiring the wrong person(s) for important positions can prove catastrophic. And third, significant “opportunity costs” (unrealized revenue or savings) accompany understaffed positions. Undoubtedly, top performers make better decisions and generate better results for your company.

In college athletics, National Championships are won by recruiting the best talent and managing that talent to success. Recruiting in business is no different. Athletes (and executives) are attracted to the best challenge, culture fit, skill match, growth opportunities, and vision. Other subconscious decision-altering stimuli can include powerful emotions such as gut feel, trust, sense of importance, etc. Frequently these are the underlying factors that tilt a candidate in your favor, or elsewhere.

Frequently, new client executives are surprised by our question, “Why should a ‘top-performer’ quit a good job to come to work for your company?” Compelling answers to this question are paramount to success in any recruiting endeavor.

Elongated processes and/or failure to effectively “sell” candidates can put a company at a competitive disadvantage. This is truly a free agent market, and a very competitive one for the best talent. Prospective *employers* must bring their “A-games” to consistently win these contests. Executives today have multiple options to choose from...competitive job offers, internal promotions, counteroffers, etc., and frequently will not wait on an indecisive suitor.

So, how might one turn the momentum toward the most positive recruiting outcomes, or improve on an already good process?

1. Emphasize that recruiting/attracting the best people are among your most important functions: a **fiduciary obligation**, even in spite of a hectic business climate.
2. Create a positive “**candidate experience**.” Treat all candidates like prospective customers (not like “applicants”). Good (or bad) treatment can reflect on your company for many years and in many ways. Make it a lasting and positive reflection.
3. Ensure that your strategic vision is known by the entire evaluation team, and communicated consistently to all executive level candidates. Most executives place a supreme emphasis upon alignment with this vision. Effectively walk the tightrope of

- EVALUATING* a candidate and simultaneously *SELLING* that person on your opportunity. Do not over-promise or oversell, but don't under-emphasize the opportunity either. Discuss the rational selling points e.g. challenge, opportunity, career growth - logical next steps, culture/team environment, mentoring, upside, location, vision, etc., AND appeal to unexpressed emotional issues (feel, fit, aspirations, etc.). *What is most important to that person...that you can offer?*
4. Determine if the person can do the job ASAP. Don't lose the best person because you can't make a timely decision! Pursue the best candidates promptly and assertively. Ensure that you each have an understanding of expectations, constraints, important considerations, etc., and that you offer a "win-win" compensation plan. Make the candidate's decision an easy one...easy to say "yes."
  5. Identify the candidate's questions and concerns, and ensure that these concerns are satisfactorily addressed in alignment with the candidate's important career decision.
  6. Review each win and loss, and take corrective action immediately. One should never rationalize a loss to any "reason outside our control." Candidates provide palatable and politically correct explanations for declining offers, but the real reasons frequently center around the fact that s/he was more excited about (or 'sold" more effectively by) a competitive suitor. And it's not always about money.
  7. These practices should be consistently-applied at the hiring executive level. *Treat every candidate like a customer.* Remember, it takes only one "blown" interview to insert a shadow of doubt in a candidate's mind.

Conclusion: No interviewing or recruiting process is 100% foolproof, but it does help to have the odds in our favor. If these practices help our team land just one additional "star"...possibly the star that helps win the championship...our effort will have been well-invested. The ROI can be substantial.

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