



R. Gaines Baty Associates

A Candidate Hires Her Boss ...lesson from a daughter

By: R. Gaines Baty

She'd found her calling...as a teacher of kids with special needs. She was constantly engaged, challenged, and acclaimed in this role, and very much enjoyed her boss. However, for personal, economic and safety reasons, working closer to home made sense if she could find an equally rewarding position, and boss.

At a district-wide career fair for the school system within her home community, she was quickly requested for second and third interviews; then invited for final interviews for open positions at two nearby schools.

In her interview with the first Principal, Ryan was very impressed...with his charisma and professionalism, his warmth, and 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. By the time she arrived home, ten minutes later, an e-mail from this gentleman had arrived...graciously expressing his enthusiasm about the possibility of her joining his staff.

Ryan deferred her decision, however. The next interview was to be with another excellent school 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 was 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 role, and the talent sitting in front of him, was noticeably absent. No "connection" was established. He promised to call **tomorrow** to "let her know" her status. She departed the principal's office with feelings of confusion and disappointment.

Two days later, Ryan 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."

Obviously perturbed, he responded curtly "I was ready to offer the job yesterday but I got busy." No best wishes were offered.

The principal's delinquent call and negative reaction were perceived as confirmation of Ryan's gut instinct...that this prospective boss held 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.

This experience 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.

One such incident occurred recently. A highly-regarded candidate, while not "looking," had agreed to explore a potentially-better opportunity with one of our clients. His enthusiasm quickly peaked after the first couple of telephone interviews... then he waited. More time passed before a third telephone

interview, and finally a flight was set for an in-person round of interviews. But this trip to headquarters was cancelled at the last minute by the candidate. Pandora's Box had apparently been opened. He'd decided to accept another offer with a competitive organization. "The other company came at me quickly and sold me hard," he explained. "The offer was too good to turn down."

In another similar, recent example a strong candidate was "put off" during a second interview with a hiring-firm executive. The company representative was late for the call, and then was heard typing for the entire telephone interview. After a few surface-level and seemingly confrontational questions, the call was ended abruptly. Knowing that this EVP would have an influence on his success, the candidate concluded "I don't want to work with or for that individual." He declined to pursue the opportunity further to the dismay of the company.

Still another highly-sought-after executive bitterly declined further consideration with a major organization he'd initially been very excited about. After driving two hours to an "important" follow-up interview, the candidate was advised that one of the two scheduled senior hiring exec's had "left early" to "take the afternoon off."

While some individuals may overlook an employer's recruiting /process inadequacies, most successful candidates will experience the same gut reaction that these individuals 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.

Candidates in high-demand generally 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.

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

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?

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