

Dallas Business Journal

WHERE METROPLEX BUSINESS COMES FIRST

Gaining the most value from your recruiter

By R. GAINES BATY

op talent can make or save money well in excess of salary and search fee investments. Many companies expect to gain a return of a least five times the salary of an employee.

Good recruiters can not only identify better than otherwise available talent, but they can partner with you to help land the winners you want. Nothing is more frustrating than to identify, interview and offer a great person a job, only to have the offer declined. In that situation everyone loses — the significant time and emotional investment, and lost potential return (opportunity cost) for that person. To get the most value from your recruiter, consider the following:

- Partner with the recruiter and you'll have better odds of landing the top person. Attracting talent is a team sport.

- Trust and mutual respect is important. A good recruiter should present good candidates capable of doing the job. You should not have to prescreen candidates. And occasionally the recruiter may recommend a person based on intangibles that don't show up on a résumé. Sometimes, those are the best candidates.

- Urgency. The more time that passes, the more bad things can happen. If a person is good, a high probability exists that other firms are also in pursuit and/or that the recruiter's inquiry may open a "Pandora's box." People want to be wanted — delays cause doubt and might give a competing company the opportunity to hire your person. The proper timing of an offer is very important.

- Communication is highly essential. Elaborate on the requirements and selling points in advance, return phone calls promptly, strategize and cooperate with the recruiter. A good game plan is important, and team execution is

critical.

- Sell and help sell — mediocrity can be hired, exceptional talent must be recruited. Blue chip athletes rarely go to a university that does an ineffective job of selling. Recruits must be "sold" on the attributes of that program. National championships are won by consistently recruiting top talent for key positions and by coaching (or managing) that talent most effectively.

- A "recruited" candidate is usually not "looking" but is receptive to a better career opportunity and must be made to feel sought after.

- A good candidate needs to be convinced of the advantages of your opportunity. Why would a good person, happily employed, quit a good job to come to work for you? Build a case and give your recruiter ammunition to help sell. And be open to suggestions about how you might present the opportunity, what hurdles exist and how to clear them.

- Create a win/win proposition. Consult with the recruiter about when, how much and what to offer. This will help ensure that the offer made is right. Lowball offers, in today's strong market, usually generate turndowns. Strong talent is in great demand today and is being pursued by numerous good companies. Don't let a couple thousand dollars stand in your way of attracting the person that can make or save you millions.

- Be flexible. Each individual is different, and has different priorities and issues. The willingness to accommodate a good person's needs, creating a win/win arrangement, will many times be the key to getting and keeping that top performer.

Baty is the CEO of R. Gaines Baty Associates Inc., an executive search services firm in Dallas.