



THE
“RECRUITABLE”
POSITION
AND THE
“RECRUITED”
CANDIDATE

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We hear it on a weekly basis: “Just go recruit one of my competitors. They’d love to work here.” It’s as though it was just that easy. Well, there is a difference between finding a good employee who is a job seeker and recruiting either a contented candidate or one of the competitor’s employees who is doing fine.

This usually comes from a hiring authority who is disappointed by the pool of available candidates who are actually looking for a job. Perhaps from reading it in a book or an article, they come up with the idea that all they have to do is recruit from one of their competitors and their problem will be solved. It is that age old idea of “What I can’t have *must* be better than what I can have.”

THE POSITION/OPPORTUNITY

When a company really needs to hire an exceptional candidate with specific skills that are hard to find, just offering an average level of compensation, title, benefits, working environment, upward mobility, and more simply won’t accomplish the goal. To get the hardest-to-find, happiest candidates, it will be necessary to go above and beyond the average compensation package and make it an exceptional package. And by the way, the idea that the candidate will get to work for an intelligent, phenomenal, brilliant, extraordinary, unbelievable, brilliant, lovable, kind, brilliant, gifted, exceptional, charismatic (did I say brilliant?) manager isn’t enough of a reason for someone who is even reasonably happy to leave their job.) In most cases, standard limitations of salary ranges, grade/title levels, standard stock plans, and other benefits have to be thrown out to attract happily employed professionals. If a company isn’t

prepared to do these kinds of things, then finding a current job seeker is best.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with filling a position with a job seeker. In fact, anyone who changes jobs is a job seeker of sorts. Excellent candidates are always on the market. It is a matter of timing. However, if a company really needs to hire a recruited candidate, they had better have an exceptionally good opportunity to offer to the candidate. They need to know what kind of an opportunity they will have to offer to get the best candidate, especially if he or she has to be recruited from another firm.

What this means is that the normal job opportunity, with an even better than average salary, title, and benefit package *isn't* going to attract a recruited candidate who is happy (or at least content) with their present position. If a company is seeking a particular type of experience and the only way to do that is to find a happily employed professional, they are going to have to get that person recruited, court him or her, then give them many superlative reasons why they should leave what they are doing and go to work for them. This isn't nearly as easy as most people think.

There is a big psychological difference between a candidate who is already thinking about changing jobs and is mentally and emotionally committed to looking, and on the other hand a happily employed individual who has given absolutely no thought to the emotional strain and difficulty of looking for a job.

Many employers feel that a recruited and happily employed candidate is a better candidate than a job seeker, yet that isn't necessarily so. Sometimes the difference between the two is simply timing. The perfectly happy employee, who has given no thought to looking for a job, can suddenly become a job

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seeker if their job or company suddenly goes away.

The best hiring authorities realize that if they are going to attract a happily employed candidate they will have to make the position they are recruiting for an exceptional one. It has to be significantly better than *any* other opportunity of its kind. A potential employer has to be in a position to think “outside the box.” More prestigious titles, more money, more responsibility, upward mobility, better location, expense accounts, vehicles, country club memberships, benefits, retirement funds, 401K plans, stock options, and other perks can all or individually make a difference to a recruited candidate. Signing bonuses, employment contracts, guarantees, and exit or termination agreements may all have to be included in the individual offer that is finally made. Again, we are trying to attract a happy employee. We have to give him or her exceptional reasons to leave what they are doing and gamble on a better future.

Great questions that the best hiring authorities ask themselves when they decide to truly recruit a candidate are:

- Have I defined an opportunity with the right kind of potential, money, benefits, and risk mitigation that I would consider leaving my present company for? (Not many managers ask this question of themselves. It is a really good question. It is sometimes amazing to hear dead silence on the other end of the phone when we ask this question of a hiring authority.)
- Is it above and beyond any comparable opportunity out there? (This means that a hiring authority must be aware of what other ‘opportunities’ are out there. Most hiring authorities really don’t know how their oppor-

tunity compares with others. Of course, this is where an experienced recruiter comes in. We deal with these kinds of opportunities daily and can provide a realistic evaluation of an opportunity and how it compares to the competitive ones.)

- Am I willing to sell it really hard? Hiring authorities really need to think about this. They are often accustomed to interviewing candidates and basically asking, “What can you do for me?” (expecting candidates to come after them), and they forget that a recruited candidate is going to need to be sold on changing jobs.
- From the CEO on down, will my superiors and the whole company go the extra mile for a quality candidate? (We can’t begin to tell you the number of times where we have recruited a great candidate and the only person actually selling the job is the hiring authority. The candidate gets beyond the initial interview and hears, “Well, nice of you to come by...let’s see, what we here to discuss? Oh, yeah, you’re interviewing; oh, it almost slipped my mind that you were coming by. Now, let’s see, what job where you interviewing for? Tell me about yourself... let’s see, I have your resume around here somewhere. Do you have one with you?” etc. End of interest on the part of the candidate. End of interview!
- “Can and will we *all* sell it?” (Is every manager on board? Do some of us need coaching on selling the job and selling the company? Is everyone going to be briefed about the candidate and the job?

THE CANDIDATE

A job change is an emotional issue. Next to the death of a spouse, child, or parent, or coupled with a divorce, looking for a job is the fourth most emotional process that people go through. No one likes to change jobs. It's a gamble. No matter what the level of employment, from the yard person to the CEO, when a person looks for employment they go through a number of mental and emotional adjustments to actively seek a change. Changing jobs involves high risk. Although it's an unpleasant and precarious proposition, the individual needing a job change has to prepare mentally and emotionally for the change. This mental and emotional preparation affects different people in different ways. To some, it's a very difficult adjustment. To others, it's an easy one. But, the fact remains that a person who has a necessity to seek a new job for whatever reason experiences a great range of emotional and mental states of change—and it's never easy.

A happily employed person isn't emotionally prepared to change jobs. When this person is approached about a (perceived) excellent opportunity, they'll go through the emotional strain of being confronted with changing jobs. The best hiring authorities realize this and *do not* approach this potential candidate in the same way they would a job seeker.

This does not mean that the best hiring authorities don't interview the candidate at the same time they're wooing them. They simply keep in mind that the potential candidate, in order to become a job seeker, has to be given plenty of good psychological, emotional, and practical reasons to do so.

The best hiring authorities include family members when courting the candidate. A supportive or unsupportive spouse



and children can either make the deal happen or torpedo it. As professional recruiters, we always keep track of the spouse's support of a job change—especially with a recruited candidate. If the candidate is happy with his or her present employment, the spouse and children are probably content. But if a move is perceived as better for the spouse and children, the whole process may be easier. Ignoring the family in a recruited situation—especially if a physical move is part of the deal—is a recipe for disaster.

Successful hiring authorities are prepared for a counteroffer on the part of the candidate's present employer. In the same manner that he or she wasn't looking for a job, their present employer isn't emotionally ready for them to leave. It will be a shock. If the job offer is right, a counteroffer will not be a consideration, but awareness of this probability is absolutely necessary. And the best way to deal with a counteroffer is to create an opportunity for the candidate that is so compelling that a counteroffer acceptance is not possible.

The best hiring authorities realize that the recruiting process will more than likely take a lot longer and be more intense with a recruited candidate than it would be with a job seeker. They are also mentally and emotionally prepared for the candidate to eventually decline the opportunity. After all of their efforts, they may not be successful. Even with a disappointing outcome, they are graceful and professional, leaving the relationship with the potential candidate open and cordial, and always keeping the door open for the future.

One of our clients recently hired one of our candidates that we had recruited for them *four years earlier*. When our client originally tried to hire the candidate, they went through a six

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week recruiting process and the candidate decided to stay where he was. Our client was very graceful about it . . . disappointed, but graceful. The hiring authority built a personal relationship with the candidate and simply kept in touch with him, calling him from time to time and meeting for lunch a couple of times a year. When the hiring authority got promoted and needed to hire his own replacement, he immediately called our candidate. He went to work two weeks later. The most experienced managers always try to be graceful.

The main message: the recruitable position and the recruited candidate are different than filling a job opening with an active job seeker.