

Working with a Recruiter to get the Best Sandwich...er, Candidate

by Jennifer Potter

When you go into a restaurant you want to enjoy your time, get some delicious food, and leave full. A wait staff at a restaurant wants to serve you delicious food, see you enjoying it and get a nice tip. If you both want essentially the same thing, why is it sometimes frustrating and disappointing? Communication!

So imagine being really hungry, going into that restaurant and when the server comes over - telling him you are starving and really need something to eat! But all you say is that you just want food, and hurry up and get it! What's he supposed to do? How can he possibly fill your order without knowing what it is? Do you want a sandwich, or a huge meal? Do you want several courses or just a light fare? Do you want mashed potatoes or ugh, cooked carrots? (Ok, you get the gist...) It's the same thing if you tell a recruiter you need an XYZ Manager, and fast, but you don't elaborate. How can they possibly present you with the right fit? You've got to communicate!

The following are a few *tips* (get it??!) to a better working relationship with a recruiter.

Conduct a thorough meeting

You are busy doing your job, which encompasses many things, not just hiring the perfect person! So to save time in the long run, be ready for that first meeting or phone call so you can communicate - not talk at - but dialogue with the recruiter. The recruiter should respond with questions to help them know what you need. There are basic questions, such as requirements, education and salary. But there is a lot more a recruiter should ask, so it's beneficial to be ready. A few of those questions may be:

"Have you encountered any difficulties in filling the position?"

"Is this a newly created position or are we filling it for someone who left? If new, what changed in your company to require a new position? If it's filling a position, what about the person who left was a good fit, and what do you need from the next to make it a better fit?"

"How is the team structured - is this person expected to learn quickly and on their own, shadow someone for a few weeks or fly solo on their first day? Be their own boss or part of a dynamic team?"

"What are the 3 top priorities/objectives of someone in the positions?"

"What is not getting done with position unfilled and what outcomes are sought from someone in the position?"

"What are the basic must-have requirements of the job, and what would make the candidate a superstar (and are you willing to pay extra for that Superstar)?"

The more information you relay to the recruiter, the closer s/he should come to presenting you that top candidate!

Create a timeline

Once you give the waiter your order, you wouldn't want to wait an inordinate amount of time for the food to come back - and neither does a recruiter. One of the biggest frustrations for any recruiter is lack of communication after the candidates are presented. That's why it's critical to

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tell the recruiter how soon you need to fill this position. Top talent are being pursued, they aren't going to wait around. Time is of the essence in many cases. Talk about how long you have until the job must be filled, the amount of interviews you think you'll require and even the time between interviews you'll need in order to assess the candidates. Take them through the whole interview process so they have a complete understanding, which will also give them a bit of insight into how you screen the candidates. That, in turn, will help them vet prospects for you.

Texting is a phenomenon that most people can't live without, so let's take advantage! Technology can aid in the timing process also. It's becoming the norm to text to set up interviews. It's faster, and in this go-go-go world that's essential, and it's far more direct. You and the recruiter, and the recruiter and the candidate, will be able to texts back and forth much easier than send emails. You will probably find that the interviews are set far quicker.

Give Feedback

The recruiter is going to do their best to obtain qualified candidates as fast as possible and present them to you. A lot of time is spent on this - wading through innumerable resumes, talking on the phone to countless people, asking hundreds of questions to qualify them for you. They send them over, and then wait for days, sometimes weeks, for a call or email back from you. Then often it's simply to say "these aren't right" without explanation. That's like telling the server that the food is awful, to send it back and try again with no reason why. How can they get it right? They can't, and neither can the recruiter. Tell the recruiter what is missing from the candidates they sent, and what may have been close to what you are looking for. This one didn't have enough experience (too light a fare) and that one had way too big an ego to possibly be compatible with others in your company (cooked carrots?!)

Also be sure to tell the recruiter if the priorities have changed. Things such as the timeline for the position as well as the skillset required are two things which change often. The company may very well have others doing what is necessary, and therefore no longer need all of the skills and experiences of the original position.

These suggestions should help the communication factor in working with a recruiter. You will both have a more positive working relationship, and able to communicate more effectively going forward. And just like at that restaurant, you'll be happier and maybe even leave with the Beef Wellington of candidates!

