**Your Biggest Challenge**

**“In recruiting and in Life”**

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Recruiters are saddled with many challenges. If it’s not a jobless recovery to worry about it’s the potential for a double dip recession. Many of us are searching for magical formula in these tumultuous times in hopes of getting through to better times. If there were such and thing – and that simple, someone would find it, bottle it(or put it on the net), sell it and we would all take a long needed cruise to some far away Carribean destination. It is true, our industry along with many industries have experienced some choppy seas over the last 18 months due to the economic sunami.

Many of us got tired, let go of the ropes and let their sails flap in the wind, hoping divine intervention would save them. It did not. Some of us grabbed a pair of oars and rowed as best we could. Those individuals worked harder, only to find that they expended more energy and got nowhere fast. A few of us became better Sailors.

Before you take your next cruise on the Titanic, there a few basic decisions we need to make in Recruiting today – as well as in life – to guarantee getting our business sailing at higher knots – in any economic market place.

**Your success is all in the decisions you make**

It sounds so simple. Most of life basic principles are. “Buy low and Sell high”. “Eat less, Move More”. It is simple, yet so true. Where you are in life TODAY is all due to your good and bad decisions you have made over your life thus far. If you made a few bad choices along way, welcome to being human, we all did. The good news… life is not over yet so let try to make good decisions from here on out..

So how does that relate to recruiting? Your outcome is all about the decisions you make on what Clients to work with, job orders (Search Assignments) you work on, and the candidates you choose to represent.

***Job Orders***

During the last 18 months, when a recruiter got a job order from a client – it was time to drop to your knees and thank our god. Unfortunately, unless we determined it was a good enough job order to work on, it often added up to more work and no placements. More of the rowing harder to get nowhere fast kind of thing. Now more than every it’s important to evaluate each assignment **“before”** you commit to taking the search. The ten critical factors are what need to be measured. Sense of Urgency, Difficulty of Search, Exclusivity, Hiring Cycle, Salary, Potential for Repeat Business, Mutual Cooperation, Fillability, Fee and Interview dates. Feel free to use the Job Order matrix my office uses here at this link. Bob Marshall did a wonderful job at putting this together years ago, and I simply tweaked the masterpiece. http://talentwinsonline.com/articles/fordyce2010/Job%20Order%20Evaluation%20Matrix%202009.pdf

Before committing to a search, we must to back to the basics and take a full search assignment. This will insure we have a complete understanding of all the variables that could affect the success the search. There will always be “areas for improvement” in the search – seldom do we see searches that are perfect to work on. If the search is lacking in a few areas, don’t fret. It’s time to go back to the customers to ask to see if they can change some of the issues that are causing you some concern in fulfilling the assignment. This needs to be done before you commit to the search itself.

“Mr. Client, before we begin on this search for you Vice President of Engineering, there are a couple areas that we need to talk about – because they may cause us some problems in getting you the best potential candidates available in the market place. When we talked about hiring process, you had mentioned that you need at least 8 weeks to get your process completed. We have found that if it takes longer than 3-4 weeks for an interview process, we lose our best candidates. We lose them to other opportunities and well as to their current employer. Is there any way we can shorten the process down to a “win-win” 3-4 weeks. In 3-4 weeks, we can determine if they are the right fit for your organization as well as the candidate can determine if it’s a good fit for them. We also have less of a chance to lose our best candidates due to time delays, other opportunities or their existing employer.

***Customers***

The decision on which customer to work with can help to increase your success in quickly getting you back into fast moving currents.

If you evaluated all the time you spent on searches in 2009, most of us will find out that some clients took an enormous amount of time – with limited results. You will also find out that you had some clients didn’t take up extraordinary amount of time, however - more placements with them. In some cases loads of them. Knowing this information is crucial to you and your firm. The answer is another simple one. *Spend more time with clients or prospects like those clients that you have made the most placements with and less time with the prospects or clients that are time wasters with limited results*.

Some of the reasons why you spent more time with some clients or prospects with limited results directly correlate back to some point on the job order matrix. Often it is Sense of Urgency, Direct Access to Hiring Manager and Exclusivity issues. Sound familiar?

***Candidates***

How many times have you got to the end of a hiring process, the client is excited about your candidate, the offer comes at exactly the amount you needed then…….. the candidate turns the offer down. Or doesn’t show up for the final interview….or takes a counter offer? What ever the reason was, you didn’t end up making the placement and collecting a check for all of your efforts. Nothing could be more disheartening. Been there… done that.

 The only way to stop that from happening is to have a philosophy – that you will only work with the best and qualified candidates. How can you insure you are only working with the best candidates candidates? By continually re- qualifying the candidate in the process and getting the approval to accept an offer on the candidates behalf at the conclusion of the interview process.

When initially working with a candidate it important to set the stage for how your relationship will work and who has what roles. When I get a candidate on the phone and find out they are a fit for the position I am recruiting on, I set expectations as a next step. The expectations lay the ground work for the roles and responsibilities of each stake holder in the process. In the expectations we set, the dollars to accept on their behalf after the final interview is critical. It stops salary creep from happening in the process as well as puts a stake in the ground for how we will work going forward. Here is an example of the expectations document we use. <http://talentwinsonline.com/articles/fordyce2010/Setting%20Expectations.pdf>

Qualifying and re-qualifying candidates is one of the most critical parts of the recruiting process in any economic environment. Today, even more so. The general rule is qualify and requalify early and often. The times we use to qualify the candidates are on every conversation with the candidate. Why so often? Life happens fast and can change in a moment. We need to know where our candidates are at in their decision process at every conversation. We qualify and requalify the candidates on every conversation. The three critical points at qualification and requalification is on the first conversation, before the second interview and before the final interview. We take a enormous amount of time before the second interview and fill out a Candidate Requalification and relocation form out. <http://talentwinsonline.com/articles/fordyce2010/CDS%20Requalification%20Form.pdf> This gives us a snapshot of where the candidate is at – midway through the process. This a point in the recruiting process where we need to make a decision if it makes sense to go forward with this candidate in the process. Do they have enough interest to proceed, are they a good match for the position, are they willing to accept the position if offered. All critical questions where we can determine if it makes sense to go forward with the candidate or not.

The final step i requalifying the candidate – is having the ability to *accept an offer on their before* the final interview. The day before the final interview – and usually its when you prep them before the interview – ask the question “ IF I get you the 100K plus 20% bonus, can I accept the offer on your behalf?” This question alone will make you and your firm more money than anything else previously. Couple reasons why this is so effective. First of all it lets you know if the candidate is ready to accept an offer. Secondly it gets out all the objections before the final interview. If the candidate does not allow you to accept an offer on your behalf, you need to start asking the age old question… Why? Until you get a number to accept on their behalf, don’t allow them to go on the final interview. This will quickly flush out objections so you can address them before the final interview and go forward confidently knowing you are close to money.

Navigating a recruiting ship in any weather or environment isn’t easy. Ad some of the variables such as we have seen in the last 18 months and it becomes a job only for the seasoned captain. Make the right decisions on which Job orders, clients and candidates to work with – and any Captain can looked like an experienced Americas Cup champion. The decisions we make in life are critical to our success. In recruiting it is no different. Practice making better decisions everyday and you will be on a constant pleasure cruise.