



And the Winner is...

Written by Stephen A. Lowisz

The entertainment industry is full of annual award ceremonies. Hollywood spends millions of dollars on awards that are handed out for best actors/actresses, movies, costumes, special effects, etc. There are two very distinct types of awards – the difference being in the way of who decides the winners. For example, we have the Academy Awards and the People’s Choice Awards for the recognition of actors and actresses. The winners of the Academy Awards are determined by an Academy that is made up primarily of actors, directors, writers, etc. In contrast, the winners of the People’s Choice Awards are determined by “the people” via online voting. In this case, the candidates are determined by national ratings averages and box office gross revenues.

The obvious difference in these awards is based on who is voting on the winners. The Academy Awards are based on the ultimate view of the movie actor’s/actress’s peers. The People’s Choice Awards are based on those individuals who are the customers of these actor’s products – the masses who vote with their wallets.

It is important and flattering to be recognized by your peers; however are they more important than the customers who consume the product or service itself? Should we spend more time trying to impress our peers or impress our customers? This is obviously a rhetorical question.

Unfortunately in the world of recruiting, we base most awards on the same methodology that the Academy uses – they are voted on by our peers who have never been customers of our service in the first place. To put this into perspective, let me share with you an experience I had in late 2008 during one of these Academy Award type ceremonies.

Part of the annual agenda for a particular recruiter conference I attend revolves around an awards ceremony that recognizes organizations in the categories of Best Recruiting Group of the Year, the Most Innovative Recruiting Group of the Year, etc. On this particular occasion, the Best Recruiting Group of the Year was awarded to an organization in which I knew many of the senior executives that were not in recruiting or human resources. After the award was handed out to a glowing representative of the Talent Acquisition group, I called my main contact at the company to congratulate him on the win and to compliment his organization for having assembled such a creative and efficient recruiting organization. As I explained to my contact the situation and extended congratulations to him on the award, I was meted with dead silence on the phone followed by a laugh and the statement, “Are you freakin’ kidding

me?” Shocked by his reply, I asked why he was so surprised only to find out that his organization was recognized. He stated that (the hiring managers and ultimate customers felt that) the Talent Acquisition function was unresponsive, lacked internal credibility and was completely ineffective.

This same individual (who happens to be a very analytical and numbers driven professional) went on to explain that he recently had a conversation with the head of their internal talent acquisition group regarding some of these issues. In reply, the VP of Talent Acquisition produced metrics that indicated their cost per hire and time to fill had decreased substantially in the previous 27 months. To this my contact replied that the quality of service from his recruiters had become almost non-existent, the quality of candidates had dropped significantly based on results and tenure, and he felt their recruiting process alienated most top performing managers and candidates.

In the end, a panel of peers voted to award the Best Recruiting Group of the Year to an organization that could not provide an acceptable level of service to their own client base! I quickly realized that if we continue these awards, it is imperative that we not only have the facts as they are reported by the Talent Acquisition group, it is just as important to have independent, confidential verification of the service provided to the customer – as reported by the customer. Confidentially surveying the hiring management team within any Talent Acquisition organization that is under consideration for such an award is critical to a truly unbiased award.

Please don't misunderstand my stance on this issue - I believe that we should recognize excellence loudly and often. What I am suggesting is that we further substantiate who receives our industry awards by getting those involved who are actually on the receiving end of the service – the customer. The Academy Awards may have a place in Hollywood, but in Talent Acquisition we should focus on the People's Choice Awards!

CONTACT ME:

www.stevelowisz.com



steve@stevelowisz.com



734-521-2800



www.linkedin.com/in/stevelowisz



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