



TECHNOLOGY – RECRUITER’S FRIEND OR FOE?

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Web 2.0 seems to be one of the main topics associated with recruiting conferences today. There is no doubt that technology has had a significant impact on the way we identify and recruit candidates in this age of social networking and blogging, but have we gone too far?

I recently had the opportunity to speak at a recruiting conference whose major theme focused on technology and its application in the recruiting lifecycle. As I stood in the back of the room waiting for the speaker in front of me to finish her presentation, I was shocked at what she had to say. She stated that “there is no reason to actually talk to a candidate today.” She continued by saying that “email and text messages should be the only means we use to contact and recruit candidates today because that is the medium they use.”

As this well known speaker’s comments began to sink in, I realized the cause of many of the problems we face today – its people like this speaker who teach us to rely almost exclusively on technology! I may not be a doctor, but the last time I checked, every candidate is a living, breathing, human being with the innate craving to have a relationship with other living, breathing, humans.

Within the recruitment profession today technology has moved from a tool to identify candidates and create efficiencies to a mechanism that replaces real relationships. If we all rely on the same technologies to identify, engage, and recruit candidates, what will be the differentiator from company to company? Are candidates to be treated as a commodity?

Have we forgotten that recruiting is sales? That sales is what builds real relationships? That technology should enable us to be more efficient but cannot engage a candidate in the way a recruiter can? Obviously these are all rhetorical questions aimed at pointing out how our near reliance on technology is only exacerbating the problems we face today.

As I surveyed the room after I heard these ridiculous statements, I realized the impact this speaker had on the audience of seemingly young, inexperienced recruiters who were attempting to learn at least one nugget of information they could apply when returning to their respective companies. It is direction like this, from supposed leading authorities in the field, that are causing recruiters to lose touch with candidates and treat them like a number instead of a person.

Let's break down the obvious: Most exempt level candidates, whether active or passive have many choices today of where to work. When an active candidate submits a resume to your organization, you can assume they have applied to your top competitors competing for the same talent. Likewise, passive candidates know that they are in demand and can choose who to speak with.

This reliance on technology has created a 'post and pray' and 'email and wait' mentality for most recruiters. Sending broadcast emails, blogging, and social networking sites are the same tools your competitors are using to engage the same exact candidates that you want. Although these are fantastic tools to identify potential candidates, engaging them is the challenge. It is difficult to establish a relationship of substance when you have never spoken to the candidate or all of your follow up is done through non-personal means.

If recruiting is sales – and it is – what do we know about the sales process? Every sales 101 class teaches us that there are 5 main steps in the sales process:

1. Develop a relationship
2. Identify the need
3. Overcome objections
4. Fill the need
5. Advance the sale

Identifying the true need of a candidate is done by asking emotional, open ended questions, overcoming objections, and then tailoring the opportunity to the individual's stated need. Posting a job description, emailing the same description to your social network, or blogging about your great opportunity skips the key steps in the sales process – identifying the need of the buyer (in this case your candidate) .

We are also taught that consumers of any product or service are initially attracted emotionally, and later justify their purchase rationally. Candidates are no different – if we engage them emotionally, we have a greater chance of having them buy into the position we are selling. There is no substitute for a trained recruiter developing a personal relationship with a candidate to identify their emotional wants and needs in order to present what the candidate wants, not what the recruiter has to sell. This is a common mistake made by recruiters today, resulting in a lack of qualified candidates that they can generate for their companies.

The key is to understand how technology can benefit your recruiting process and holding your recruiters accountable for establishing meaningful relationships just like we expect our sales people to do. Technology is by the far the most effective way to source potential candidates - the real challenge is what to do with them once you find them. With all of the options passive and active candidates have today, it is even more important to engage them in a manner that builds a stronger bond with them than your competition.

Once you start combining the efficiencies of technology with the expertise of properly trained recruiters skilled in the art of sales and we can reverse the trend created by the 'silver bullet' mentality. With 70%

of a company's assets in human capital, Talent Acquisition should be the most respected shared service within an organization.

Remember – Technology is for enablement, not to replace engagement.

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