

Gain the Competitive Edge in Recruiting

Even in times when the economy is soft and the market is flooded with unemployed professionals and others who are worried about their positions with their current employers, it is still imperative for companies to hire the best. And, even in bad times, the best candidates will usually be sought after by several companies, especially if they are responding to postings on the national job boards. How can your firm compete with all of the others for those still rare, exceptional candidates?

Following are a few suggestions to give you and your organization the recruiting edge:

- 1. Evaluate your recruiting process.** Some companies shoot themselves in the foot by having an interviewing and evaluating process that either takes too long or turns off candidates. Streamline the process as much as possible. If you are using a Search firm, demand they do their due diligence, by verifying education and references *before* they refer candidates to you. The good ones do it anyway. Look to your interviewing process. How long does it take from the time you receive a candidate's resume to determination of interest to first contact with the candidate? A week is a reasonable time frame. Longer and the candidate may no longer be available. If you can move more quickly than that, you have out-manuevered your competition.
- 2. Buy & Sell.** It's always important to have a method of interviewing that qualifies candidates. Of course you want to be a careful "buyer" when evaluating candidates. However, it is equally important to promote or "sell" the opportunity to the candidate. What is your process for promoting your company, the position, career track and community to candidates?
- 3. Use all resources available to you.** All of us in business want to save money, especially in today's economy. But it makes no sense to save money while recruiting the very people who will be propelling your organization to success. A good hire will make you money- - - a bad one will cost you much more than you saved. Use internet postings, rewards to employees for referrals, and good Search Firms.
- 4. Demand more from the Search Firms you use.** Why use recruiters who only refer candidates they get from internet postings - - - the same candidates you could get with your own postings? Find Search Firms who have the experience and resources to dig deep in to the hidden talent pool and use a variety of resources to find the best candidates for you, not just the most easily obtained. You should also expect more in the service they render. Employ Search Firms who will be your strongest allies and advocates in promoting your organization in a good ethical manner. Remember, they are reflections of your organization every time they interact with candidates. Are you getting the kind of representation you would like? And lastly, expect your Search Firm to do their

due diligence *before* they refer candidates. That means background checks and pre-qualifying candidates on your location, etc., before they refer them to you. Some recruiters don't even interview the candidates they refer. Is that the service you expect?

- 5. Evaluate your employment packages.** New hire packages range from signing bonuses and complete relocation including buying their house for sale and paying closing points to other companies who only reimburse for a U-Haul. Obviously this makes a difference in attracting and securing the best candidates. However, most candidates are seeking only a fair package. Relocation costs are more important than a signing bonus. A progressive vacation policy is very important to candidates and the insurance benefits and costs along with a good 401K or related benefit are hugely important to all candidates. Look for ways in which you can adjust or flex your benefits to meet the challenge of competing for and retaining top talent.
- 6. Develop a local support network.** Location is a top factor when candidates make their final decision and simply pointing them to the Internet for research is not enough. Issues such as housing, school systems, religion, employment opportunities for significant others, and recreation are important considerations in the final analysis. Develop partnerships with the school Superintendents and Principals. Get to know a Realtor you can trust who will not just try to sell a house, but one who will represent the community. Know the churches and pastors in your area. Select one or two hotels where you know visiting candidates will have an enjoyable and trouble-free visit. Partnerships like these will go a long way in making your job easier in promoting the community where you live by showing people who care and can get the necessary facts to the candidates you are recruiting for your organization.