

Hire Quality Multipliers By Doing Your Best Completely

Quality hires. It's the siren song of our profession. Even as organizations discontinue large scale hiring in the current economic environment, they remain in the hunt for top tier talent. And we all know why: both anecdotal and empirical data confirm that "A" level performers not only contribute more themselves, but they raise the value of their coworkers' contribution, as well. Regardless of their field of work or industry specialization, they are "quality multipliers" for the organizations that are able to hire them.

And that, of course, is the challenge. They are hard enough to bring in the door in the best of times, but in a difficult environment, they are especially tough to recruit. A slow economy makes them even more risk averse and even less willing to move than normal. So, what can we do? How do we overcome the twin hurdles involved in recruiting quality multipliers?

- First, we have to build and maintain the right size pool of talent so that we always have enough of the right kinds of candidates for each of our openings;
- and
- Second, we have to convince the right individual among those candidates to accept the right opening with our organization at the right time (i.e., when we need them).

A recent research report from SHRM listed a number of actions that organizations are now taking to improve their yield of quality hires. They include:

- Increasing the number of recruiting sources they use;
- Developing standard templates for writing job descriptions;
- Conducting training programs to upgrade the recruiting skills of hiring managers;
- Administering applicant skill and personality testing; and
- Offering recruiting incentives, such as sign-on bonuses.

While all of these initiatives are helpful, they are also tactical in scope. In other words, they will improve an employer's recruiting yield, but only if they are implemented within an overarching strategy that integrates and focuses them. This strategy creates a unity of purpose and approach that enables each and all of the actions to achieve their optimal results. It should have four components:

- A theme;
- A context;
- A framework; and
- A foundation.

Each is described briefly below.

A theme: A clearly articulated and compelling employment brand.

Quality multipliers never, ever think of themselves as job seekers. If they move from one organization to another, they characterize that shift as the necessary and proper behavior of a "career activist"—someone who takes the initiative in managing their own career. Their initiative, however, is seldom self-induced; in most cases, career activists must be activated by something you do. For example, they will rarely visit an organizational Web-site or apply for a position on their own. They are also seldom activated by simple information—by a recruitment ad, for example, that does nothing more than notify them of an opening. In a very real sense, they must be compelled to connect with you. How does that happen? Through the

rationale provided by your employment brand. It must give them a reason to act that is so persuasive and so uniquely intriguing that they can't help themselves. They have to be in touch with you just to make sure they aren't missing out on an employment opportunity that will enable them to continue or (even better) accelerate their success at work.

A context: A differentiating and persuasive candidate experience.

All too often, organizations confuse the steps of their recruiting process—the tasks that are performed—for the experience—the affective outcome—that it provides to candidates. While what you do and how you do it certainly influences the way a candidate feels about your organization, it's the subtle and less obvious things that often determine what a candidate remembers most. These include the warmth of the message you use to respond to candidate applications and the nature of your follow up communication after they visit for an interview. They are also affected by the extent of the interaction you permit them to have with your organization's employees and by the look on those employees' faces and the tone of their voices when they talk about their employment experience. It's these "little differences" that separate one recruiting process from another and, more importantly, differentiate your recruiting process from the purchasing department's supply chain. Widgets don't care about the little stuff that touches them, but humans and especially the best performing humans do.

A framework: A sophisticated relationship-building campaign.

Done well, your employment brand and your recruiting process experience will get top tier talent into and interested in your organization, but they will not sell them. They are not sufficient to convince quality multipliers—individuals who are probably well taken care of by their current employer—to do the one thing most humans hate most to do: go through the angst and disruption of a change. What's missing? An emotional lasso. It is the precedent to the emotional handcuffs that the best employers create to sustain high retention among key workers. Basically, you must give candidates a sense of genuine connectedness to both the organization and those who represent it. You must make them feel as if they are a part of your team before they are. While it's an admittedly overused term, the best description of this activity is "relationship building." You transform strangers into proto-colleagues by weaving connections to and with them. How is that accomplished? Through a continuous and carefully developed communications campaign that helps each prospect see how they can fit into your organization effectively and play a meaningful role in its success.

A foundation: A robust and well integrated workforce planning infrastructure.

An organization can do everything else right in its recruiting strategy and still fail to hire the talent it needs, if its aim is off the mark. A powerful employment brand, a differentiating process experience and a dynamic relationship building campaign are all for naught if they are focused on the wrong number of candidates or on candidates with the wrong skills or skill levels or on candidates who are in the wrong location. Said another way, it's easier to get it wrong than it is to get it right. How can you protect yourself? With a workforce planning infrastructure that removes uncertainty from your process. It alone can provide the information you need when you need it to design and implement a recruiting strategy and set of tactics that will successfully yield the talent required to execute your organization's business plan. This infrastructure, however, doesn't need a super computer and team of statisticians with doctorates to be effective. It doesn't have to predict your workforce requirements to the eighteen decimal point. It simply needs to give you a ballpark estimate of what's needed, when and where so that you are recruiting proactively and with a goal that is aligned with your organization's expected operations.

Quality multipliers are special people who can't be effectively recruited with half an effort. They require the use of not one but two kinds of best practices: those that are strategic as well as those that are tactical. The former provides a theme, a context, a framework, and a foundation for all of the important activities encompassed by the latter. The organizations that have the greatest success in hiring top tier talent assign equal priority to both and, as a result, they do their best completely.

Thanks for reading,
Peter

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