

Getting Past Yes

A candidate's "Yes" is, more often than not, the end of our recruiting effort. We hand the newly hired person off to those responsible for onboarding and move on to our next assignment. It's a reasonable course of action—one that usually works well with active job seekers—but it sets us up for disappointment and failure if we use the same approach with passive, high quality candidates.

Active job seekers, especially in today's emaciated job market, seldom have options. Few employers are hiring, and those that are typically have just a handful of openings to fill. For someone in transition, that means a single offer is a dream come true, multiple offers is a fantasy. With mortgages to pay and families to feed, they have no choice but to accept the first decent opportunity that comes along. As a result, when they say "Yes," they almost always show up on the first day of work.

The same isn't true of passive, high quality candidates. First, they do have options. In most cases, they are employed, so they can stay right where they are rather than accept an offer. In addition, with talent at a premium even in today's tepid recovery, they will also likely have other recruiters seeking them out and that situation gives them a choice among competitive offers, as well.

Second, they create a window of vulnerability for organizations trying to hire them. Since they are usually employed, they will in most cases have to give notice to their current employer. That notice, in turn, typically triggers a two-to-four week period when they are "in play" and their visible willingness to consider other options gives them a free agent aura.

What does that mean?

The Unique Challenge of Top Talent

Even after passive, high caliber new hires say "Yes," they can be and often are stolen away by;

- a counter package from their current employer, which occurs with almost every offer involving an "A" level performer and those with hard-to-find skills;
- buyer's remorse, which occurs when they or a spouse or partner get cold feet about the changes involved in taking an offer that moves them into a new organization;
- or
- grand theft candidate, which occurs when another recruiter swoops in and makes them a better offer than the one they've already accepted.

In other words, there's a very high probability that the high caliber person we recruiters work so hard to bring to our employers will be tempted, frightened or lured into switching their "Yes" to a "No." So, what should we do? I think we have to redesign our recruiting processes so that they get both our candidates and us safely past "Yes."

For example, think how easy it would be to do the following as soon as a candidate says "Yes:"

- Give them an ID and password to their own personal home page on our corporate career site;
- Focus the first page of that site on a message to the individual from the CEO of our organization;
- Have the CEO's message welcome both the new employee and their family to the organization;
- Fill the two-to-four week window of vulnerability with daily welcoming messages from the individual's new supervisors, managers, team members and peers. The goal is not to onboard the person, but rather to "re-recruit" them—to remind them over and over again why they said "Yes" in the first place.

Obviously, this approach isn't the only way to redesign a recruiting process for passive, high quality candidates. It does, however, illustrate the central point. When we're recruiting the best talent, we must remember they have options. We have to get them past "Yes" by recruiting them right up until they walk in the door on their first day of work.

Thanks for reading,
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