



Become a Great Recruiter

How to build trust and success

Why do some recruiters seem to find it easy to make placements and get hiring managers to accept the candidates they send? How do they do it? What special skills or qualities characterize the recruiter who can present two to three candidates who impress the hiring manager so much that they make an offer to one of them?

For example, Dave M. is an outstanding recruiter. Most candidates he sends to managers get offers. His candidates like him and his managers respect him.

What's unusual is that Dave has been in this company for only slightly more than two years and has been a recruiter for less than one year.

The first two years he was in operations as a quality engineer, but toward the end of the second year, he sought a career change. He really liked people, and many of his peers had told him that he had a natural ability to pick good people to work on the line. He had frequently been the one who interviewed candidates and made hiring recommendations that usually turned out well.

His company has a good internal promotion process and he was able to make a move into recruiting as a researcher. His engineering background, familiarity with computers and the Internet, and his motivation led the recruiting director to make him an offer.

He went to several classes in Internet sourcing and he took a class in behavioral interviewing. Right off he was finding decent candidates who responded to him and who, with a little coaching, made good impressions during their interviews.

Many of the other recruiters were a bit envious of his skill and suspicious of how he could be so good with so little experience. Maybe he just had an "in" with the engineering staff because he had once worked there.

But he was even making placements in areas outside of engineering and managers from different areas felt comfortable and trusting of the people he sent their way.

The Four Traits

Simply put, Dave had four critical traits that add up to trust and to the creation of trust and respect. This is your "equity" or personal capital. When you don't have it, everyone assumes the worst and requires you to go out of your way to show a candidate's quality.

It is very similar to the kind of prestige and trust that CPAs, doctors, lawyers, or some other professionals have. It is built through education, certification, age, experience, and relationship. Because there are no certifications for recruiters, and the barriers to becoming a recruiter are not very high, it is the most powerful tool a recruiter can have.

The First Trait: Intimate Business Knowledge

Dave understood the business his firm was in and had real knowledge of what the hiring managers wanted and needed, even if they couldn't articulate or define it very well.

Because he had "been there" and had the responsibility to work with many new engineers, he had a good mental map of the skills, competencies, and experience levels that would be appropriate for most of the positions in operations.

If you don't have Dave's background you can still gain this expertise by showing interest in the work your hiring managers do, by spending time working with them (perhaps even doing a mini-internship) to show that you grasp the essentials of their output and needs.

Talk to "star" performers to figure out what they have that makes them successful, read annual reports, talk to people who know the organization's strategy, and keep yourself fully informed about changing business and technology conditions. You have to be able to have an intelligent and informed conversation about the products, business, and issues that your hiring managers face.

The Second Trait: Relationship with the Hiring Managers

Second, Dave had developed relationships with the hiring managers in the operations area. They trusted him because he was "one of them" and had been part of their team, involved with their decisions, and motivated by the

same goals. He was an insider and that gave him a powerful ability to be trusted and have the candidates he presented trusted.

While most of us cannot be technical experts in the areas we recruit for, we can spend the time to become acquainted with the hiring managers. We can sit in on their staff meetings and we can be with them when they grapple with tough decisions.

Sure, we may have to invite ourselves on occasion, but after awhile, we will be part of their team. Dave extended his skill at this to other parts of the company because of his reputation and the word-of-mouth communications that take place in every community and organization.

He was "branded" as a good guy, someone who understood the needs of hard-working managers. This is the highest form of personal equity you can acquire, but it takes work and time to develop.

The Third Trait: Focus on the Right Candidates

Third, he had learned how to source and focus on the right candidates. He didn't spend time screening candidates who were long shots or poor fits. He used his knowledge about where the kinds of people he was after tended to be found and went there to find them.

He knew, for example, that the engineering hiring managers in the company liked people with an automotive background or at least with an interest in cars. That became a key screening criterion, not the only one for sure, but an important one. He asked candidates about cars and assessed their interest and skills in working on cars.

There were numerous other traits and characteristics that tended to be influential in getting hiring managers interested in a candidate and he leveraged that knowledge. He relied heavily on his network of engineers in other companies to recommend people, and he used the Internet.

With his knowledge and sourcing skills, he was almost always able to present candidates within a day or so of getting an opening. Again, developing and fine-tuning sourcing skills is one of top few skills you will need to be successful.

A good sourcer is a great networker, someone who spends enough time with hiring managers to really know what they need and want in a successful employee.

The Fourth Trait: Sell Both the Candidate and the Hiring Manager

Finally, Dave was able to speak to candidates in their language and assess them against the criteria he knew would really count to the hiring manager. He was able to take the complex soup of corporate culture, hiring manager personality, technical skill needs, and candidate desire and sell both parties on success.

What he did (and you can do) was take the time to develop deep understanding of the environment. He knew what pressures and goals managers faced, then found candidates who could help the managers overcome the pressures or achieve the goals.

Good recruiters can make those pressures look like exciting challenges to a candidate and infuse enthusiasm for the candidate's abilities in the hiring managers.

Personal equity is what sets you aside and exceeds what might be expected. No one gains trust or equity without a track record of results and without working at building relationships.

I know recruiters who have been in an organization for a long time and still lack credibility. It makes their job harder and they rarely go home feeling satisfied or respected.

It takes hard work to build up your equity. It is not something won in a day or a month or often even in a year. It takes determination, study, knowledge, and practice. But the payback is huge.

Those recruiters who have strong reputations within their company are always sought after and are successful. They make hires with seeming ease, and they do what all masters of anything do: they make the complex look simple.

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