



5 things your competitors know about Recruitment.

An old boss of mine once said that over his 40-year career he had probably had a recruitment success rate of less than 30%. At the time I had little experience in the matter and thought that that seemed low. 20 years down the track I now realise that he was probably more successful than the average.....

"The secret of my success is that we have gone to exceptional lengths to hire the best people in the world."

Steve Jobs

Recruitment is one of the most challenging activities that a business is involved with and at the same time is critical to the probable success of the same. Simply put if you don't hire well you will suffer in two key areas; you will lose endless management time and resource in handling on-going HR problems; and more importantly you will miss your business goals!

"Get the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus"

Jim Collins

I like the analogy of a business being a bus. You are all on it together on the journey to business success. Overtime the complement of people on that bus becomes a mix of successful hires and others that perhaps wouldn't be selected if they had their time again (I'm being diplomatic here). It is one of the key roles of a business leader to take

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responsibility for the quality of those on the bus and to make changes when required. In a previous post I dealt with the need to make such decisions quickly for the benefit of all concerned ('Don't Pull your Punch') so I won't labour this point here. Similarly, I have covered what makes an excellent professional ('Are you a Professional?') and in that piece, I explore the varied qualities of top professionals such as energy, drive and attention to detail and these are certainly traits that you want to have in your successful team.

"If you pick the right people and give them the opportunity to spread their wings and put compensation as a carrier behind it, you almost don't have to manage them."

Jack Welch

Some CEO's make the mistake of trying to pack their team with 'stars' and of course for a team to work well you require a perfect balance of talents from professional knowledge, to drive and determination, to the right connections, all held together with good team players. A team full of 'stars' does not necessarily make for a 'happy bus' – look at some national football sides, for instance.

The actual mechanics of recruitment are fraught with challenges and this is probably where things go wrong in most cases. The face-to-face interview is a poor tool to help determine the true qualities and talents of an individual. Even assuming that the interview panel has been properly trained, a confident candidate will easily portray the traits that he or she feels that you are looking for. Their CV has been rewritten to best compliment your job description and they have rehearsed answers to the typical questions.

"Recruiting is hard. It's just finding the needles in the haystack. You can't know enough in a one-hour interview. So, in the end, it's ultimately based on your gut. How do I feel about this person? What are they like when they're challenged? I ask everybody: "Why are you here?" The answers themselves are not what you're looking for. It's the meta-data. "

Steve Jobs

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Some companies go to great lengths to try to simulate real work situations and to try to break the candidate from his/her comfort zone. These include 2 day interviews, repeat interviews, psychometric-testing or even roleplay using actors to watch the interviewees deal with challenges. Unfortunately, whatever you chose to do and however big your budget there are no guarantees of success and that is the constant challenge.

In my experience companies often are recruiting under pressure and whether by default or design accept less than perfect candidates because it 'fills the role'. This is extremely hazardous and if it goes wrong will cost the business much more in time, lost growth and resources (cost of probable termination compensation) than a delayed hire would have done in the first instance. The right candidate is out there and is worth waiting for!

"Leaders don't flock. You have to find them one at a time."

Ross Perot

Finally, I believe that a business must be as transparent as it can be when interviewing final candidates about the challenges ahead if they accept the role. If you sugar-coat it in an attempt to get them on-board you are potentially storing issues that will arise sooner rather than later. Putting a great professional into a challenged or even compromised environment without due notice will affect his or her effectiveness and you may struggle to retain them mid-term.

I will end with my favourite quote – very popular after the 2008 Global Economic Crash:

"Somebody once said that in looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if you don't have the first, the other two will kill you. You think about it; it's true. If you hire somebody without [integrity], you really want them to be dumb and lazy."

Warren Buffet

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