

The Six Golden Rules of a Successful Executive Search

Talented people are always in demand, and Internet job listings are numerous, but how do you close the deal on a “match made in heaven”? The key is finding the right person and initiating a long-term, win-win relationship.

Follow these six golden rules for a successful search.

Rule 1: Define the Job

Clearly define the company's need before candidate sourcing begins. Follow a clear path of simple, essential items on which to focus your efforts from day one. A well-written job profile communicates your company's culture, supplies the framework for effective communications about the position, and provides a measure of fitness for candidate reviews.

Develop a job description that identifies the value the position will provide to the organization. Include the job scope, responsibilities, reporting relationships, and career path as well as specific product knowledge, industry knowledge, background, experience, behavioral attributes, and other abilities needed to be successful.

Rule 2: Deliver a Consistent Message

Communicate a consistent message about the job to foster a sense of security for candidates about your company's level of seriousness and commitment to hiring additional staff. When the message is delivered consistently by all involved in the hiring process, the candidate will fully understand that your company has spent the time and effort to think the opportunity through.

Rule 3: Use Professional Capabilities, Relationships, and Resources

Successful hiring often requires more time and effort than the human resources department can provide. In such cases, it may be best to outsource. If you retain a search firm, make sure you obtain maximum benefit from the relationship.

Find out how the search firm intends to generate real interest and excitement about the job opportunity with candidates. Ask to see examples of the type of market intelligence they utilize as well as the Database from which they source candidates. Will they provide your staff with interview training? Do they have measurements that will be tracked during the process? How will they check references?

In addition, fully understand the search process of your chosen firm, and establish appropriate communications channels to support that process. When and how many status reports and meetings will occur?

How will changes in the search parameters be handled? What is the process for event-driven communications to ensure speedy feedback regarding a candidate's status and desired next steps?

Rule 4: Understand the Marketplace

Increased demand for professional services is driving fierce employment-market competition for quality, experienced talent. A few guideposts can help you win the hearts and minds of qualified candidates.

Move quickly to avoid decreasing a candidate's interest and minimize the likelihood of competing offers. Create a "fast-track" process to move an exceptional candidate forward, keep interest high, and maintain motivation to make it happen.

Experienced candidates expect to be aggressively sold on the company, its culture, and the long-term career opportunity. Be prepared.

Rule 5: Romance the Candidate

Moving the mental and emotional position of a candidate is not an easy process. It's helpful to empathize with the candidate regarding his risks associated with leaving a familiar work environment. Regardless of the outcome, each candidate should view the experience positively.

All candidates, who contact your organization, are spokesmen to the market. Like any first impression, a positive experience is an excellent catalyst for future referrals.

Rule 6: Offer Competitive Compensation

Do you really know what the competitive benchmark is for the compensation you plan to offer the candidate? Collect market intelligence on compensation in your region and make offers that ring true to candidates. Utilize salary surveys and other forms of market intelligence that address cash and non-cash compensation to identify the pay scale. A world-class candidate will always try to leverage up to what they believe is the market value for their services. Being armed with recent comparative compensation data can help level the conversation about compensation to realistic boundaries. Education, awareness, and preparation about compensation issues are the best ways to stay ahead of the curve. No one wants to lose the best candidate because he doesn't have the best data.