

Spotting Danger Signs

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Scott Love is a leading expert and authority in the executive search industry. He writes a monthly column in the Forgyce Letter, has been quoted in the Wall Street Journal and Selling Power Magazine, and is the author of 'The Recruiter's Adventure Book! How to Find Buried Treasure in the World of Recruiting'. Scott has spoken to nearly every major industry group and is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

About This Segment

Spotting the Danger Signs to detect future problems with Clients and Candidates is key to the success of your recruiting business. In this content-rich session from industry expert and trainer Scott Love, you'll learn to ask the right questions, the right *kind* of questions and how to use follow through dialogue to gain commitment from clients and candidates.

Week 1 Meeting: “Spotting Danger Signs” by Scott Love

If you are reviewing this episode with a team, break this episode into two different segments – Part 1 and Part 2 (already broken into two different episodes on the site). Week 1's suggested viewing schedule and exercises are below.

Facilitator: (Begin the video, and watch through the end of Part 1: (25:10)) Scott spends the first few minutes of this video talking about using the “tells” from a candidate to predict future behavior. Although we don't necessarily like the concept of equating our business to that of gambling, it is just that – especially in the initial stages of investing your time in the unknown placement. Before we break down the five areas that Scott covered, let's talk first about what he mentioned first – the issue of the ‘never received resume’. How many of us have been to the verge of stalking a prospective candidate for the sole purpose of getting that resume that they continue to promise to send?

Instead of continuing to call and receive a constantly pushed-back deadline, consider using an alternate choice close. *“(Name), I've found that typically when someone delays in sending me their resume, it's usually either because they got a raise/promotion since we last spoke, or they are concerned that sending their resume equated to resigning from their company and were not sure they wanted to take that step. Would you put yourself in either of those camps?”*

Most candidates will pick the second option, or offer up their true resistance. This gives you an opportunity to separate yourself from other recruiters who simply continue to call and ask for the resume. What other approaches do you think would work for your industry/organization?

(Group discussion)

Facilitator: Scott covers five critical areas to spot danger signs early on in the candidate recruitment process. Thoroughly understanding **the Candidate's Background**, understanding his/her **Uniqueness and Value**, knowing his/her **Saleability**, setting **Mutual Expectations**, and asking for **Exclusivity** are all key components in the recruitment process. Let's break down a few of these. First, let's dig a little further into determining Uniqueness and Value. Scott starts with tossing out a few possible questions – what are others that work for your style or industry? How can you work these into your candidate evaluation calls?

Scott's questions for understanding the Candidate's Uniqueness and Value:

- Why is that significant?
- Why are you unique?
- I see this one point on your resume – what's the significance of that?
- What do you think are the three primary reasons someone would hire you?
- Let's say I present you to my client. If they ask me "what's so special about this candidate" – what are three things you want them to know about you?
- If I observed you in action, what are some things that I would see in your performance that I would come to the same conclusions? (that you are a good leader, or very organized, or a critical thinker...)
- What others would work for you?

Remember that the most important thing you can give your clients are **results** – not **descriptions**. Be able to create 'proof statements' for any soft skill that you candidate claims to possess.

Next, let's talk about **Candidate Saleability**. Scott's definition of this is the art of knowing what the problems are within your clients and knowing how to show that **your candidate** can solve those problems. Let's use some real life examples – think about the primary search you are working on currently. Can you articulate the critical problems that they are facing right now? Are those truly the critical, underlying problems or the obvious face-value problems? How does, say, one candidate solve those problems over the next candidate?

(Group discussion)

Scott also covers the importance of setting **Candidate Expectations**. How do you do this on each phone call? Scott's example script is below – how can you adjust to use in your practice?

From this point on, my job is to facilitate this process of discovery between you and my client. What we're going to do is go through a series of steps and meetings and if at any point you're not interested in going forward, I'm okay with that. I need to have commitment from you to communicating with me honestly on that. In terms of you and me working together, my role is to facilitate the process of discovery. What you can expect from me is honesty and communication as we go through this. If you aren't a fit for my client, I'll tell you that. If there are things I see that you can do help you in your career, I'll share those with you. If at any time I get feedback from my client, I'm going to call you and give you candid feedback. All I ask in return are two things: honesty from you and communication from you. If at any time you aren't interested, I need you to feel comfortable communicating with me in a timely manner. Does that make sense? Are you okay with that?

Besides honesty and communication, are there other things that should be covered when setting mutual expectations? What else can a candidate expect from you?

- Timely feedback for changes on their resume
- Dealing with the direct decision maker
- Complete prep for any initial meetings
- Fair offer negotiation and insights
- What else?

What else will you expect from a candidate?

- Full disclosure on other interviews/recruiters
- References/List of target companies
- What else?

Last, let's talk about asking for **Exclusivity**. Each firm handles this differently – some use it as a SOP, and others might never ask. If you've ever been burned while making marketing calls on behalf of a candidate, consider more strongly asking for Exclusivity. Most candidates have no issue at all as long as they understand there is a timeframe involved. You aren't asking for a lifetime of hand-off – you are simply asking for some courtesy as you spend time working on this individual's behalf. Scott's example script is below – how can you adjust to use in your practice?

Let me tell you how I work and what I can do for you. Once we spend some time together to get your key selling points down, I'm going to conduct extensive research on possible opportunities. I'm going to use my firm's database to uncover hidden opportunities that nobody else knows about. I'm going to use my firm's reputation and existing relationships to help you get in the door. I'm going to bypass human resources where everyone else is and take you straight to the head of the line – to the real decision makers - overcoming any objections that they might have. I'm going to encourage them to meet you, even if they don't have any openings. Bottom line is that I am going to showcase your value to them. Once we go forward, if you get to offer stage, I'll have the chance to negotiate something that works for both you and my client. And I'll get to find out what that offer is before it gets to you to make sure it works for you. What I'm asking in order to successfully do this is for you to work with me and only me for a few weeks – if I hear about an opportunity, I'll tell you about it. If you hear about an opportunity, tell me about it. If you get a call from another recruiter, tell them you are already working with someone - that way I know that I can dig deep in doing whatever it takes to get you a position you're excited about. If in a couple of weeks you aren't satisfied with where we are at, I give you full permission to work with anyone and everyone who exists. Does that make sense? Are you okay with that?

Week 2 Meeting: “Spotting Danger Signs” by Scott Love

If you are reviewing this episode with a team, break this episode into two different segments – Part 1 and Part 2 (already broken into two different episodes on the site).

Week 2's suggested viewing schedule and exercises are below.

Facilitator: (Begin the video, and watch through the end of Part 2: (18:41)) Scott continues with his discussion in the first segment about how to spot danger signs with candidates. His first series of questions revolve around the initial qualification of a candidate. Are there any other questions that will allow you to uncover possible red flags?

- What have you done so far in your job search?
- Where else have you interviewed?
- What's the status of those interviews?
- Are there any offers that are pending or you think will be extended soon?
- Is there anything that would prohibit you from making a move in the next 30-60 days?
- Is there anything else that we haven't yet talked about that is important to you?



Facilitator: Scott also expressed his views on covering the counter-offer throughout the process. He covers either before the first interview or after the first interview. Let's talk about other times in the process that we could cover the counter-offer, and how to do so in a consultative manner.

On the first phone call:

- When others resign from your company, what does that usually look like? Do they usually give them a box to pack up their stuff, or have you noticed more of a red carpet being rolled out?
- I know that staying for a raise or bonus makes sense financially, but think of how that looks to your employer. I don't want to put you in a situation of permanent career damage when all you really want is a pay raise. If that's the case, I can certainly tell you what to say to get a raise! Does that make sense?

Prior to the first interview:

- Have you ever resigned at this company before? What was happening then that caused you to want to leave? What changed?

After the first interview:

- Who specifically do you resign to? What is your relationship like with that person? What is it going to look like and feel like when you resign?
- When you turn your notice in, how do you think they are going to respond? How would you respond to how they respond?
- Can you imagine yourself seeing a new receptionist every day? Think of the people you've gone to lunch with each week for the last # of years – can you picture not going to those lunches anymore? What about taking a completely different commute with a different Starbucks, different gas station, and different McDonald's?

Prior to offer:

- Let me ask you – do you want the job?
- If so, I need to have a candidate conversation with you about what my client needs to offer in order for you to accept – if that's what you want this outcome to be. I am going to fight to get you the best offer possible, but make sure you don't go in overpaid enough that you now have a target on your back.
- You want this to be a quick process once the offer is extended - it shows them you are decisive and you can make important decisions quickly. It shows them you are excited to be on the team.
- Does that make sense to you? Do you feel comfortable with this process?

What other questions can we add to the process above? (*Group discussion*)

Facilitator: Scott switched from the candidate side to the client side of the process, and identified some possible areas to spot some danger signs early on in the process. The "Solid Search Assignments" in the Next Level Library has over 100 questions we can ask to take an effective Needs Analysis Profile, but let's talk specifically about gauging what's been done so far on the search. Below is some example opening dialogue and questions that can be used – what else would work for you and your team?

*Before I get started on this search, I don't want to duplicate any efforts that have been done thus far. In order for me to know how to proceed with my **search** process, I need to know where you are currently in your **hiring** process.*

- How long has this position been open?
 - Why do you feel your prior efforts have not produced the desired results?
- What sources are you utilizing to fill this position?
 - **OR** How have you attempted to fill this position?
- How many interviews have already been conducted for this position? Who did you interview?
 - Who internally have you considered?
 - What candidates are currently in process?
- How many offers have you extended that were rejected? Why?
- Do you know how much of the market has been penetrated at this point? Has it primarily been the active marketplace or the passive marketplace?
- Have you used other search firms on this position?
 - What has worked? What didn't?
 - What criteria did/do you use in determining which search firm could best represent you in the market?
 - How many calls were made on your behalf last week by recruiters? Do you know? Why not?
 - Have other firms used your name in the marketplace or have they kept the details confidential?
- Have you ever engaged (on this search or on past searches) in a dedicated search with a search firm? What was your experience?
- If other recruiters (internally or externally) have already searched on this position without surfacing the right candidates, what do I need to do differently to ensure a different result?
- Why do you feel your efforts haven't produced the desired results?
- How do you ensure quality control with your hires? Do you have a plan to identify and land the elite?
- What else are you doing to fill this position through all sources? What else have we not yet talked about?

Facilitator: Just as we set Mutual Expectations for the Candidate, we need to do so for the client as well. Scott's suggested script:

"Anytime you leave a message for me, I'll call you back within 24 hours. Reason being is because I'll have a candidate that has a window of opportunity, and that window might close on us. It's important for you and I to know that if we ever leave a message for each other, the window we've allowed is no longer than that in order to not have that window close. That being said, the only time from here on out that I will ever leave you a message is for one of two reasons - #1 I have a candidate who is interested or #2 I have a candidate who needs more information because he may be interested in your opportunity. Does that make sense to you?"

In terms of offer when we get to that point - I'm going to find out what the candidate's expectations are and I'd like to share that with you. I'd like to have the chance to test that offer with the candidate – either the candidate gets that offer and they don't receive it, or we don't let the offer go forward. If we don't know that the candidate will accept it or not, we've lost control of the whole process. I'm coaching them to accept the offer the day they get it. Are you okay with this process?"



Below is some additional dialogue and questions taken from the Library of the Next Level Exchange to assist you in continuing to set Mutual Expectations with the Client.

Based on what you've shared with me, I think we're in a very good position to help you fill this opportunity. I've got a great understanding of what you are looking for and offering, and I think that you've got a strong platform to land the caliber of candidate you're targeting. I'd like to talk about what you can expect from us moving forward, and what I'll expect from you.

- **What you can count on from me**
 - Dedicate sufficient time to generate quality candidates in timely manner.
 - Create a detailed position profile, presentation, and search plan that can be reviewed.
 - Pre-qualify all candidates by phone/in person before presentation to you.
 - Provide detailed information on skills and background as well as motive for considering change and needs.
 - Share accountability for interviews and make you aware of any time constraints, candidate perspectives and coordinate the visit.
 - Prepare you thoroughly for each interview with additional specifics on each candidate and cover any issues needed.
 - Provide detailed feedback from candidate and act as your agent to navigate through any issues faced.
 - Give you a regular status report with detailed progress and market feedback.
 - Answer calls and e-mails with 24-48 hours unless in crunch time and then sooner, or I will give you my phone number, cell, email, and all contact info so you can hunt me down when needed sooner.
 - Act as your agent to secure a candidate you want to hire.
 - Work extensively with you and the candidate through the offer, acceptance, resignation, possible counter offer and transition.
 - Maintain strict confidentiality with any information you share in confidence.

- **What I need from you**
 - Exclusivity/financial commitment (we will cover this in greater detail Establishing the Proper Service Charge and Terms)
 - Share all information in a timely manner relevant to the search (changes, new people, time frames, etc)
 - Timeliness of response of calls and e-mails (24-48 hours) and less when needed
 - Know your interview availability a few weeks in advance and access to someone that can schedule your time
 - Willingness to continue interviewing even when you find one candidate that you like
 - Immediate decision on interview ("go/no go") after being presented the resume, or within 24-72 hours of resume review
 - Set time for our interview preparation call
 - Set time for post-interview debrief call
 - Preliminary estimate of offer before interview
 - Route all other candidates through me in overall effort to produce best possible candidate with me as sole filter
 - Access to all decision makers
 - Decision on go/no go and offer within (# of hours/days) after final interview

- How hard should I push if I see you making what I feel could be a 'mistake' while we are working together?