

Closing the Deal

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About This Segment

In Scott's presentation, entitled "Closing the Deal", you'll learn a complete, step-by-step closing process for successful matches between a candidate and client. This comprehensive process includes how to get client offers accepted, how to eliminate counteroffers, and how to follow up with candidates once they've joined their new organization.

Week 1 Meeting: "Closing the Deal" 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: (24:39)) Using the structure of the closing process that Scott has provided, let's customize further to create a systemic method of brokering the offer between the candidate and client. The first step is to take the time to make steps! The later stages of the placement process tend to be the stages that are "winged" the most, so taking the time to think through all of the "why's" and "how's" will certainly increase your chances of a successful placement.

First and foremost, it's important to pick up on something that Scott said several times throughout the episode. "Ultimately, people are going to do whatever is in their own best interests." What does that mean for us, as recruiters? That we need to make sure that above all else, we are putting the candidate in a situation that is, in fact, in their best interest! The same holds true on the client side as well. It's reasonable for candidates and clients to be selfish with this type of decision; it's an important one, so make sure you keep *their* best interests above *yours*.

Step One: Prep the Client. Ask yourself, or discuss as a group, the following questions:

- What's in it for the client to use a recruiter as a "middleman" for the extension of the offer?
- What fears, or hesitations, would the client have with allowing you to have access to this information? How do you address those (sometimes valid) fears?
- How do you continue to align ourselves with our client, making sure that they know our objectives are the same, without sounding like you are just trying to "close the deal?"

Create your script for preparing the client in the early stages of the process for this conversation. Use Scott's as a template if it's a helpful starting point:

“Once we get to the very end of the interviewing process, you will have thoroughly screened viable individuals and will have one that you want to move forward with. When you are ready to extend an offer, I’m going to have the chance to find out from the candidate what that candidate will accept. What I will need from you to do this is what the offer is going to be, and I’ll test it with the candidate to make sure that your formal offer is the offer that will be accepted. Does that make sense to you? Are you okay with that?”

Step Two: Prep the Candidate. Ask yourself, or discuss as a group, the following questions:

- What are the benefits a candidate will experience when using a recruiter as the “middleman” for the formulation of an offer from the client?
- What are the (many times unspoken) fears that a candidate will have in sharing this information with you? Are those fears valid? How do you create an opportunity to openly discuss those hesitations with the candidate?
- How do you continue to build rapport and trust with the candidate, making them feel comfortable with your motives, without sounding like we are trying to push them through the interviewing process?

Like you did above, create your script for preparing the candidate in the early stages of the process for this conversation. Use Scott's as a template if it's a helpful starting point:

“Once we get to the point of talking about money and an offer, I want to share with you what my role is going to be. Once you and my client decide that this is absolutely the right fit and they want to make you an offer, I am going to have the chance to find out what that offer will be. I will share that with you and make sure it's the offer that you want; that way, when you get the offer and it's official, you already know what it was and you have the confidence to accept the day it is extended. This does two things for you. One, it shows your new employer that you are decisive and can make important decisions quickly. Two, it shows them that you are excited about coming on board. Does that make sense to you? Are you okay with that?”

With both scripts, remember what Scott mentioned about the two questions he closes with. People naturally want to honor the commitments that they make to others, even if it starts verbally. Scott's message is clear – if he can get a verbal commitment, the odds are greater for future compliance. How can you incorporate that into your conversations at each step of the placement process?

Step 3: Monitor the Interest Level. Have an arsenal of questions you can ask to judge interest at every step along the way. Use the ones below as a starting point to create ones that work for your style and industry: (replicate on the client side as well)

- How does this candidate compare to others in process?
- On a scale of 1 – 10, how interested are you in this opportunity now that you've talked with them?
- The others involved in this decision – how do they feel about this change?
- Is there anything that would keep you from moving forward in the next few weeks?
- How does this new position allow you to grow compared to your current situation? What concerns do you have about the role or expectations?
- Has anything changed since we spoke last?

Step 4: Test the Offer. On both sides, test the offer but make sure that you have a complete understanding of all areas of compensation – both where the candidate is currently and what the client offers. If you need a complete tool, review the Candidate Compensation Worksheet in Module 18 of the Rookie Training Program. This grid includes all of the miscellaneous, but important, areas of compensation. Remember that the total compensation package can be both a deal-maker and a deal-breaker. Possibly knowing that the offer is lower than expected, but there is an increased monthly vehicle allowance, or a new profit sharing program that they haven't had at their current company, or perhaps a drastically less expensive out-of-pocket cost for monthly health insurance will help bridge the gap. However, if you know that your client's monthly vehicle allowance is significantly *less* than where the candidate is currently, or if the monthly out-of-pocket cost for health insurance is dramatically *more* at your client company, make sure you are aware of those differences. Make sure you don't make the mistake of negotiating an offer, testing the offer, and then finding out about the massive difference in an area of compensation outside of the base salary.

Use Scott's script to create your own:

"Candidate, I've got the offer here and I want to share it with you so you and (whoever is involved in the decision process) can talk about it tonight. Who else at home are you going to talk this through with? (Once you've shared the offer), how do you feel about that? What is your initial impression? I will call you in the morning and present you with their formal offer, because I know it's coming, but I understand you will need time to think and process. What I'm asking you to do is to use this time as that time since we know that the offer I just shared with you is the offer they are going to extend. Does that sound fair?"

Remember to mitigate risk for all parties! If there is difference between the offer and the desired offer, use the inducement technique that Scott refers to in this segment. With this technique, you are leveraging the request from your candidate as an incentive for the client to make this final concession – or vice versa. As an example:

"If I can get you \$85,000, are you telling me you would accept it? I need to get your word that if the hiring manager goes to bat for you, and does what I tell him/her to do, that you aren't even thinking about doing anything other than being ready and excited to join their team. I'm not saying I can secure you \$85,000. However, if I try, I want to get your word that you aren't even thinking about taking a counteroffer, and I also want you to send me an email with the date that you will turn your notice in and date you will start. If I can get those two things for you, I'll go to my client and tell them that they need to give you \$85,000. Does that sound fair?"

Step 5: Present the Offer and Confirm Acceptance. In most circumstances, you will have the ability to present the offer to the candidate directly. Ask yourself, or discuss as a group, the following questions:

- What are the benefits to a client to have you extend the offer, instead of them? In what circumstances does it make more sense for the client to extend the offer directly?
- What fears does a client have with you extending the offer? How do you address and resolve those fears?

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). For homework between the two meetings, have each associate record phone calls and review based on Scott’s feedback and suggestions.

Week 2 Meeting: “Closing the Deal” 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.

The list that Scott provides of the warning signs of a counteroffer and the dangers of a counteroffer are helpful ones, but how do you present them in a way that still comes across as being in this for the best interest of the candidate? The issue is this – your candidates know why you are covering the counteroffer. Your candidates know that you earn a living by them going to work for your client, and they know that if they stay where they are, the time you’ve invested in them has earned you little or nothing. Because of all this knowledge your candidates have of your vested interest in the outcome of their decision, you are not the most credible source to be dispensing advice if you don’t deliver it the right way and from the right place.

Of the warning signs and the dangers of a counteroffer, select the top four that you want to make sure you cover with each candidate. The list may vary from situation to situation, but how can you cover the most important areas with each candidate, without sounding like you are trying to save your placement?

Use Scott’s example from the video:

“Although it’s against their policy, I will go out on a limb and tell you that they will change policy for someone like you. If something is able to be changed, they will change it for you – but you are no longer in the circle of trust and I don’t want that on my conscience. It is better for you in the long run, I promise you, if you go in and openly discuss now what you need from them. If they make these changes, they would have made them when you went in to resign – but now you are associated with being a proactive leader rather than a disloyal employee. Does that make sense? Are you open to going in and having that conversation first, before we continue in this process?”

How can you present the critical discussion points below, in a way that the candidate understands *what’s in it for them*?

The Eleven Warning Signs of a Counteroffer

1. The candidate says he doesn’t believe his company will give him a counteroffer.
2. The candidate says he will have to consider the counter if it is given to him.
3. The candidate’s motive to move (“*I don’t like our policies here*”) could still be solved by his employer when he leaves.
4. The time it takes for a candidate to return your call is longer than normal.
5. The candidate agrees to accept the offer, then asks for ‘one more thing’ after he gets what he’s asking for.

The Eleven Warning Signs of a Counteroffer (continued)

6. The feelings of the candidate's spouse are never considered during this process.
7. Your client doesn't think meeting with him after he accepted the offer is important.
8. The candidate was never really sure about making a move to begin with.
9. The candidate has accepted a counteroffer before with his current employer.
10. The candidate will not commit to turning down a counteroffer with you when you are extending the offer.
11. The candidate verbally expresses concern about "what will happen if I make a move and the economy gets worse?"

The 8 Dangers of Accepting a Counteroffer

1. Your loyalty will always be in question.
2. Your employer will know you were out talking with companies on company-time.
3. Do you really want to work for a company who will only get what you need when you threaten to leave?
4. How important is personal integrity to you? Then once you give your word, does that mean it won't change? How do you feel about people who don't honor their word?
5. It never works out when candidates take a counteroffer and stay with their company. I've seen candidates who think they're going to use this as a big pay day, but in the end they end up getting burned because their company doesn't trust them. Does that make sense, Jim?
6. Can you understand why I just want to make sure you'll be able to fight off anything like that?
7. I would hate to have it in my conscience that I put you in a situation of permanent career damage if you really just wanted to stay there.
8. So if you're doing this just to get a raise, let's not go forward. I can present some of the other candidates to my client and I can tell you what you can say to get a raise without them knowing you have been talking with other companies.

Preparing for the Counteroffer Conversation: Use Scott's three types of counteroffers to build your scripts to preparing candidates for similar situations. Even if the candidate does not encounter each of these, they will feel more prepared and less apprehensive about this impending event!

Situation #1: They will accept your offer!

"Here's what is going to happen; they will accept your offer - just like all well-managed companies do. Well-managed companies know that every employee is a temporary employee and that trying to talk a grown-up out of an intelligent life decision isn't just an insult to that person's intelligence, it's a disrespectful and selfish move. But I'm sure your company isn't like that. They probably will just accept your notice, have a good and thorough turnover with you, and throw a party for you on your last day. Well-managed companies always know that their best recruiting ground is the alumni network of former employees and that trying to manipulate someone during their last few days is a futile attempt on trying to control someone who's really in control of their career."

Situation #2: Pack your bags. You're going on a guilt trip!

"They can try to guilt-trip you into it. They might say things like:

- *How could you do this to me, after all I've done for you? I'm really disappointed in you.*

- *How could you do this to the team? You'll be letting them down.*
- *How could you do this to the company, especially right now when we need you the most?*

Understand that your boss is only human and is reacting to very bad news that affects him personally. He'll get over it with time and everything will be back to normal soon. Everyone is replaceable. When he starts doing this, just keep focusing on the turnover. Say something like, 'Joe, my decision is final and we need to focus on the turnover. When would you like to start?'

If he still keeps trying to guilt-trip you into it, keep bringing up the turnover. If he starts getting vindictive and emotional, say, 'Let me give you twenty minutes and I'll come back and we can start the turnover process.'

Remember that this is like the shot you used to get when you were a kid. The drive to the doctor's office is always worse than the shot. It's a quick meeting and once it's over, you won't feel the anxiety anymore. You'll feel the burden lifted off your shoulder as you start a new chapter of your life."

Situation #3: They will selfishly try to talk you out of it.

"They can selfishly try to talk you out of it. They'll try to say things like:

- *Before you make this official, let me talk with management and see what we can do to keep you here.*
- *Before you make your decision, why don't we try to see if we can work this out?*
- *Why don't we just forget about the whole thing and pretend that it never happened. What can we do to keep you here? You're a very important person to our company.*
- *Why don't we just talk about how I/we can change to keep you here?*
- *Can you tell me why you decided to leave? Where are you going to go?*

Scott provides additional suggestions to share with your candidate, or scripts to give them to help them think through how to address some of the likely responses they will receive when going in to resign.

- Remember that companies never change based upon the conversation given at someone's resignation meeting. You don't have to tell them where you are going or why you are leaving. If they keep pressing you, tell them that you'll send them an email in a few weeks with your new contact information. If you tell them where you are going, it could open it up to competitor-bashing and that could make the meeting take an unprofessional turn.
- Remember that keeping you there is what they see as a temporary solution to a permanent problem, and you'll be the one who ends up disappointed in a few months once they find your replacement. When you tell your employer that you're leaving, it means that you've been talking with competitors on company time, so your trust is always going to be in question. When it comes to you and

someone else considered for a promotion, it won't be you. Why should they promote someone whose loyalty is questionable? That's why you need to be firm, and remember that this is your meeting and you are the one in control of your career, not your employer.

- If pushed back repeatedly: *“Joe, listen, I’ve already turned my notice in and I’d hate to have to reject you again. I respect you too much for that. Instead, I need for you to accept my resignation and start focusing on the turnover because we don’t have much time.”*
- If they continue to press: *“Listen, I’ve already made a career decision to join another company and have given you the professional courtesy of a two-week notice. If you choose not to accept my resignation and say one more word about me staying, I will leave immediately. It’s your choice. When do you want to start talking about the turnover?”*

Remember to close with questions to truly open the conversation up for any concerns or hesitations or fears the candidate still has.

- Are you okay with all of this?
- How do you feel?
- When are you going to talk to your boss? I'll check in with you later that day just to make sure you're doing okay.
- Do you have any questions?

The Resignation Letter: Provide examples for your candidate. A couple are below, and it will help the candidate feel slightly more comfortable with this process. Remember to coach them to keep it simple, keep it vague, keep it unapologetic, and keep it controlled.

Dear John,

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that as of (date), I will no longer be employed with (company).

I appreciate all of the experiences I have had with (company) and I wish you the best of luck in your future.

Sincerely,

Dear John,

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of my resignation from my current position as (title) with (company). My last day of work will be (date).

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to you as my manager, and I wish you and (company) much continued success.

Please understand that I am not in a position to consider an alternative offer from (company), since my decision to resign is final.

Please let me know how I can be of assistance in helping make this a smooth transition.

Sincerely,