



6 Tried and Tested Closing Techniques for Recruiters

The phrase 'closing techniques' probably brings to mind the worst possible recruiter stereotype. Bad suits and slicked back hair, gobby salesmen channeling their inner Glengarry Glen Ross or Wolf of Wall Street.

Sales needn't be sinister though.

Whichever way you look at it, recruitment is sales. Particularly today, in a highly competitive candidate-driven market, *not* being able to sell will see your acceptance rates plummet.

Closing techniques aren't about manipulation; they're about conveying the truth in the most persuasive way. They're about giving yourself the best possible chance to secure a hire.

They're not some magic formula. Rather, good recruitment is about identifying your candidate's needs then finding a way to meet those needs.

I sometimes think of recruitment as being like baking a cake. You've got all these different variables laid out on your countertop, and what comes out of the oven depends on how you combine them. Closing techniques are the icing on the cake. If the cake's a soggy, deflated mess, there's no amount of icing that can turn it around.

Anyway, I digress. My point is this: don't shy away from learning 'sales' techniques because of the negative connotation. The more you have in your arsenal, the better placed you are to secure top talent.

1. Always Be Closing

In my recruitment days, we were always taught that you should know before you present the offer whether the candidate would accept it. This gets at a critical point: [closing isn't something you do just at the end of the process.](#)

While the slogan 'Always Be Closing' definitely has a bad connotation, it simply refers to this idea. It's not about being brash or bullish, but about constantly checking in with your candidate, putting the feelers out and being receptive to their emotional landscape.

One good practice is to ask your candidates, *"if we were to make you an offer today, how would you feel about that?"* There are various ways to phrase the question but the principle is the same - you're aiming to understand where your candidate's head is at throughout the recruitment process. Get into the habit of asking regularly because the earlier the better.

2. The Yes, Yes, Yes Close

This closing technique works on the principle of building positive affirmation, and it's [a well-known and proven sales tactic.](#) The idea is to get your candidate into the habit of saying yes, starting with 'easy' questions and becoming increasingly specific until you 'make the sale.'



Every 'yes' helps the candidate feel more positive about you and your relationship, which in turn helps them feel positive about the final offer. Recruiters should get into the habit of securing yes answers from their candidates on every call, to build up this positivity and increase the likelihood the candidate will view the offer in a positive light when it comes.

It's not about what they're saying yes to, but the fact that they're saying it. These are the sorts of questions you could ask:

- 'You're at home today, aren't you?'
- 'Didn't you have another interview yesterday?'
- You met with COMPANY on Wednesday, right?'
- 'You loved Claire when you met, didn't you?'
- 'It was their mentorship scheme you were excited by, wasn't it?'

An important note – it's not about *leading* the candidate. Rather, it's about feeding back things *you already know they think* and getting their confirmation.

3. Don't Sell To Them, Get Them To Sell To Themselves

It's much more effective to ask the candidate to sell to themselves than it is you trying to sell them. A great salesperson isn't great because they manipulative, trick, convince or compel you to do something you don't want to do. They're great because they facilitate your realization that you want to do *that*.

Ask questions like:

- "Remind me, what do you love most about this job?"
- "What five things stand out about this opportunity?"
- "Why is this job perfect for you?"
- "Why do you think this opportunity is such a good fit?"

That's why I say closing is only the icing – if your opportunity *isn't* right for the candidate, you can't (and shouldn't) convince them otherwise. Good sales are about helping them realize that your solution is a good fit- if it isn't, you're doing the wrong job.

4. Build Anticipation

The first time I got an offer through for a candidate, I made the cardinal recruiting sin. Bubbling over with excitement (and completely ignoring my manager) I called my candidate to tell them. The conversation went like this:

Me (can barely contain excitement): "Harry! I have some amazing news. You're going to be so pleased! I've just got off the phone with COMPANY and they're going to make you an offer!"

Candidate: 'Oh. OK. Thanks, that's great. How long do I have to make a decision?' *Me (confused):* "..."



He accepted elsewhere in the end. This candidate had been biting my arm off for feedback, interviews, follow-up and the like- I just couldn't understand what had happened. I went on to recruit another day, but I'll always remember the sting of that first proper rejection.

What did I do wrong? It's basic psychology – I made the offer seem 'easy', instantly attainable and therefore less desirable. Instead of making a fair decision on which company was best for him, my candidate was swayed by how the other company made him feel – special, unique and lucky.

Here's how it should have gone:

Me (with offer in hand): "Hi Harry! I spoke to COMPANY this morning and they're minded to make final decisions today. You're up against one other candidate at this stage – I know they wish they could hire you both, but sadly they can't. He's got a couple more years' experience than you, but I know they loved meeting you and felt you'd really fit into the team. I'm going to call them at 12 and emphasize one more time why they should choose you. What should I say?"

By throwing the ball back into the candidate's court, you're setting up the psychology that the offer is competitive, desirable, and far from a done deal, and you're asking the candidate to sell themselves, as above.

5. Test Close

The most important rule of closing has to be this: *don't rush into it*. Once you receive an offer, you should always test-close your candidate before presenting it. This gives you a final opportunity to tackle any objections.

Your aim should always be to get your candidates to accept first time around; the moment you present the offer the dynamic shifts and it makes it ten times harder to close, even if you are presenting an offer they'd have leapt at before.

Get their commitment to accept on every aspect of the offer before you officially present it to them. That means salary, bonuses, flexi-time, hours, holiday time, team – everything:

"I know if they do make you an offer, their standard contract is for two weeks paid holiday. Would you accept that?"

"If they made you an offer of \$XYZ, would you accept?"

An important note on salary: always create a cushion. If you know the offer will be \$50,000, close the candidate on \$45,000, for example. The idea of this is to build candidate excitement when you do release the offer - so they're thrilled to accept immediately.

It's also critical to pre-empt any objections at this stage. Questions like *"What could prevent you accepting an offer?"* help you better understand the candidate's decision making process, and forewarned is forearmed.

6. Manage Their Resignation

An offer acceptance should never be the end of your close. Between accepting and starting, there's a whole minefield of things that could go wrong – not least, the resignation.

I used to send candidates a document I'd created from our online recruitment software, walking them through the resignation process and preparing them for the worst (a sizeable counter-offer, guilt tripping, anger, and so on). Role-playing with candidates can really help, and explaining to them *why* accepting a counter-offer is generally such a bad idea.



It's also important to keep in contact with that candidate – not just while they're resigning, but regularly throughout their notice period.

One fairly junior candidate I was working with had a three-month notice period. I was worried about her buy-in over that time, so I worked with the company in question to set up bi-weekly Skype calls with her and her new team to create a sense of integration and accountability.

Those are the sorts of things recruiters should be looking at; your job isn't over until the candidate's started, integrated, and loving the new company. That's why recruiters have rebate periods and HR managers have quality of hire metrics. Getting bums on seats is the first challenge, not the last.

Ultimately, no closing technique is good enough to close a candidate who doesn't want to be closed. If you 'trick' a candidate into accepting an offer that isn't right for them, you'll only be in trouble in the long haul (they'll likely be disengaged, disillusioned, disloyal, and ultimately leave).

Effective closing isn't about manipulation – rather it's about helping the candidate see more clearly which path is right for them, about removing obstacles that obscure the right path (a guilt-tripping boss, for example). If you've done your job right, you're only making them an offer because this opportunity is the best possible fit on all sides: closing techniques help you help them see that.

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