

HOW TO USE A SURVEY AS A MARKETING TOOL

Are you making the same marketing calls to prospects that you've made for years? If all recruiters call and say, "We will find you the best candidates," the phrase starts to lose relevance in the client's mind because they have heard it so many times. Put yourself in your clients' shoes; they are getting loads of calls from your peers, who are saying very similar things, and they have less time to evaluate recruiters than they had in the past.

So the question for the smart recruiter becomes ***"How can I engage this hiring authority in a conversation where they see me as a human being and a solution provider rather than just another salesperson?"***

Many retained firms diligently work to position themselves well in the minds of their potential clients before they ever make a sales call. This is a relationship-building method as opposed to a transactional sales method. It takes more time, but it builds more loyalty and profitable referrals over the long haul. Referrals are the very best marketing method that a consultant can develop, and these come only through a relationship built on trust.

The survey as a marketing call:

One way to build trust with high-level people is to ask for their participation in a survey or interview for an article that you are writing. What are the trade journals and publications that your target market reads? Contact those publications and tell them that you are thinking of writing an article on a topic of interest (current hiring trends, management's perceptions of recruiters, etc.) and ask if they would be interested.

Most will say yes, as you are an expert in your specialty area and they are usually eager to get outside material. If you cannot get a response from your industry publications, try writing for a recruiting publication on a topic such as "What our clients really think of us." Between print, online publications, newsletters, and e-zines, finding a place to accept your article will not be difficult.

Once you have decided on a venue for your article, you then want to construct a brief presentation and questions for your target contacts. Your contacts should be high-level hiring authorities with whom you want to do business. The call needs to be sincere in that you are actually doing research for your article, but on the other hand, you are also engaging in a business conversation (rather than a sales conversation) with somebody that you want to build a relationship with.

The Initial Call:

Start the conversation by introducing yourself and saying, "I'm not calling to do business with you but rather to see if you would be able to share some knowledge about ____ for an article that I am writing. We would probably need about 10 minutes." This way, you take the pressure off them (and you) and also set an expectation for how long it will take. You can ask if they are available now or if they would prefer to schedule another time.

At this point, many hiring authorities would ask, “Who are you writing the article for and when does it come out?” It is important that you have done your homework and can answer this question. Once you have permission to go ahead with the call, you are then able to demonstrate your professionalism to this potential client in a nonthreatening environment.

The best selling takes place by asking excellent questions. You are judged by the quality of your questions. If you ask an intelligent question, you are perceived to be intelligent; if you ask a mediocre question, you are seen as mediocre. Be sure to stay within the time frame that you stated initially, or if you are going to run over, to acknowledge it and ask if he has time to continue. This demonstrates, in a subtle way, that you can be trusted to deliver on what you promise.

Here is a sample script that you could use with a potential client:

“The reason for my call today is that I’m going to be writing an article for _____ on _____, and I’m conducting a brief survey with a select group of people who I thought may be able to shed some light on the subject. If you could grant me about 10 minutes of your focus to answer a couple of questions, it would be very helpful. Are you able to do that now?”

- 1. What methods do you typically use to locate exceptional staff?*
- 2. What have been your toughest challenges with either finding or retaining employees?*
- 3. For what percentage of your searches do you use retained vs. contingent?*
- 4. How would you describe your level of satisfaction with each?*
- 5. How has the current economic climate affected your business?*
- 6. What innovative ways have you found to reward your staff or inspire greater loyalty?*
- 7. How do you define excellence in your team’s performance?”*

When you finish the interview, be sure to thank them, and engage in any business-related discussion to which they might be receptive. Offer to be a resource by stating something like the following:

“Feel free to call if you need to keep a pulse on what the market looks like for certain skill sets or if you would like us to research salary comparisons for your current staff. I provide this for my clients at no charge and would be happy to do this for you as well. I will contact you when the article comes out and will get a copy to you.”

This builds rapport and trust and opens the door for future conversations.

The Follow-Up Call:

You now have the perfect follow-up method, which is to contact them when the article comes out and to send them a copy. You may even quote them in the article if it makes sense (people LOVE this). Premeditated follow-up is the most important part of this method. During the follow-up call you can move toward more of a sales question by asking, "Are there any types of candidates that you'd like me to keep an eye open for in the next 90 days?"

Send the client other articles that you have come across that may be of interest to them, and stay in touch regularly. There are many other back-door methods that you can use besides a survey; the point is to give yourself as many options as possible to position yourself well in the mind of your potential client. When there is an opening, you want to be seen as a trusted ally that they will call on first to offer an exclusive contract.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

*Gary Stauble is the Principal Consultant for The Recruiting Lab, a Coaching Company that provides Recruiting Professionals the Training, Tools and Systems to make More Placements with Less Effort. Gary offers several **Free Special Reports** on his website including, "**\$1 Million Time Management**", "15 Critical Candidate Questions" and "The 3 Things that Lead to Placements". Get your copies now at www.therecruitinglab.com.*