

“Why do I need to pay an upfront retainer?”

Rebuttal #1: *“In your world, there are situations that you won’t go into unless there is some mutual commitment. (It could be an initial consultation fee for a physician, it could be the price they charge to sketch the rough plan of a building, it could be travel expenses for an initial meeting, etc. Use your market knowledge to be able to use a relevant situation for your client.) Why is that?”*

“Obviously, there are situations in which you would work without that initial payment upfront. That’s our contingent approach, where there is no mutual commitment upfront – but that’s the key. There isn’t mutual commitment on either end – no risk on yours, but I can’t promise that I will be able to prioritize this search above my other retained clients nor can I commit that I will be actively working on it. There are certainly times when I recommend a contingent approach – this just isn’t one of them based on the critical and urgent nature of this position that you’ve shared with me. Did you need to hold someone accountable to getting this filled?”

Rebuttal #2: *“There are a few reasons why you might engage me to fill this search but then you halt the search – perhaps you go on a hiring freeze, perhaps you need to do some internal reorganization, or other factors outside of our control. Let me break something down for you though – on a typical search, I will dedicate 100% of my time, all day, every day, making calls on your behalf. Let’s say that there are 300 candidates in the market who need to hear your story – that means that if I talk with 75 a week I will be able to contact the entirety of the market within a month (leaving multiple voicemails for the remainder of the candidate pool). I work more than 40 hours a week, but we’ll use that for the example. Four weeks, 40 hours a week, in which I will then short list three of the best candidates, prep them and prep you for the interviews, debrief them and debrief you, continue to work the process to make sure that the one you want to hire is the one that wants to work with you, and so on. Best case scenario it’s six solid weeks of my efforts – for (example) an initial amount of \$5,000 – that breaks down to me taking a risk of earning about \$20 per hour for six weeks of work if you decide to halt your search. I’m open to taking that risk because I know that I can fill this for you and solve your problem – but after becoming an expert in this field, knowing every candidate that exists, and knowing how to get you the right person by the time you need him – anything less than that would really just be pro bono work. Does that sound fair?”*

Rebuttal #3: *“That’s a great question – and I could probably give you the same long-winded answer that probably most recruiters give you. My answer is simply this – because then I know you’re serious. Plain and simple. I’ve been doing this too long and know my world too well to waste time with clients who don’t have a high sense of urgency to have me solve their problem for them. If you’ve ever worked with an attorney, you know that the ones who dominate their worlds are going to charge you to even meet with you in the first place. The ones who are desperate for business will give away their initial services for free. I know what I’m doing, I know how to do it, and I am only going to work with clients who are serious about working with those who will get it done.”*

Rebuttal #4: *“There’s several things that I can guarantee when you engage me to partner with you – I can guarantee my ability to identify and recruit suitable candidates, and to continue to work on your behalf until you tell me to stop. What I can’t guarantee is your decision to hire one of them or not – so obviously I need to be compensated for my efforts if for some unexpected reason you terminate the search or decide not to fill the position. Do you feel that it’s fair and reasonable for me to expect to be compensated, even a slight amount, if I initially follow through on what you hired me to do?”*

Rebuttal #5: *“Fair question. This is purely a deposit towards the total amount, because once we conclude the search (which we will, because in the (# of) years my team has been doing this we have never failed to fill an engaged search), we take 100% of that initial amount and apply it completely towards the search. The reason I’m asking for a financial commitment up front from you is to get just that – it’s a commitment. I’m really just asking you to put some skin in the game. Here’s why - I employ a tactic called open recruiting, which is where I’m going to go out and say ‘I’m actively working on behalf of (their company).’ It’s a completely different approach than most recruiters use, because they too interested in protecting their own interests to ever divulge the name of who they are working with. What kind of candidates do you truly think you can recruit when you are holding back the most important information, which is who they would be working for? I’m going to tell them your story possibly even better than some of your own employees could – but I need to make sure that you are as invested in this as I am. I will not make one call without being able to have full disclosure – it’s candidly a waste of my time and it ruins my credibility with my candidates. That retainer is to make sure you have skin in the game, because I certainly do – sound fair?”*