

ESTABLISHING YOUR ROLE IN THE SELECTION PROCESS

If the role a Recruiter plays in their clients' selection process could be represented on a continuum, the two extremes would vary significantly. On one end of the continuum are those Recruiters who submit resumes to their clients' Human Resource Departments, are subsequently held at arm's length throughout the process, therefore, have minimum impact on the final outcome. At the other end of the continuum are those who have leveraged their role for maximum effectiveness by demonstrating to their clients the benefit of combining resources, establishing mutual commitments, and keeping the Recruiter involved at every point in the agreed upon process.

Where you fit on this continuum is generally determined by the actions you take or fail to take when initially accepting the search/job order. In their haste to fill the position, many Recruiters take a cursory approach to defining their role in the client's selection process and consequently find themselves marginalized.

For some Recruiters, this is not a concern as their approach to the business is based on covering as many of their clients with as much paper (resumes) as possible in the hope that something positive will happen and a placement will result. These Recruiters concentrate on the "low hanging fruit" and quickly become a commodity in the eyes of their clients. Nevertheless, this is a business model they choose to follow and it does produce placements but rarely builds client loyalty.

Conversely, many Recruiters, in order to produce more consistent results, require a greater involvement in the client's selection process. This greater involvement begins when you properly qualify the search/order and review the history of the opening (*See my article – Establishing A "Sense Of Urgency"*). The next logical progression is to define with your client the key steps in the selection process. Asking a question similar to the following will help set the stage for this discussion.

"As we begin our work together, specifically, what are your expectations for my (our) performance?"

The client's response will demonstrate the level of value they place on your involvement in the selection process. For some, the response could be as simple as:

"I hope you show us some good resumes."

This response is a clear indication they view you as a commodity-clearing house and thus you will be instructed to work through Human Resources in the hopes of surfacing a possible match for their open position by sifting through your available database.

An ideal response might be:

"I expect you to work closely with me (hiring authority) in a collaborative fashion allowing us to jointly apply our collective resources in the most effective manner to insure the successful completion of this search. We will work as partners until the position is filled."



Sounds almost ideal, but unless you've worked with this client previously in this fashion, it may be unrealistic to expect a response of this nature.

Most Recruiters who ask this question receive a response similar to the following:

"We expect you to fill the position."

Or

"What should be my expectation?"

Here is the opportunity to establish your role in the selection process by responding in a manner similar to the following:

"Based on what we have discussed and established thus far (the first three steps of the "Client Centered Process"), would you agree that the thoroughness and validity of our search and selection process must be based on the fundamentals of performance measurement?"

Anything other than a "yes" from your client is not acceptable and is a clear indication that you have not successfully completed the first three steps of the process. Consequently, you will need to repeat the steps to insure that you and the client are in full agreement before moving forward in defining the selection process.

If the client responds with a "yes", gain answers to the following questions in order to understand how the client views this process.

"Good. Now, let's see if we can clearly define that process."

"What is your target date for hiring?"

Always begin by establishing the date on which the client "must" have the position filled. Working backwards from the target date will allow you to determine whether or not the steps in the selection process match the timeline for hiring.

"How many interviews will be needed and who will be conducting the interviews?"

This is the point at which the members of the selection team are identified and assigned roles. If the client says that you are to submit resumes to Human Resources for screening, qualify their reasoning for this by asking a series of questions about their HR function. You can follow the line of questioning with a statement such as:

"To date, we have worked with you in establishing the performance based, job related selection criteria. These will serve as our mutual guide in identifying and recruiting only qualified and interested candidates for this position. In reality, we will complete the initial screening process for you. The result will be a group of qualified finalist who are ready for your consideration. Does that match your understanding of our role during the initial stages of this process?"



Once again, you are looking for an affirmative response from your client. Any other response will require additional positioning on your part.

“In order to meet your target date for hiring, it would be best if you would set aside specific dates and times on your schedule to interview the finalists. Let’s consider the nature of the search and your availability and see if we can establish those dates at this time. Does that seem reasonable to you?”

Locking your client into specific dates and times for interviews reinforces the mutual commitment to your role in the process, as well as eliminating many of the obstacles that arise when you need to present candidates for consideration rather than finalists to be interviewed.

“Specifically, what needs to be accomplished on each interview by you and by the others who will be involved in the final decision?”

This is where it’s important to insure that everyone involved in the process knows their role and is properly prepared to accomplish it. Get into the specifics of exactly who will be responsible for what, where, when and how. As always, the emphasis should be placed on measuring the finalists against the job related selection criteria.

Remember

Hiring good employees requires a two-way selection process. Not only must the client select the right finalist, but they must also insure the right finalist select them. They cannot hire someone who does not want to work for their organization.

Keeping this in mind, a major part of your role is to make certain that each member of the selection team is prepared not only to fulfill their responsibilities in the selection process but to also serve as a positive reflection of the company, its people and the position.

“How will you arrive at your final hiring decision?”

Keep your client focused on measuring the finalists against the performance based, job related selection criteria. This is an objective approach to decision making. Help them understand that it is imperative to hire the finalist who is best qualified to do the job, not necessarily the finalist who did the best during the interviews. Ultimately, everything else being equal, the decision will be made based on subjective factors. But you cannot allow subjectivity to carry more weight than the job related, selection criteria in your client’s decision-making.

“How will you determine the specifics of the offer and who will extend it to the finalist you select?”

There are four things the client must take into consideration if they expect their offer to be accepted by the finalist. You control three of those considerations. Most importantly, you need to educate your client on the value of having you pre-close the finalist prior to issuing a formal offer.

REMEMBER

If the client issues an offer that is turned down by the finalist, you have not correctly performed your role in the process.

However, gaining acceptances to your clients' offers is not the entire bottom line. In order to build long-term relationships with your clients, the newly hired employees must meet or surpass the performance standards that define the position. Ultimately, three to six months after the hire, the client should be able to look back at the finalist they hired and state with certainty that, *"If I had to do it all over again, I'd hire the same person because they're flat out getting the job done."*

In order to consistently meet your clients' needs, your role in the selection process must be established in a manner that allows you to do your job without human or systemic encumbrances. From conducting your search to presenting the finalists, from interview preparation (both client and finalists) to interview follow-up, from pre-closing the finalist on the offer through to start date and beyond, the key to your success may very well depend on how well you can properly establish your role in the selection process.



*Terry Petra is available for one-on-one coaching, consulting and group training through "**Petra On Call**", a cost effective approach to receiving the full benefit of his expertise. For details on Terry's products and services, including "**Business Appraisals**", visit his web site at: www.tpetra.com. As always, if you have questions or comments about this article or wish to receive Terry's input on any other topic related to this business, your calls and e-mails are most welcome. Terry can be reached at (651) 738-8561 or e-mail him at Terry@tpetra.com.*