



## Timely Client Decisions

**Presenter: Kent Burns, President of Simply Driven Executive Search, a member of the Sanford Rose Associates® Network of Companies**

Kent Burns leads Simply Driven Executive Search, a member of the Sanford Rose Associates network of offices. He specializes in delivering high-calibre talent in the areas of Finance/Accounting and Engineering. For over eight years, Kent was a Partner and perennial top producer within a global network of recruiters. In 2003, he was the Top-Producing Individual Account Executive, outperforming approximately 3,500 recruiters worldwide. Prior to entering the search industry, Kent was a CPA with two Big Four firms as well as a corporate Controller and Chief Financial Officer.

He is the author of *What's Your Why?* and *The Why Guide to Your First Job - College Edition*. He has been featured in publications such as Fast Company, Forbes, CFO Magazine, HR Magazine, The Journal of Accountancy, The Boston Globe, Reuters, The Houston Chronicle, The Indianapolis Business Journal and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Since 1999, Kent has helped companies make hundreds of successful hires. your offer.

### Meeting: “Timely Client Decisions” by Kent Burns

**If you are reviewing this episode with a team, watch the entire Episode and ask your group for their key takeaways and insights. Review the following below to fill in the gaps.**

**(Facilitator):** It has often been said that prospects care more about what you have done than what you say you can do. To this point, behavioral based questions can be a phenomenal way to assess abilities when screening candidates and when aligning the “wants” of clients. Most managers thrive when it comes to evaluating an employee’s success related to the hard skills of a role. Achieving measurable quotas, meeting quantifiable objectives, or directly contributing to profit or cost savings are black-and-white and leave little room for subjectivity or interpretation. The challenge most face is in evaluating the soft skills of every role; regardless of the behavioral profiling tools, the interviewing forms, or the qualification summaries utilized, the key is to define what those desired soft skills mean to *you*.

Put a group of individuals in a room and ask them to come to a consensus as to what ‘*good communication skills*’ look like or what makes someone a ‘*dedicated employee*’ and they will stay in that room for quite some time. However, imagine hiring a new employee who understands the expectation that they be a ‘*hard worker*’. One hiring manager may define ‘*hard working*’ as working ten hour days and fifty hours per week, and another manager may define ‘*hard working*’ as twelve hour days and seventy hours per week. While the person in the former example may be receiving an award for their work ethic, the person in the latter example may be getting fired for the same behavior.

Let’s come up with some questions we can ask candidates to understand their past behaviors in some of the most common areas our clients ask for:

Hard Worker

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Team Player

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Effective Communication Skills

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Requires Little Micro-Management/Hand-Holding

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## High Integrity

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Making sure that your hiring managers can define what they are looking for in soft skills, and then being able to ask the right question to assess those, will expedite the hiring process and can ensure a more appropriate match. Defining specific soft skills and expectations thereof can fall quite low on a priority scale when managers are tasked with much more urgent and critical responsibilities. However, the ability to measure and manage beyond more than performance expectations will not only help ensure the right strategic hire, but help avoid future frustrating evaluations and reviews. The premise of the bestselling book *“Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus”* is a popular paradigm for this same issue; disconnects in both personal and professional relationships arise when two individuals have differing understandings of exceptional, average, or unacceptable behaviors and expectations.

**(Facilitator):** Let’s move on to another one of Kent’s critical points, which is to make sure the candidate gets a true attraction-based interview. In addition to knowing who will be involved in the interviewing process, what is their role and how does the interviewing experience differ from one person to another?

Second, what is their message? How employees represent the company’s mission and brand is as important as anything said by human resources or leaders during the hiring process. Within the first interview, a candidate needs to grasp an understanding of what is unique about the organization, environment, and opportunity. If a candidate was to ask *“why your firm”* as opposed to others, does your hiring manager know how each interviewer respond? The *“why your firm”* moment is an excellent opportunity for an employee to communicate the elevator pitch of the organization. Clients should consider providing employees with an example of a strong and succinct elevator pitch script to be used in both social settings as well as the interviewing



process. Make sure all individuals involved in the interview have a concrete understanding of the mission of the firm, the vision for the future, and alignment of organizational goals.

Some areas you can coach your clients to have aligned answers for (what others can you create?):

- Complete this sentence: “This position is the opportunity for someone to \_\_\_\_\_.” (The reasons need to be beyond ‘work with great people’, ‘take the next step in your career’, or ‘work in a great environment’ – what does this position allow someone to do above and beyond what they might have the opportunity to do currently?)
- What are the primary reasons someone would join your organization instead of another search firm?
- What is the career path for this individual?
- What in-house resources do you have that give people a competitive advantage? What external resources?
- What is the tenure of your senior staff? What benefit does that provide a new associate?
- What is the training program for this new associate? Think through initially, as well as continued development.
- What future growth plans do you have for your firm? What opportunity does that create for someone? Where do you see your niche heading/evolving?
- What are you most proud of in terms of the work that you’ve done or impact you’ve made for your clients?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**(Facilitator):** We could dive deeper into each of Kent’s areas shared, but he has provided some fantastic plug-and-play examples that we can use immediately. Let’s cover one final area he touched on – the pre-close. This is a topic covered in the Foundation Training Program, but deserves a constant revisit to make sure each area is top of mind. We want to make sure that we have covered on all areas of relocation (if relevant), their family and personal situation, their motivations, their timeline and agenda, BEFORE you even get to the area of compensation! Remember that each side needs to be pre-closed in each area! Consider taking these questions and putting into a document that is part of every pre-close you do!

## RELOCATION

### CANDIDATE:

- Contact a realtor to conduct a Comparative Market Analysis for the home
- Realtor should gather Multiple Listing Service (MLS) data
- Understand the monthly mortgage rate, how much equity is in the home/how much negative equity exists
- Understand any closing costs or realtor fees associated with sale of the home
- Square footage of the home, and any storage areas



- When lease ends/any fees for breaking lease early
- Home finding trip, home financing, or temporary housing
- Assistance on double mortgage or double rent payments
- Reimbursement for trips back home if the candidate is relocating prior to the spouse and children
- Status of home ownership, realistic possibilities for that home selling, cost, and timeframe
- Calculate the cost for pack/ship/move, and clarify the candidate's expectations for reimbursement
- Cost of living and tax differentials, and city information including school system (if children involved)
- Expectations for financial assistance with: temporary housing needs, short-term double payment issues, travel back-and-forth prior to, or after, start date
- Introduction to a local realtor or realtors if the candidate intends to purchase a home immediately

#### CLIENT:

- Specifically what financial reimbursement is offered for pack, ship, and move
- Cost of living differentials, or differences in taxes between current state/country and where client is located
- Financial assistance with: temporary housing needs, short-term double payment issues, or travel back-and-forth prior to, or after, start date
- Understand any possible obligations for re-payment should the candidate leave within a certain timeframe
- Will the client cover the tax liabilities associated with relocation benefits, or is it the candidate's responsibility?
- If the client pays for the breaking of the lease, will the client also pay for the tax liability associated with that benefit?
- If there is a gap in the lease of housing from one place to the next, will the client cover the gap in the increased lease versus the current, and how long?

### FAMILY/PERSONAL

#### CANDIDATE:

- Is the spouse employed? How does the spouse feel?
- How old are the children? Are the children in public or private school? What programs are the children involved with? Are there any special needs of the children?
- (If relocation) What needs to be done to transition the children to a new school system?
- How is this candidate going to handle the change?
- Has this candidate left previous organizations in the past, or is this his/her first job since entering the workplace?
- If changed employers in the past, how was that experience? What compelled them to change? What made them feel comfortable with that transition?
- If they have not yet changed employers, what fears do they have? Who in their life is a support system that can help alleviate some of those concerns?
- What connections does the candidate have at the new company?
- If none, what could be done to bridge the transition and help the candidate feel personally and professionally tied in?
- If the candidate is relocating, have they ever relocated before? What was that experience like, and what could have made it better?
- If relocating, what are the ties to the new area? What could be done to make it a smoother transition and help the candidate feel connected quicker?
- Does this move put them closer to, or further away, from extended family? How will that be a benefit, or how will it be a possible negative?

## MOTIVATIONS

### CANDIDATE:

- I know when we first spoke, (hot buttons) were the things that were most important for you to consider when making a move. Let's break down each of those areas since it's been a while since we started in this process; how has each of those areas changed or evolved over the (timeframe since we started this process)?
- When we first spoke, you were limited because of the lack of upward mobility because you and your boss are about the same age. Has that changed at all?
- You were also concerned because they were going to be moving their office building to further downtown, which would be an even longer commute. Is this still an expected move?
- You were not going to be able to pursue (projects/work) because your company doesn't have the leadership experience to be awarded those kinds of jobs – has that changed at all in the last few months?
- Compare this company to your current company – what does this new organization allow you to do that you don't have the opportunity to do currently? Any concerns with the new organization?
- Compare the boss and team to your current boss or team – what are the benefits? Any concerns? How does this new position allow you to grow, compared to your current situation?
- What responsibilities will you be involved in that you aren't currently? What concerns do you have about the role or expectations?
- What is the anticipated career path in this new role? Where can you be in time, and what happens to promote you along the way? How does that compare to what you had envisioned initially when beginning the interviewing process?
- What other areas do you still need more information? Are there some subjects or questions that could use some clarification or expansion?

### CLIENT:

- Has anything changed since we started this search, or is this still a priority search that is urgent and critical to fill?
- Who is currently doing the workload created from this position being unfilled? What burdens or financial costs are associated with that extra work?
- Who or what, specifically, will suffer if this position remains unfilled?
- How can you see this individual being able to immediately impact that workload?
- How quickly can you see this candidate getting up to speed and being able to alleviate that extra stress?
- Let's quickly break down the requirements that you first described when we started this search – how does this candidate compare in each of those areas?
- What areas do you still need more information in order to make the call that this is the individual you want to bring on board?



## TIMELINE/AGENDA

### CANDIDATE:

- What other recruiters or companies have your resume?
- What other interviews do you have scheduled, or have you gone on recently?
- What are you wanting to find in those opportunities that you don't feel you have with this current opportunity?
- What needs to happen for you to feel comfortable ending the process with the other opportunities?
- Background check, Drug testing or screening, credit check, reference checks, and any other testing, paperwork, or screening
- Assuming an acceptable offer is made, what is the desired start date for the candidate? If the client requests, could the desired start date be earlier or later? What are the possible issues with both?
- What is the timeline for resignation? How much notice will the candidate give the current company? What are the issues associated with that timeline?
- If the candidate is relocating, what is the timeframe for the move? Will the candidate need "down time" to get settled in prior to starting at the company? Is this factored in to the desired start date?

### CLIENT:

- What other candidates do you have in process, or have been submitted for consideration recently?
- What are you hoping to see in that candidate that you don't see with this current candidate?
- What needs to happen for you to feel comfortable ending the process with the other candidates and bringing this candidate on board?
- Who else needs to approve this hire, and how long will that take or what needs to happen for that approval to go through?
- Assuming an acceptable offer is made, what is the desired start date for the candidate? If the candidate requests, could the desired start date be earlier or later? What are the possible issues with both?
- If candidate should start ideally on (date), and the candidate anticipates needing to give their current employer (amount) of time after the resignation, do those two timelines align?
- If the candidate is relocating, has the client allowed sufficient time for the candidate to get settled? Is this factored in to the desired start date?