

Recruitment... a job or a lifestyle?

By Gaynor Lowndes, Managing Director, The Recruitment Training Company

As a trainer, having worked with the great, the good, the bad and the downright hopeless teams, I often get asked this question by agency managers and team leaders: "What do you think is the fundamental secret to a truly great team of consultants?" My answer is simple: The level of passion within the consultants is the deciding factor. Are they just "doing their job," or is there a far greater commitment to and passion for their work?

Whenever I conduct an in-house workshop, I make the statement that "Recruitment is not a job... it is a lifestyle," and many consultants sit in stunned, puzzled silence, some even scoff. This does not necessarily mean that they are sub-par consultants with bad attitudes towards their work, they are often the solid, skilled recruiters who simply see their jobs as just that... jobs.

And this is the problem. So many managers and team leaders employ consultants because they appear to have potential, skill and an "enjoyment" of the profession. I urge you to understand that these traits are nowhere near enough to help make your team great.

The employee who has a genuine passion for what they do, will be an asset to their team, and to their company. The same is true of any profession or industry, but this fact has a special significance to recruitment. Recruitment cannot be considered a 9 till 5 job. Candidate management and client relationship-building go far outside the realms of a standard working day. I have trained so many consultants who are quite literally disgusted when they are required to make a "counselling" call to a candidate in the evening, or when they have to make a client visit after-hours, because the decision-maker didn't have time to meet with them during the day.

These are the same consultants who work diligently during the day, but simply don't understand the greater commitment involved in a profession such as this. I was surprised when a team leader I trained told me this: "My consultants work from 8 till 5 (already longer hours than most people) and they meet their KPI's each week... isn't that enough?"

Certainly not, if you want to have a team of truly great consultants. What if the team leader's attitude was more like this? "My consultants work from 8 till 6 officially (but some of them start at 7, in order to make the most of the day, and work later for the sake of their time-starved candidates and clients). They don't meet their KPI's, they exceed them. And best of all, each of them realise that they still have so much room for improvement!"

When discussing this with trainees, many of them state their belief that it is quality, not quantity, that matters when it comes to the issue of service. That is, they tell me that "it's not about the amount of time you spend on your clients or candidates, it's about the quality of the service you provide them with."

Quality and quantity are both essential factors for success in any area, and I have never understood why many people believe that the former is more important than the latter. After all, what good is quality service, if no quantity of time is spent on it? What good is your quality service to a candidate or client, if you are not willing to put in the additional time to provide them with that quality service?

When I run workshops for managers and team leaders, one of the key discussion topics is value-adds – "What can my team of consultants give their candidates and clients to take their service that extra mile?" The usual ideas of chocolates, flowers and other gifts are pulled out (and they are good ideas), but I remind the group that the greatest gift they can give is their most important asset as working professionals; their time. And which of their consultants will dedicate their time to candidates and clients, even if this requires after-hours or weekend commitment? The answer is simple; those with a passion for their profession, rather than those who simply see their work as a way to "pay the bills."

If you are a team leader, I urge you to lead your team with an emphasis on recruitment as a lifestyle. Am I suggesting that you and your consultants should have no life outside of work? Absolutely not! I am simply stating a fact. If you are passionate enough to go the extra mile you will get results. Some of your

consultants will not be able to cope with this greater commitment and will resign. Don't be concerned about this, instead be glad, because this gives you an opportunity to replace those "9 till 5" consultants with people who have true passion and commitment in their work. Those who resigned were doing nothing but holding your team back.

As a team leader or manager, simply ask yourself, "do I want a good team, or a great team?" Jim Collins tell us that "Good is the enemy of Great," because "Good" creates a complacency that stifles passion and improvement, whereas "Great" acknowledges and fulfils the concept of "going the extra mile, because I truly love what I do!"

Remember, nothing is more profitable than a team of professionals who truly love what they do! ■



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