

Getting back to basics

I have recently been working with a small boutique specialist agency in Sydney who are undertaking my *Recruitment Excellence Program*. That means that I conduct training each week for 10 weeks and each member of the team undertakes formal assessment of what they have learned. The return on investment for this program is measured directly by revenue.

It is a small team of 5 consultants and a resourcer who in February 2007 will have billed over \$250,000 between them. That's an average of \$50,000 per consultant which may not be all that fabulous compared to you, however consider this – 2 of the consultants have less than 2 months experience!

How have they done it you may ask?

Culture

I would like to say that I have had a hand in it through my training which I believe has certainly added value to the individual skills of the consultants. In fairness to the team though, it's all up to them. The business is run very much like the recruitment businesses of the "old" days when I was a recruiter. An open plan office with the consultants almost on top of each other creates an amazing "buzz" in the office. The inexperienced are coached by the experienced and are very open to asking for help and assistance. No one goes off to hide when making business development calls, all activities are conducted in the open plan office with coaching encouraged at all levels.

The directors have created a culture of "wanting to win". Consultants keep a tally of their billings on a whiteboard which is updated each time an offer is accepted. Although competitive, the team is very supportive of each other and the experienced consultants push the inexperienced consultants to be the best they can be. The team members think nothing of getting to the office at 7.00am, and some leave as early as 2.30pm once their targets have been reached for the month. They work hard and play hard. You may at this point think that the consultants are too focused on the next win and not placing the right candidate in

the right job. I was too initially. However, when I asked for their credit stats, I found that on average they were only losing 1 to every 15 permanent placements. That is quite incredible in the current market.

KPI's

All team members work to key performance indicators – the "old fashioned" ones, such as:

Calls: 100

Visits: 5

Interviews: 15

Candidates out: 15 (either on short lists or floats)

Candidates placed per week: 2 minimum but more likely 5

I have seen the reports and all the team members consistently meet their KPI's each week.

Time Management

The consultants work "smarter", focusing in on a "niche" area within their specialisation and moving candidates around in that area. They block time for marketing activities and rigidly stick to that time. They focus on the urgent and important tasks first then the important/non urgent tasks. You don't hear them chatting about what they did on the weekend, they are more interested in generating revenue during working hours and leaving the "social" aspect to after hours. They work their candidates well, often having up to 5 offers for one candidate. Why would their candidates go anywhere else? They are honest with their clients, letting the client know that the candidate has competing offers and managing the recruitment process properly. It is not unusual for a consultant to have 20 client interviews in a week, managing their pipeline so they can correctly estimate what the billings for next week will be.

Self Belief

One of the things that most stood out for me was each individual in that team has no doubt about his/her ability to be successful and all have a genuine desire to be the best he/she can be. All are interested in developing both

their skills and knowledge further and indeed the fact that this company has invested in *The Recruitment Excellence Program* is testament to the company's belief in their people. They are optimistic, enthusiastic and have a great deal of energy, just like many of the individuals I worked with in companies such as Accountancy Placements (in the late 80's and early 90's), Recruitment Solutions (in the mid 90's) and Morgan and Banks (in the mid to late 90's). I have not seen a company like this one for a very long time.

So how can I go back to basics?

Consider the culture of the company you work for. Do you enjoy coming to work so much that you would be there at 7.00am? Do you love your job so much that you would still be there at 6.00pm generating revenue? Do you have the skills required to be successful? Does your company support your development? Will you do whatever it takes to be successful? If you have the desire but are not being supported then look for another opportunity. If you are in the right place but lack the motivation to do it, then consider whether recruitment is for you or change your state (see last month's article).

Companies like this one are few and far between in my experience. Having said that they are one of the most profitable businesses I have been in during the past five years. Maybe a few more of us need to go *back to basics*. ■



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