

The Art of Recruitment

I have heard many times that recruitment isn't rocket science and that, to an extent is true. However as our lives get more technologically sophisticated, so does the art of recruitment.

In the days prior to e-mail and the internet (which incidentally isn't that long ago), recruitment was about 'gut feel' – that is whether I thought you had the skills, knowledge and ability to do the job and probably just as important was whether I liked you. One of the most difficult things to come to terms with, as a recruiter is to leave your personal prejudices at home. If I had learnt this earlier in my career, I would have experienced a great deal more success and financial reward.

It is imperative that if you want to be successful, you must learn the art of being impartial. You must select your shortlist or place the contractor / casual / temporary based on their ability to do the job and whether they will fit into the client environment – not whether you like the way they were dressed.

The other trap to be aware of when you first start out is the desire to become a social worker. Those recruiters with a psychology degree or background most commonly fall into this trap owing to their desire to help. As a professional recruiter, you must ensure that you take a balanced approach to the situation at hand. This trap was highlighted to me during my years recruiting in the north of England during the 1990 recession. Margaret Thatcher was in power then and was basically closing down all the mines in the north of England, which meant that thousands were out of work. I spent my days interviewing out of work miners (because I felt sorry for them) and trying to place them in office jobs. Everyone knows that during a recession, quality candidates are in plentiful supply so I can't possibly imagine now why I did it. The whole experience was very depressing and I was unable to help most of them. Those that are most desperate do desperate things so when I wasn't interviewing I was taking calls

from them demanding to know why I hadn't found them work. After a couple of months of this, I realised the error of my ways and referred these enquiries onto more generalist agencies that could perhaps help them.

The market is much more agency aware than when I started in it in the 1980's which means that quite often you will receive candidate enquires without having a role immediately for them. I have always held the philosophy no matter how busy I am that I treat people how I would wish to be treated. I am sure you have either experienced or heard about recruitment agencies that treat candidates like cattle – herding them in, registering them and then NOTHING! Worse still there are those that don't return calls and as a candidate you are left wondering why these recruiters won't help you. I have experienced all of those scenarios, which is why I am so adamant about treating people properly. In addition, you can never be sure whom an individual knows. Consider the bad experience at a restaurant – you tell everyone you know. A bad experience at a recruitment agency is the same! It always amazes me why recruiters haven't worked this one out yet. My advice is see less people, and do it properly.

Recently, I have been working with a small office support agency who take candidate care very seriously. Most of their temporaries are long term and very loyal. I believe this is because the consultants take the time to have a chat or coffee with their candidates and treat them with respect at all times. During my time with them I noticed that they rarely suffered 'no-shows', (temporaries not turning up for work) and more often than not they filled their contingent roles.

When I compared this scenario with others that I have been exposed to (interviewing 15 candidates per week no matter what) it became clear why our industry has gained its bad reputation.

One of the continual frustrations for recruiters is candidate 'no shows'. That is candidates that are booked in for initial

interviews and then don't show up at their allotted time. There are many reasons for this and it seems to be prevalent in the labourhire and office support sectors. My belief is that if you indicate to the candidate that you are really keen to see them and show sincere interest during the initial call, they are more likely to show up.

I had a consultant working for me in office support a few years ago who didn't seem to suffer the same 'no show' rate as others. When I investigated, I found that it was the way she approached the initial candidate enquiry. She always sounded genuinely happy to hear from the candidate, booked the interview as soon as possible after the call and ended the call with "I am really looking forward to meeting with you." Remember, it's the little things that make a difference.

This is an excerpt from The Art of Recruitment, a book written by Gaynor Lowndes, Managing Director of The Recruitment Training Company. Having worked in a multitude of recruitment environments, Gaynor has a wealth of experience which she is more than willing to share. The Art of Recruitment is a user friendly guide for anyone working in the recruitment process and covers every aspect of the process from candidate interviews, client relationships, building business, proposals and tenders to maintaining balance and achieving success. The book will be available through the next issue of Recruitment EXTRA.

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