

Building your People Pipeline

Managing the candidate experience...what you say or don't say can come back to help or haunt you.

As a Manager, Leader or Business Owner we have all been caught with conflicting priorities when it comes to managing our recruiting process. From start to finish, hiring a new employee doesn't have to consume all of our attention but it definitely takes time. While balancing all of our projects, we need to keep in mind the time it takes to manage the initial recruiting process, to interview candidates, and to make offers. Don't forget it takes even more time to close out all of those candidates you have decided not to move forward with. We all know our number one priority is managing our number one candidate's experience; after all we want them to accept our offer, but we must also keep in mind all of the candidates we are declining.

While we make that candidate the number one priority, the remaining candidates often get overlooked and fall to the bottom of our priority list. These unfortunate oversights can come back in a month, a year or even five years down the road to either help or haunt your recruiting process. Don't let this happen to you! Below you will find four easy steps to maximize your time and ensure a great candidate experience with your company, whether they are your star candidate or not!

Set Expectations

Job searching can be an emotional time, whether a candidate is looking actively or passively. Let's face it, it requires you to sell yourself, which means putting yourself in a space that most of us are not comfortable being in. To add to this, the majority of job seekers apply to jobs that they not only think they are qualified for, but they accept that as fact. Whether we agree or not on their qualifications, they are expecting forward movement on their resume or application. To avoid frustration for either party, take a minute to set expectations for your recruiting process. This small investment of time can have a huge payoff in creating a positive candidate experience.

To ensure a consistent message of expectations, make sure your website has clear application instructions next to each job posting. Simple steps you can take include adding a date to which applications will no longer be accepted, creating an automatic reply for all incoming resumes or applications that states the process outlined on the website and reflects the same time restrictions, and/or creating a script or process that your team can follow when getting telephone or email inquiries about a candidate's application.

Remember, it is the small things that make the difference for a candidate and it can be as easy as acknowledging that their resume has been received. Ever been trapped in the black hole of an applicant tracking system? It is frustrating!

First Interview

Ahh, the first date! Finally, you have a pool of candidates narrowed down and it is time to set up first interviews! To make sure both parties' expectations are met, I would like to emphasize how

important it is for even the smallest details to be mentioned, otherwise someone will probably end up disappointed.

Remember, interviewing is like dating and as no one is an expert at it and everyone wants the process to be over with. Take a moment to inform the person of the following: who they will be meeting with and what that person's role is; where they can find a copy of the job posting or job description; how much time they should allow for the first interview; the address and phone number of the office where they will be interviewing; and in some cases it is important to mention dress code.

Now hear me out on this one! Seattle is now referred to as metro-casual. Just because a company allows jeans and tennis shoes on a regular basis does not mean that a candidate won't be judged negatively if they over or under dress. Chances are you have an expectation, so share it! This can be especially difficult for a candidate that hasn't been interviewing in the last five years or is coming straight from work. Eliminate the ambiguity.

So now you are sitting down for your face-to-face and the interview begins. Again, sharing with the candidate what to expect can be easy and will make all the difference. Don't take for granted that a candidate understands the protocol. Some interviewers are looking for initiative and confidence and others want to remain in control and answer questions at the end. Ways to frame expectations can be as simple as offering the following: Here's what I am going to cover, feel free to jump in and ask questions at anytime or wait until the end.

One of the most critical elements to cover in the first interview is the compensation requirement. It is important to know a candidate is in your compensation range and vice versa. Lastly, set the final expectation for a follow up timeline. I don't want to add anything else to your plate, so put the follow up responsibility on the candidate. Ask them to follow up via email or another preferred contact method by a certain date. This will give you a great opportunity to close out candidates you aren't moving forward with (we'll get to that later) and see the follow up skills of a candidate that you want to move forward with.

Second and/or Final Interviews

Things are looking good; you've decided to have a second date with one or maybe a few individuals and this is a perfect opportunity for both parties to reevaluate each other as most of us have relaxed and let our guards down just a bit.

If interviewing is like dating, we all know a proposal is coming. In order to ensure an "I do" you must continue setting expectations. Feedback heard by most candidates is, "I was really interested after the first interview but when I went back to meet the team, it felt unorganized and I didn't learn anything new." This is a really easy issue to overcome if you set an expectation with everyone involved in the interview process.

Keep your teammates in the loop by taking a moment to share with them what you have already learned about the candidate and let's not forget about what aspects you want them to focus on. Check out LinkedIn to learn common elements that team members can mention or create rapport from. You don't want to lose your candidate to cold feet! With everyone on the same page, you will be more successful at up-selling the opportunity and nurturing continued interest from the candidate. If you are going to check references on a candidate make sure to let them know that as well. The candidate can take an active part in helping to eliminate phone tag with the reference or even provide a reference that could answer specific questions you might have. Once again,

whatever step you are at in the process, don't leave the candidate hanging! Remember that feeling you had when you were dating and wondering if they were going to call? You have the opportunity to change that.

Thanks But No Thanks and The Offer Process

So you have decided to propose; congratulations! This is your time to shine so sell your company and all of its best qualities. When the offer is made, take a moment to circle back and tie in motivators, priorities, and expectations that the candidate has shared with you during the interview process so that it is clear to them that this new partnership will be a win-win for everyone involved.

With an economy that is reaching double-digit growth in unemployment, you might think it's in the bag. Think again! Candidates now more than ever are looking for a job that 'feels right', feels secure, and aligns with their career plans. Do you know if that candidate is aligned your position to those 'feelings'?

Now that you have chosen your candidate and they have chosen you, it is time to close out all of the other candidates that have so graciously and willingly invested valuable time in you and your company. Don't take this for granted, it can come back to haunt you if you don't take the time required to manage this process. Once again, make it easy on yourself! Set up email templates that you can locate quickly. This template should include the following key points: acknowledging their time, acknowledging their skills (this can be generic!), thanking them for their interest in your company, educating them on how to learn about future employment opportunities with your company, and lastly that the final decision has been made with regard to this position.

Ideally, this information will create respect and value for you and your company from the candidate's perspective without a need to follow up and get specific details. Please keep in mind that it is not unusual for a few candidates to follow up asking for specific information as to the decision. However, if you have set clear expectations from the very beginning, managing this final step of the candidate experience will be a snap and you'll be able to move on to all of your other priorities effortlessly!

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