

# BUILDING EFFECTIVE RECRUITER RELATIONSHIPS

## PARTNERING WITH RECRUITERS TO BUILD YOUR BEST STAFF



### Abstract

Getting the most out of recruiters can prove challenging. The following discussion addresses six tactics that can help you avoid common pitfalls in recruiter/business relationships. These suggestions should help your recruiters to better help you.

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# Building Effective Recruiter Relationships

The six tactics described here can help you make the most of your recruiter relationships, allowing you to work together to build your best, most successful staff and business.

## Six Tactics

### Practice Due Diligence

Treat the choice of recruiter like any other major purchase or choice of vendor: research the firm, ask around, request references. Find out who specifically will be corresponding with candidates and screening them. Will it be the senior partner? A junior associate? A recent college grad?

Seek out firms with expertise in your business. Does the firm have in-depth knowledge and experience in your industry? Like many relationships, compatibility based on shared experience and perspectives will provide a stable foundation for prosperous growth.

### Have Realistic Expectations

Often recruiters complain that their clients have far-fetched ideas of the type of candidates that they expect to attract. Although there may exist a marketing genius/geneticist/CPA, it's unlikely that one person would be best suited to work in all three departments. Although a three-for-one deal might seem like a bargain, keep in mind that the more unique the skills are, the smaller the talent pool will be, and the harder it will be to find the right candidate.

By the same token, it's important to be realistic about what is being offered. While the best talent will not be attracted to an average salary, title, and benefits, average talent may be attracted to those things. Keep in mind how the compensation package compares to similar ones in the industry and set realistic parameters for the kind of talent that can be acquired. Is the salary offered actually competitive? Are the benefits typical? If not, adjust the range of possibilities accordingly.

### Communication Is Key

Arguably the most often cited obstacle to effective recruiter/client relationships is poor communication. From the client side, it's important to understand that recruiters are not mind readers. Taking the time to articulate clearly the type of candidate you are seeking and the details of the position will make the search much quicker and more efficient. Recruiters rarely complain that they receive too much information in this regard. Often meeting the hiring manager in person or spending some time at the client's office helps recruiters get a clearer picture of the position and makes it easier for them to sell to candidates. If you suspect that the recruiter doesn't fully understand what you're describing, he or she probably doesn't. Taking a little extra time up front will avoid wasted time and effort down the road.

Another typical communication problem is staying in touch. Recruiters note that staying responsive to emails, both from recruiters and candidates, goes a long way toward expediting the search and building productive relationships. Generally, the more feedback that the client can provide to the recruiter, the closer the match will be. Of course, the sooner you can respond to a recruiter's follow-up questions, the sooner the search will be over. Finally, it should be noted that recruiters perceive emails that are not responded to as damaging to the recruiter/client relationship, which lowers their willingness to invest in your search. It also can make your company appear a less attractive place to work and therefore more difficult to attract talent.

## The Shotgun Approach

One strategy that results in a lot of recruiter eye-rolling is the shotgun approach.

It's not uncommon for a company to play the odds, appointing 10 or more agencies to fill the same role. Often, however, this approach yields sub-par results and redundancies.

First, recruiters comment that they are frequently aware when they are one among many. This, they point out, leads them to invest minimal effort in the candidate search and to become less invested in the client relationship. If all 10 recruiters are doing the least amount of work possible, the search will not be as fruitful as it could be.

A more effective strategy would reduce the number of recruiters and allocate the extra time and resources to helping the recruiter better understand the client's needs (see "Communication Is Key" above). Further, you may not be sacrificing as much as you think by ditching the shotgun approach. Using a large number of recruiters to fill the same role will likely result in overlapping lists of candidates and multiple copies of the same resumes. Although a less diversified approach appears to reduce the statistical probability of finding the perfect candidate, a handful of recruiters with a clear and detailed understanding of the client's needs will likely go further to meeting their goals than a room full of recruiters with a vague understanding.

## Be Flexible

Adapting to changing circumstances is a virtue, especially in recruiting.

Recruiters comment that an unwillingness to change the position's title, pay, or responsibilities often results in alienating otherwise compatible candidates. Prioritize where you can compromise and where you cannot, and be amenable to making trade-offs if necessary. If salary is non-negotiable, see if a more prestigious title is possible. If there is a rigid hierarchy, alter the mix of responsibilities or find other benefits, economic and otherwise, that might be available.

## View Recruiters as Specialists

In the ever-increasing presence of social media and online networking, it's easier than ever to advertise and sort through potential candidates. So why pay an expert to do something that anyone with a computer and an email account can do? Recruiters comment that they are frequently employed to find candidates that could easily be found on sites such as LinkedIn. Use the cost savings from discovering easy-to-find candidates online and spend the extra money where it's needed, on difficult to fill positions.

## Six Tactics Checklist

Use the following checklist to help you keep these six tactics in mind when retaining recruiters.

### Practice Due Diligence

- What is the agency's reputation?
- Will they provide references?
- Who will call and screen candidates?
- Does the agency share our industry knowledge?

### Have Realistic Expectations

- Does the position require the best or is an average candidate sufficient?
- How competitive is the salary/benefits?

- What is a realistic picture of the best possible candidate?
- What is a realistic picture of the least acceptable candidate?

### Communication Is Key

- Can I articulate in detail what we are looking for?
- Does the recruiter appear to understand our specific needs?
- Will the recruiter meet the hiring manager?
- Will the recruiter visit our company?
- Is the recruiter up to speed on the developments in our search?
- Has the recruiter received feedback from us, and vice versa?
- Have I responded to follow up emails from candidates or recruiters?

### The Shotgun Approach

- What is the smallest number of agencies that can adequately fill the role?
- Does each agency have a thorough understanding of our goals?
- Do the agencies perceive us as not fully committed?

### Be Flexible

- What aspects of the position are non-negotiable? Rank from most negotiable to least.
- How much can we change the salary? Title? Job duties? Other benefits?

### View Recruiters as Specialists

- Can this position be adequately filled using online sources?
- Which positions always require a recruiter's expertise?
- Which positions never require their expertise?

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