

How Candidates Can Get the Most Out of Recruiters

BY PAUL POMPEO

It's currently a buyer's job market, but candidates who choose to work with recruiters can improve their odds of success by paying heed to these eight pointers:

1. Three's A Crowd—Sometimes Two. If you're working with more than one search firm, be clear with each recruiter about who is presenting you to whom. Working with more than one search firm risks *both* sending your résumé to the *same* company. This is not a good thing.

While most recruiting firms will not forward your résumé unsolicited, a few have been known to mass forward résumés to multiple companies without the candidates' knowledge or permission in the hopes of getting a lucky hit. There are several dangers in this: The obvious risk for currently employed candidates is that a résumé sent randomly to companies may compromise their confidentiality. It also risks "commoditizing" the candidate and his CV. When a company receives a résumé both from a firm authorized to forward it and from a recruiter who is "carpet-bombing" the résumé, the candidate can appear to be desperate or at least actively looking. It can also create a conflict between the authorized firm and the rogue recruiter—with the candidate in the middle.

Just last week, a respected sales management professional in the controls/dimming arena approached us about representation. However, we soon learned that the candidate's résumé had been sent to a recruiter who had proceeded to present it to a number of companies without permission. This forced us to pull back from assisting the candidate to avoid confusion. Thankfully, many of the larger lamp and fixture manufacturers are now including clauses in their contracts with search firms that negate having to pay a search fee for candidates whose résumés are sent unsolicited, which will hopefully reduce this practice. The bottom line is that recruiting firms who ask permission prior to forwarding a résumé have a better chance of getting the candidate an actual interview. . .and isn't that what it's about?

2. Ban the Bomb. Occasionally there may be something in your background that could be viewed negatively by a potential employer. If it may come up in an interview, make sure the recruiter is aware of the issue before you're presented to a company. If it's something minor, the recruiter and candidate can strategize as to how best to defuse the issue during the interview. Letting the bomb go off during the interview (and having the recruiter sub-

sequently finding out from the interviewer) will put the recruiter in an awkward situation and may cause her to lose trust in the candidate.

3. Good Advice. If your search consultant offers suggestions, take them. Even if you're confident in what you can offer a potential employer, keep in mind that executive recruiters make their living by getting candidates to the next interview (and hopefully, the placement). Just as you wouldn't dream of asking your doctor for recommendations and then immediately go in the opposite direction, heed your recruiter's counsel.

4. Information Is Power. Though the best candidates have done extensive research on their prospective companies, they should still ask search consultants for their insights. Recruiters should be able to provide information that you won't find on the Internet or in a job description. Just as important, ask your recruiter for insights about the person with whom you're interviewing. Knowledge about their previous experience, hobbies/personal interests or educational background can give you the edge over other candidates.

5. What Did They Say? Solicit as much feedback as you can from your executive recruiter about how you did. These comments will help you prepare for the next round if you're going forward or let you make adjustments for your next game if you're not.

6. If You Don't Know, Who Will? When first speaking with your recruiter, be specific about the type of company, type of position, and type of lighting or product areas you

are open to. Flexibility is good to a point and can be attractive to an employer. Too much flexibility, however, can risk "diluting the message." A couple of weeks ago, I spoke with a candidate who had worked for a lighting agency and a lighting design firm who said he was open to anything in sales, engineering, design or marketing with a manufacturer, agency or design firm. This is much too broad and makes it hard for your search consultant to effectively keep

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the candidate in mind for appropriate opportunities.

7. Après Interview. Be sure to call your recruiter immediately after your in-person or phone meeting. This will serve two purposes: first, it should expedite the recruiter's call to the employer; second, assuming you've had a good interview, if your recruiter can enter the debrief call with the interviewer knowing your feedback, she has a great opportunity to build on the interviewer's enthusiasm about you. This can increase your chance of moving to the next step.

8. Don't Be "Click-happy." Even though you feel confident about your background and feel you could fit a variety of opportunities, don't be a "serial poster." Most candidates will reply to Internet postings judiciously, even if looking actively. They

won't reply to a position seen on our website unless they both have interest in an opportunity and genuinely believe that they are qualified. Responding to too many positions that may only marginally fit your background can reduce your credibility in the eyes of recruiters.

HELLO, FRIEND

Think of recruiters as the doorway to various career opportunities. Don't underestimate their ability to

help you. Due to the number of available candidates these days, companies are being pickier than ever. A successful partnership with a search consultant can help increase a candidate's odds of moving to the next career step in this "buyer's market." As I say, a good recruiter can be your career's best friend; this is a great example of where two heads truly are better than one.



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