

Asking the Right Question

A blog from Greg Savage:

"Filling a job does not start with finding good candidates for a particular job order. It starts with the quality with which you take the job order in the first place. It does not matter if you take the brief face to face (and you should, if at all possible), or over the phone. Filling the order starts with *how well you qualify* that order.

You have to make sure, at the very get-go, that the order you are so excited about, is in fact, fillable! Sound crazy? I don't think so. My assessment is that most contingent recruitment firms fill somewhere around 25% of the permanent jobs they take. And they only achieve a 25% success rate if they are both very good and very lucky! Everyone denies that of course, but usually that's because we don't measure it, or because we are in big-time denial about the reality of our fill ratios.

What this means is that we end up spinning our wheels on 75 % of the permanent orders we take on.

Now it is true that you will be hard-pressed to fill 100% of your job orders in a contingent market. However, you *will* increase your hit rate exponentially if you learn to qualify your job orders. The key to this is to take charge of the order-taking phase and to act and believe as though you are the expert.

Another day, another blog, maybe, I will lay out how to qualify a job order from beginning to end. But here let me share two golden questions you *must* ask every single time you take a job order. It's non-negotiable. Without asking these questions you are taking on the order 'blind'. It is in fact inconceivable to me how any recruiter would expend one second of time on filling an order for a client, if they had not asked these two questions, and drilled down on the answers too.

These questions are designed to assist you 'triage' your job taking. Is this brief urgent? How sincere is your client about actually making a hire? In other words, if you put a suitably qualified candidate in front of your client, would they offer them a job? Indeed, will they actually ever even interview them?

Basic you say? Hilarious, I say! Or maybe tragic is more accurate.

Every day I see even experienced recruiters taking on orders they will never fill. Unqualified orders.

If you want to put the title 'Recruitment Consultant', or anything vaguely similar on your business card, ask this;

Question #1: "*Ms Client, how long have you been trying to fill this particular role and what steps have you taken so far to fill the position?*"

Question #2: "*Ms Client, if I found the perfect candidate this afternoon, could we get an offer by tomorrow morning?*"

The answers to these questions will unlock a treasure trove of information for you. Yes they will provoke more questions and more answers, but once it's been worked through you will know whether this job is real, whether this client is able to hire and committed to hire, and you will know the urgency of the need.

There are a myriad of variations in the answers you will get, but largely it plays out as follows:

In answer to Question #1, how long has the role been open and what has been done to fill it, you will hear that it's been open 6 months, that it's been offered 3 times, that it's never been offered, that it's with six other recruiters, that it has been advertised on 12 job boards, that no one has ever been interviewed for the role, that the search criteria have changed 4 times because the hiring manager can't make up his mind on what he is looking for. You will dig, you will ask more questions, but you will slowly uncover if the job is real and if it is, what has to change to make sure it will be filled.

Or, in answer to Question #1 you might just get the dream response, which is "the current incumbent resigned last night and I am desperate to get a replacement, and so I called you". That is a beautiful sound. It is the sound of a client in pain, and a client in pain is a very good thing. Because we can ease that pain

When it comes to Question # 2 you are not really looking to have the job filled by tomorrow. You are assessing the clients' seriousness. A typical response to this could be "Oh no we can't give an answer by tomorrow because we are still assessing internal candidates", or "Oh, we can't move that fast because the CEO has not signed off on this hire as yet" or any number of other responses that tell you quite clearly: Do not work on this brief – because it is not real.

Remember, you are not a lackey to you clients' whim. You are not in servitude, required to supply candidates on demand for your client to peruse eventually, if he feels like it, one day, maybe...

You are a professional recruiter and your time has value. If you are not working on a retainer (and your clients will not jerk you around if you are), you need to drill down on these 2 questions in depth, every time. Even then, that is only stage one of qualifying the order.

But please, at the very least, do that."