

The Offer Experience – Is Your Recruitment Function Equipped to be a “Closer”?

By Simon Parkin

One of the most important steps in the recruitment process is the offer stage – yet most companies don't invest the appropriate amount of training and resources into this critical recruitment phase. Success in Recruitment must be defined mainly by the outcome – the Hire. In working closely with a large number of clients over the past year and closely analyzing the state of their Recruitment function with our diagnostic model, the offer stage is definitely one of the larger Recruitment capability gaps we encounter.

As Recruiters, we need to look at this phase as “closing the candidate”, and put the same importance the Sales function puts on “closing the deal”. An organization can have best-in-class sourcing channels but if they are unable to have their top external talent accept their offers and actually start with the company then they have failed. You aren't classified as a top Salesperson by your company if you haven't impacted the bottom line and closed deals so why should this be any different for Recruiters when it comes to closing the candidate.

In today's uncertain economic climate, many top candidates are hesitant to leave their current organization for another opportunity. Candidates are justifiably concerned with job security. With an ever increasing number of organizations going through very public restructurings, it is tough to say which organizations will be laying off next. Every day on the news there are countless organizations that seemed stable six to twelve months ago, now publically going through a significant downsizing or restructuring. It is impossible for any candidate to truly predict the true health of their own organization, yet alone an organization they are interviewing with. Recruiters today need not only to be concerned with their top talent candidates receiving multiple offers and counter-offers, but also need to account for the “I'm too scared to quit or make a change” factor.

The selling of your organization and the role to candidates must be part of every step in your recruitment process. When it comes to the actual offer of employment, how equipped are your leaders to be successful in “closing the deal”? Organizations need to understand that even in these tough economic times, top external talent will still be recruited by multiple organizations simultaneously, and you are still competing for this talent. Sell, Sell, Sell!!

There is also another threat to this process which is often not considered; if the candidate is truly top talent, how easily is their current organization going to let them walk away? In these economic tough times, companies realize they need to keep their top talent in place as it will be this talent they will need to increasingly depend on and leverage for their success. Always anticipate and plan for a counter-offer and ensure you have the process and skills in place to successfully compete with a counter-offer. If your candidates' current organizations don't act to counter your offer with your candidates,

how can you be sure they were really that valuable and considered top talent. Ensure you discuss this with your candidates, plan and expect a counter offer.

A counter-offer sounds like a great scenario for candidates, but I can tell you from personal experience that a counter-offer is a stressful time for the candidate. Candidates are caught between competing offers and sometimes the security of the known (their current organization) outweighs the unknown (the new organization).

So how can you position your organization to “close the deal” on your top candidates?

The first step is to analyze your current recruitment process, talent, tools and business leaders and understand how effective they are in both selling your organization, the role and your value proposition within each stage of the process. An effective end-to-end recruitment process that sells candidates throughout (including the critical “pre-start” stage) will help you set the stage for high performing new hires – remember, it is a competition and we need to think, talk and market our offerings similar to our colleagues in Sales as they are always striving to win new business.

The next step I would recommend would be to look at all aspects of your new hire offer stage. What role do your recruiters and hiring leaders play? Who extends the verbal offer and how are you positioning the offer based on what you have learnt during the recruitment process on what is most important to your candidate? What does your offer letter and offer package look like? Does it sell and excite your candidates or is it simply full of legal verbiage and policies on what employees can't do? Do you look at an offer as a Win-Win approach for both the candidate and the organization? How are your recruiters and hiring leaders equipped to negotiate the offer? Have you set limits on the negotiation of salary, vacation, signing bonus, etc.? Will you be turned off on a candidate who negotiates the offer? Are you able to communicate what the new hire can expect on their first day and beyond with an on-boarding plan? When will your candidate be resigning from their current organization and is there a plan to speak to them immediately following their resignation to determine if there is a counter-offer threat.

The final step is to ensure you have an ongoing communication plan with the candidate. Not only up to the offer phase but ensure it continues right up to their start date. The period between offer acceptance and start date is when new hires feel most anxious and are susceptible to competing and counter-offers. You need to hold their hands right up until their first day to ensure you have truly “closed the deal”.

Is your current Recruitment function and talent equipped to be a “Closer”?

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