

Effective Recruiting is like Dating (or is it the other way around?)

I'm not in a relationship right now, and as such, am dating. Lately, I've noticed how much the dating process parallels effective recruiting. There are loads of dating services around - both online and off-line, and they all pretty much work the same way. Bear with me as I unfold this, because understanding the nature of how we act and connect is critical to your recruiting success.

The process starts with filling out the details of the kind of date or mate you ideally want. You develop a sort of "checklist". You usually can specify physical attributes (red hair, green eyes, etc.), personality traits (good sense of humor, intelligent, etc.), likes (cooking, camping, etc.), and dislikes (dishonesty, drug use, etc.) You can even specify geographic proximity - (60 miles away or closer). Then you probably would include photos (HEY! Let's keep this clean... LOL).

Of course, the other person would go through the same process - identifying all the traits and characteristics they are looking for. Then, the service would run a search of their database to identify the people who meet your criteria. Once these potential matches are found based on your checklist, you review them one by one - examining how well each of you match in your own opinion. Sometimes the system "matches" you with someone who really doesn't seem to fit at all, and sometimes you come to realize that certain traits are much more appealing to you than others and you modify the criteria you use for searching. Once you find someone you feel is a good fit, you start the process of getting to know one another. If there is a mutual interest after corresponding and speaking on the phone, the two people agree to meet.

This is where things get interesting. From my experience (and I believe that this holds true universally), within a very short period of time - usually a few minutes - we know if chemistry exists or not. [By the way, a great book on our ability to make very accurate evaluations in very short times is "blink" by Malcolm Gladwell.] Let me repeat that. We know in very short order whether that elusive chemistry is present. Here are some very interesting and extremely important observations. If the chemistry isn't there, then no matter how many traits and interests two people have in common, the relationship will not flourish. On the other hand, if the chemistry is there, then even if a number of the traits and interests we felt were important aren't present, the relationship will happily move forward. In fact, two people can meet by chance, and feel an instant connection and chemistry - even though many of the "important" traits and interests aren't present.

Which brings us to effective recruiting.

Active recruiting is effective and passive recruiting is not very effective. Passive recruiting methods are things like internet recruiting, advertising and direct mail. Think about how passive recruiting works. We develop a checklist of the traits and characteristics we're looking for. These may be things like intelligence, knowledge, education, ambition, business savvy, geographic proximity, honesty, drug-free, etc. Then we search the internet or spread out our fishing net with the intent of pulling someone into us who meets our criteria. But here's the truth of this process. It all comes down to chemistry. If, when you finally interview the candidate there's no chemistry, the checklist becomes irrelevant. If there is chemistry during the interview, then you have a great candidate. However, recruiting in this manner means you have to "kiss a lot of frogs" to find the right candidates. And more often than not, the candidates that do come on board are ones we tend to settle for. We're often anxious to have recruiting success (just like people can become anxious to find a date or a relationship), and therefore we often temporarily give up on finding that ideal candidate and are more likely to compromise.

In contrast, active recruiting works just opposite to passive recruiting. Active recruiting finds the chemistry first, and then evaluates the "checklist" fit. Often I'll ask clients which they

find more valuable - technical knowledge or people skills. The answer I always get (correctly) is people skills. You can help the right person acquire the knowledge and technical skills necessary for success, but you can't take someone who is well-versed in the industry, but lacking people skills and passion, and teach them to be passionate nor help them to relate to people more naturally. It's just like what happens when you meet the "right person" in a social environment. The part that's most difficult to find becomes self-evident, and the "qualifications" that we felt were important fade in comparison.

The key to effective recruiting is finding candidates you "click" with. People who have good communication skills. People who can relate well to others. People who relate well to you. People who are passionate about what they do. People who will look to you as a leader. People who will be responsive. People who want more than simply bringing home a paycheck. People who care about others. People with an owner's mindset instead of an employee's mindset.

Because active recruiting focuses on finding the meaningful first, it is always more effective and efficient than passive recruiting. As an added bonus, you end up with a team who is highly productive and is responsive to your production needs as well as their own.

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