

“Who you gonna call? HEADHUNTERS!”

When you are looking to recruit that special someone, do not treat it as just another hire.

You are busy looking for a CEO for your new economy start-up, or desperately trying to replace the star performer who just left your old economy firm to head a dot.com.

Amidst all the Human Resource Department's various activities and “busy-ness”, you managed to wring what is left of their capacity to include your current critical recruitment requirement.

Meanwhile, you have even talked to your network of contacts and, subsequently, through their recommendations, discussed the vacancy with some of those informally referred prospects.

While awaiting the responses to your advertisement, the HR Department managed to swing your way a few possibilities that they personally know of and, when you hear of them, realised that in all your years in the industry, you may not “know everyone”.

What is more, you have a nagging feeling that these “prospects” may not be as sincere as you hoped, possibly because they also question your true agenda for approaching them personally, no matter how transparent you try to be.

Then, a deluge of applications comes in. Too much time is spent screening the CVs, especially when it is wasted in sieving away the majority who will never be able to do the job and those who are just “passable”.

The minority who seem suitable then need to be screened, qualified, reference checked and tested - and how do you actually do these properly? – and all before the interview!

Furthermore, the calibre of the short-listed applicants does not excite you either. You figure that star performers do not tend to respond to advertisements. Like the one you recently lost, they were “headhunted”.

So you assigned a firm to search and, in time, a good candidate is presented.

At the first meeting, after the niceties, you ask, “So, why did you apply for this job?”

A deafening silence follows.

You are as puzzled as the candidate. You wonder why he looks perplexed and is taking so long to respond to such a simple and common interview query.

He is wondering why this question is being asked in the first place.

Welcome to the world of the headhunted candidates.

These individuals are not your everyday, run-of-the-mill employees who actually *applied* for the role. And, there IS a difference.

Make the RIGHT choice

Through the tried and tested processes of a credible headhunter, these candidates are identified as top performing individuals who are approached with specific opportunities – they did not “apply” for the position.

So how does one actually manage the recruitment process for such individuals? Here are ten key tips for would-be employers to bear in mind.

1. The First Meeting – A Business Discussion, NOT Interview.

The candidate was approached discreetly and professionally with an opportunity, and invited to meet and explore with you.

His background has interested you and, specifically, his achievements provide a strong track record of what he can do for your organisation.

On the other hand, you are there to offer an opportunity, for example, of career advancement, additional skills development, which sounded interesting to him.

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Make the RIGHT choice *(cont.)*

2. Know What Is Required Of The Candidate.

Be certain of what is expected of the position in question, such as, duties and responsibilities, reporting relationships, educational qualifications, etc.

You must also be able to articulate cultural issues with regards to working environment, expansion plans and the like.

You would not be able to “sell” the opportunity properly if you are uncertain.

3. Find Out About The Candidate in depth.

Know what motivates the candidate. Otherwise, you would not be enthusiastic about the person you are meeting.

Find out about his presentation skills and personality, so as to help you “break the ice” early in the conversation, enabling you to move on to more substantial matters promptly.

For a high-calibre candidate, any and all information regarding his likes and dislikes, hobbies, sports, family, etc., is relevant.

A good measure would be your ability to answer the question “What is it about his personality that will best fit my company?”.

4. Measure The Candidate’s Preliminary Suitability.

As the prospective employer, you have to do your homework and be prepared.

Know clearly “what” you actually want to find out from the candidate and “how” you intend to do that.

Develop good questions to ascertain how the candidate’s experience matches or even exceed the specifications you require.

As a result of the meeting, you would really want to know if the candidate can handle the position, as well as his strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis the expected performance.

5. Be Ready To Address All Concerns.

Most candidates will have questions, reservations and/or concerns about the position. Find out what they are, and how you should cover them in the meeting.

6. Interest The Candidate.

Based on his preliminary interest, he has taken the first step to meet you.

Capitalise on that interest and emphasise those areas during the meeting.

Develop good questions to ask. Review the company’s future plans in relation to the candidate’s expectations.

7. Do NOT Talk Money.

You should have a tentative idea of the remuneration band within which the candidate would fall into.

Information on the candidate’s current package and an indication of his expectation should have been provided by the headhunter.

However, such a valued individual will obviously be made a counter-offer by his current employer. This is where the expertise of RUBICON can be of premium value to “broker” the deal at the final stages.

8. Close The Meeting Positively.

All professionals work on clear directions. Close the meeting in a positive manner. For example, if there is to be a second meeting, tell the candidate when, and with whom.

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Make the RIGHT choice *(cont.)*

9. Work Closely With Your Headhunter.

The headhunter is your invaluable partner.

Do choose a credible firm to work with.

He is more than just a matchmaker.

He is your consultant and an extension of your recruitment capability.

He will remind you of more than just the most mundane of details to confirm, such as where and when to meet and who should be there.

For instance, at RUBICON, we will also advise you on important issues such as the areas of the candidate's background that should be probed, how to handle the industry's perspectives of your organisation, what the next move after the meeting is and the best ways of presenting the offer to the right candidate.

10. Optimise Your Investment.

You have invested financial resources to ferret out headhunted candidates.

Optimise that investment by spending the right amount of time and effort to ensure deriving the best value.

Partner your headhunter wisely.

He is the vital link to your most valuable asset: high-calibre human capital.

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