



Getting the RIGHT START

The importance of great strategy sessions in the hiring process

We're all aware that bad hires are costly. And, it's not just the money, which can often be a six-figure loss considering time, training, onboarding, and everything invested in a new hire over their first year. It's also the productivity loss, impact on team morale, and damage to your reputation – internally with employees, and with public perception.

That cost can be avoided completely by setting the stage properly in the recruitment process. Bad hires happen when the hiring manager and the recruiter are on different pages. Great hires happen after great intake strategy sessions.

Intake Strategy Sessions

The intake strategy session is a tool to properly gather job requirements and supporting information. This key information will prove critical to understanding organizational needs and culture. It's a matter of starting the process with mutual respect, while ensuring a consultative approach, managing expectations, and sharing the responsibility of generating a great hire.

Recruiters often hear the statement: "I don't have time for an intake session." Hiring managers are understandably busy people, and it's the recruiter's job to demonstrate the value of the strategy session. Recruiters must be empathetic and take time to understand and impact their hiring managers' "pain points" during the recruitment process. They can overcome initial resistance by demonstrating their

expertise and support. The hiring manager should feel they are "in good hands" and that they'll be represented professionally and effectively in the broader job market.

By explaining the recruitment process and helping hiring managers to understand what to expect, recruiters can become key organizational partners and advisors as they guide the hiring manager through the recruitment process.

To best prepare, recruiters should research the labour market before the session. Nicole Nespeca, a global talent acquisition leader at MSC Industrial Supply Co., suggests researching this before the intake, "so you can speak to the statistics of the candidate pool and how you will circumvent any supply challenges. You want to come to the intake session armed with as much information as possible."¹

Process for Strategy Session

During the intake strategy session, the hiring manager is guided by the recruiter to answer a sequence of key questions that help the recruiter to accurately understand the nature of the operation and the position. The information gathered is just what is needed in one shot for the recruiter to launch the search, and keeps the recruiter from needing to pepper the hiring manager with follow-up questions later in the hiring process.

The recruiter digs into what is needed beyond the written job description, to detail the necessary candidate skill sets, and to explore and identify the sources that will generate top candidates. This uniquely-crafted session creates an opportunity for relationship building and

agreement on how the partners will work together. After the session, the recruiter develops a unique recruitment strategy to source candidates, then confirms the sourcing strategy with the hiring manager.

A good recruiter employs a combination of recruitment techniques to launch a networking campaign. This includes database searches, soliciting referrals, using selective job boards, creative advertising and media campaigns, campus recruitment, outreach association networking, accreditation searches, and other social media drives. They'll actively "direct recruit" passive candidates who are not looking for a new job, and go where potential candidates live.

Sometimes, hiring managers create the greatest challenge when they request a complex, lengthy "wish list" of qualifications or multiple skill sets that often don't travel together. Recruiters spend countless hours trying to give hiring managers what they've asked for, when the best hire only needs a portion of these qualifications – and the ability to learn the rest.

Hiring managers – when you think of your best employees, ask yourself if they had all of the qualifications that you are asking the recruiter to find. Many of us might not make the

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¹ <<https://www.ereMEDIA.com/sourcecon/a-speedy-sourcers-guide-to-conquering-the-intake-session>>.

shortlist for our current positions if someone hadn't seen something in us that they believed would make us successful. Did any of us have the skill set we have now, back when we were first hired?

During the session, recruiters should ask which technical and behavioural competencies the best employees brought to the position when they joined. If you are asking for more than that, you are probably asking for too much.

Keeping the list to a minimum of what you really need will allow your recruitment partner to open the scope and focus on finding you a "star" with exceptional behavioural competencies who possesses the drive, strong interpersonal and communication skills, and amazing attitude to contribute exceptional achievements to your organizational culture.

Recruiters can help this process along by challenging each qualification with the hiring manager and continuing to probe – especially if the list of qualifications seems too long. Do you really need someone who can juggle chainsaws? Is it enough that they can juggle apples?

Recruiters – don't be shy to ask these questions, and to probe each qualification to determine if it's necessary. You're helping everyone when you can narrow the search to a few core technical competencies and a lot of great behavioural abilities.

Key Questions

Here are a few key questions that will shed some light on the situation,

and will help the recruiter to promote the position:

- What is exciting and dynamic about the role? What sells the position to candidates?
- If you don't fill this role, what is the consequence to your organization?
- Shall we submit candidates above the pay grade if they are exceptional?
- What will a day in the life of the position look like?
- What will success in the role look like, and how will you measure it?

Ask the hiring manager to stop for a moment and think: "Do you enjoy working here? Do you like your job? Why?" Turning the conversation to them may give you a few really good clues about what's great about working at the organization.

Great recruiters partner with hiring managers as trusted advisors. Recruiters know the job market, they are knowledgeable about where to source both active and passive candidates, and know how to attract and include diverse candidates to strengthen shortlists. They are experts who conduct legally defensible recruitment practices that keep the organization safe from potential discrimination suits. Collaboration is key because the hiring manager is the final decision maker and organizational guru.

What's Next?

Now, it's time to put all of this great information into play. Execute the recruitment strategy, showing the hiring manager all of the things that you do that are unique. Posting and database/applicant tracking system searches are only the entry level of many things that

you do. You direct-recruit or hunt for passive candidates who aren't even looking for work. You fire off massive social networking and diversity and inclusion campaigns. You create advertising on television or radio, do sharp campus recruitment, and online career fair initiatives. Clients love to have regular "snapshot results reports" on the strategies you're using, and on the progress that you're making on their behalf.

After recruiters review resumes, create shortlists, do interviews, and submit candidates with professional profiles, the excitement really starts. Ideally, it will be tough for the hiring manager to make up their mind among the two-to-three stellar candidate shortlist that they interview. At this point, the most important action a hiring manager can take is to get back to the recruiter quickly with meaningful feedback. This prevents loss of candidates to competitor organizations.

From here, participate in "sourcing syncs," where recruiters and hiring managers revisit and tighten the search criteria if they didn't nail it the first time. Recruiters can bring their search data to show hiring managers the candidates in the labour market, and compare them to their intake information. It's a great way to refine and resume the search.

It all starts with the intake session. As the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said, "the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." In an effective recruitment process, that step is a great intake strategy session. Without it, your journey of a thousand miles might end up a thousand miles from your destination. **MW**

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