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THE WORLD ACCORDING TO RECRUITERS: HOW IT WORKS AND HOW TO MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Otherwise savvy business people are frequently confused or angered by their experiences with recruiters. In large part, this is because they have not looked closely at the recruiting industry's basic business and compensation models for the key to these relationships. Since this is a business relationship, the path to enlightenment can be found by simply following the money.

THE USUAL COMPLAINTS

- Recruiters won't call me back.
- Recruiters won't give me a few minutes of advice on my resume or job search.
- The recruiters I know never seem to have a job opportunity for me.
- Recruiters won't consider me for a search even though I know I am perfectly qualified.
- If I do network my way into a company, I end up talking with the recruiter anyway.
- If the recruiter didn't "find" me, I don't get fair consideration.
- After I've been interviewed, a recruiter may be attentive and then suddenly disappear.
- They string me along and keep me hanging.

None of this seems rational or fair, and certainly not considerate. Understanding how the recruiting world works and how recruiters make their money goes a long way to helping you have a better and less frustrating experience. If you understand their perspective, you have an opportunity to work with recruiters effectively, positively, and to your mutual benefit. It is a dance, and you can be a good partner.

WHY WON'T THEY TALK TO ME?

Recruiters work for their clients, and the clients pay the bill. Regardless of the type of firm, the recruiter ultimately gets paid for executing successful searches by delivering qualified and interested candidates. If you are not a match for an active search, every minute a recruiter spends with you is a minute that he or she is not making money. Unless you are a valuable resource for the future, recruiters tend not to extend courtesies such as returning phone calls.

WHY DON'T THEY HAVE A JOB FOR ME?

Surprise! Recruiters only control 10-12% of the job market. An individual recruiter is able to conduct only a small number of assignments each year, often as few as 8 to 10 for executive positions. Those

searches span positions, and sometimes industries and geographies as well. Recruiters are tied tightly to a job specification, and more tightly in a buyer's economy. The company is looking for candidates that "fit" the spec, not "out-of-the-box" talent. The odds that any individual recruiters are working on a search that is a perfect fit for you at the time you are looking for a new opportunity is infinitesimally small.

WHY AREN'T THEY INTERESTED IN ME?

Good recruiters learn what their clients want to fill the position. In addition to the job description, the recruiter usually understands the company culture, the history of incumbents in the position, and the private or unstated criteria on which the company will ultimately make a decision. The recruiter needs to find candidates that not only can do the job but who also can be "sold" to the client.

Clients pay a lot of money for recruiting services – sometimes as much as 35% of first year compensation. And the higher the position, the more likely the client pays travel expenses for the recruiter to conduct interviews. **CATCH 22:** The client is paying dearly for recruiting services, so the client will funnel all candidates through the recruiter for evaluation in order to get the full benefit of those services. On the other hand, recruiters need clients to value their investment; therefore, recruiters have a vested interest in "finding" the candidate. If the client finds the successful candidate rather than the recruiter, it can affect the perceived value of the services.

ONCE I'VE BEEN CONSIDERED OR PRESENTED FOR A JOB, WHY DO THEY STRING ME ALONG?

Recruiting assignments often have erratic paths. They start quickly, go on hold, change requirements, change hiring executive, or even get cancelled altogether. The recruiter is required to go with the client's flow and, at the same time, maintain an inventory of ready prospects. Furthermore, the recruiter never truly knows what the client or other candidates are going to do. He or she always needs a pipeline until an offer has been made and accepted, and sometimes even until the person actually starts the job.

WHAT DO I DO ABOUT THIS?

Recruiters are still an important channel in any job search. It is important to stay on their radar screens because no one ever knows when a great opportunity will suddenly surface, or which recruiter will have it. At the most senior levels, search firms are universally used when companies go to the external market to fill a position. Such a search is complex and time consuming. It requires extraordinary skills and is often confidential. Search firms must have or be able to get access to the right people. Clients use recruiters for finding managers and staff so they can outsource tasks to skilled professionals.

By understanding how recruiters work, you can position yourself to get the benefit of this channel. **DO** network with the appropriate people and get to know recruiters in your field. **OFFER** to be a source and provide quality referrals. **DO** keep your resume up-to-date and in their hands or databases. **DO NOT** expect anything in return. **DO NOT** take recruiter behavior personally. **DO** be connected and visible. Recruiters have all kinds of tools for finding you. **MAKE SURE** you can be found!