

Secondary Gains

The moral behind the recruitment story

The primary focus of the recruitment industry is pretty clear to all concerned. It is highly driven, extremely competitive, and attracts individuals who thrive on commercial challenge. By default, it is also high in risk for all parties involved.

Because of the financial implications associated with high profile business relationships in recruitment, we thrive on the primary objective of financial gain. After all, we are in business not charity! We get remunerated by means of commission based upon the deals brokered on behalf of our candidates. Our fee structures depend on percentages of candidate income more often than pre-agreed fixed fees, and individual consultants earn commission on the turnover they generate through these fees. The enterprise of recruitment, at face value and like any other business, is about money.

So it is easy, and quite understandable, that we are so driven by our primary objective that other potential gains are easily overlooked. Not because we are insensitive to them, but simply because the overriding prime driver is so strong that it often blocks out everything else.

What are the secondary gains in recruitment?

Every recruiter will have a different answer to this question. Depending on their highly individual internal drivers, some would say the client relationship. Others would say the candidate. Even others would say the personal satisfaction they gain from winning through. And certainly, there will be many other answers, each of them valid.

For a moment, let's remove the financial element from the business equation and place ourselves on the other side of the desk, first in the candidate and then in the client's position.

The candidate probably feels that we are an important cog in the wheel of his progress. We provide access to job opportunities he might not have had before. A good recruitment consultant will act as a sounding board, giving advice and frequently listening to problems and issues that affect the candidate on a personal level. And without either party being aware of this factor, the recruiter is in an immense position of power that can have a dramatic impact on the livelihood of the candidate. Consider this: people define themselves by their jobs. Often, candidates are willing to move themselves and their families across the country in order to gain that dream job. They risk their livelihoods and wellbeing on the recommendation of a consultant whose primary objective is to win a fee. Of course, the final acceptance offer is always the candidate's responsibility and we can only consult and make suggestions about candidates' life decisions. But still, the responsibility is enormous.

To most clients, the recruiter is probably a means to an end. We are meant to make his life easier by taking responsibility for part of the recruitment process, but he pays dearly for that pleasure. There are diverse opinions on the value added by recruitment consultants to employing

businesses. Some agencies are unwilling to take any of the risk, whilst others operate very closely to their clients in truly symbiotic business relationships where the risk is shared equally. However, the impact of candidates introduced into businesses, especially at senior level, always have a dramatic impact. A newly hired MD has immediate leadership responsibility, and takes the success of the business in his hands. Likewise, the recruiter who introduces him has a high degree of power over the hiring decision by introducing suitable candidates. By association, the impact of the recruiter's actions on the business can be huge. Again, the final hiring decision belongs to the client and it is up to us to broker an acceptable arrangement between the parties but this responsibility in itself contains an element of power.

The brokering element might highlight a conflict of interest in the way we charge our fees if monetary gain is the prime driving objective of the business relationship.

The true secondary gain for all parties concerned is the three-way win that happens when a responsible recruiter introduces a perfectly suitable candidate to an employer who benefits from having a true star in his business. The candidate has an excellent career, the business thrives through his input and the consultant has won a strong business relationship based on trust long after the fee has been paid and the guarantee period lapsed.

The moral of the story is simple: The fee will find itself if the ground work is done with the longer term secondary gain in mind. The recruitment industry is about people first. Without people there will be no industry: Consultants, candidates, clients, the relationships they build and the actions they take ultimately define the success of every single recruitment campaign.

Of course, luck will always play a part in finding the perfect candidate at the right time. As well as, of course, having the wherewithal and ability to spot that perfect candidate in the first place. That is what makes a good recruitment consultant.

Aiming for the secondary win, seeing beyond the imminent fee to the bigger picture of long term secondary gains, makes an outstanding recruitment consultant.

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