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12 Questions you must ask a recruitment supplier

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After working as a recruiter from the age of nineteen in 1984 I had no formal training, or qualification other than a “Script” and a dial telephone, and a boss that threw things at us. I was told to just ask an applicant where they last worked, what they did and reasons for leaving, and worked backward chronologically until school. When we opened The Works, we were still pretty “Green”. Thirty years on and crikey we’ve learned our “craft” to be a great recruiter is a wonderfully honed craft.

Not much has changed in our industry. The qualifications to entry are ZERO in most businesses. A degree sometimes, but by enlarge, a years’ experience, whether it was a good or indifferent would secure a recruiter a chair, whether earned or not.

Imaging the responsibility we are allowing some recruiters. Not just to source candidates, but to market your business to potential employees and clients of the future. How do we know a doctor is qualified to tamper with our bits and how do we know a mechanic is, well, a mechanic? The truth is, we rarely ask.

Here we have devised a few simple questions to ask a recruiter before you let them loose on your most prized element of your business. Its people! There are many more but here are a few simple ones to get started.

Enjoy, and if you need to discover more for your team of “How to Recruit” just ask.

What qualifies you to do this job?

Here we are looking for longevity, genuine interest and lots of third party examples of similar businesses and roles.

I'm keen to know how they learned the job. We're not selling cars here, we're helping people make decisions in their business and careers, and they need to know the Law and principles of recruitment and the technicalities

Who would be looking after my account and why?

It's great when a super duper sales or BDM does the schmooze on me but whose doing the delivery, who are they?

What attributes do they have and back to question #1. How long have they been with the business is OK to ask but you know what; we all start somewhere.

Could you tell me about when a recruitment project has gone wrong?

Stuff goes wrong, people change their mind half or even at the end of the process, but it should never be a surprise.

We should know when a candidate is interviewing elsewhere. Look for statements like; "The candidate turned the job down" "The client changed the role" "they recruited internally" "They weren't paying enough" We have over 150 reasons why a project didn't complete but we're looking here for someone taking personal responsibility, not blaming other people and if the job is done right, all the above statements should have been presented on first and subsequent conversations with a client or candidate and they should have been "Consulted" that's what a Recruitment Consultant does.

How many jobs did you NOT fill in the last three months and why?

Realistically a reasonable generalist recruiter fills 20% of roles, the more closely they work with a client and candidate this can bump up to 80%. We are curious to spot someone who knows the "Why" rather than blame.

What do you know about my sector/company?

This kills us all the time. I've asked so many consultants about their new clients and they don't have a clue where they are let alone what they actually do or how many people they employ. I need statistics, I deserve that they've done the research into my business, my ex-employees as well and current and where they are most likely to go to after they leave me. And more importantly where I like them to come from.

Could you tell me about candidates?

A truly open question that I need someone to “Love” their candidates, as though they are golden nuggets.

Most recruiters treat candidates like a butcher would treat cattle. I want to hear a smile, a fondness and at least an example of a great or favourite candidate.

What happens to your applicants that were unsuccessful?

Refer to the statement before in that I need to here that they would understand they could be damaging my reputation as a business if they’re not giving any feedback or response to applicants who are not “The One” after all I only need one or ten and if we’ve had three hundred applications to position I need to know what the Ad looked like? What were we asking for? A pulse, or specific skills and attitudes? Poor recruiters write awful ads.

Remember these people are an extension of not your HR department but your PR engine and reputations are a long time hard earned and a moment to lose. We never know who our failed applicant knows too!

Could I please choose three clients from a random list of 50 for a reference?

I love this one, ask for a list of fifty companies and contact names in confidence, and pick three or four.

I’m not expecting everyone to say amazing things but I’m looking for words such as Tenacious, Detailed, took a good job brief, understood my requirements, called back when they said they would. And did what they said they would. Remember it’s a two-way road all this malarkey and the client relationship needs to be managed and the boundaries set from the off.

My clients call me back within an hour of an interview or at close of play and always feedback on a CV within twenty-four hours.

Could you tell me the process to fill my roles?

This sets the “Men from the Boys”, you know where I’m going with this. Most recruiters are not detail, they take short cuts, they are dare I say pretty lazy when it comes to the small stuff. It’s the small stuff that kills the deals that missed the signs of a candidate in need or an unasked, unanswered question.

They should reel off: Take a full and concise Job Brief-Agree Terms and Fee-Explain the process to Client-Ascertain the urgency-Plan the recruitment roadmap or whatever their terminology might be-Start the search-short-list-interview-present the candidate-Candidate Prep-Clients Prep-De-brief both-Offer management.

That’s just a snapshot and half the process but if they get there or thereabouts I’d be happier.

What are the characteristics' of a great candidate?

What's the point in receiving a CV and getting all excited to meet a candidate if they're not really a #1 in the "Motivated to Move" scale? They should be eager to meet, interested in the role and match not just the skills but attitude and values aligned to your business.

They're not interviewing with every Tina Dick or Harriet and their CV isn't with more than two agencies. Reliability is key and can we reference them and the last person they worked for when asked the Golden Question; "Would you re-employ" would answer YES, as any variation would indicate it's a NO!

What are your corporate Values and how would they impact on us

On average, only two out of ten people in a business can recite four or five corporate values in their own business.

How do you interview for ATTITUDE

If there's one thing a recruiter should know inside out it this Ten Million Dollar question. We know now that 11% of people don't work out because of skills, a staggering 89% is about ATTITUDE!! And old fashioned interviews rarely dig deep enough and too many people don't know how to formulate questions let alone understand the difference between a good or a bad answer. 84% of hiring manager have never had any formal interview method training.

Could you tell me about social media and recruiting?

Here they should be able to demonstrate the difference between Linked in and Facebook and all the other five or six current vectors used for an effective recruitment campaign. They should be able to also explain the style of attraction compared with a more traditional advertisement. Ask them about AIDA
