



Recruiting Roadblocks

It may be time to replace a 'box-pushing' manager

by: Paul Schwartz, Copier Careers

Not long ago, we ran into a serious problem with one of our clients, the owner of an independent office technology dealership. The client — let's call him Tom — had retained us to recruit an experienced sales rep for his business, which has an excellent reputation and a competitive compensation plan. At first, everything was going well. We connected Tom with a candidate who seemed like a great fit. The candidate sailed through the dealership's hiring process and Tom decided to extend a job offer. Unfortunately, the candidate declined the position.

This was disappointing, but not completely out of the ordinary, and our recruiters were ready with other candidates whose backgrounds, skill sets, benchmarks and personalities were very close to what Tom was looking for. Over the course of several weeks, Tom and his management staff conducted many interviews and extended job offers to multiple candidates, all of whom they would have loved to add to their staff — but none of them accepted the position. By the time the third candidate rejected a job offer, Tom lost his patience. We were on the verge of not making a placement, despite our collective efforts.

From the client's perspective, our candidates were the problem. But we knew better. These candidates were excellent — and Tom thought so too, or he never would have extended job offers to them. Something else was going on and we were determined to get to the bottom of it. So we got on the phone with the candidates. When we asked them why they had rejected the position, they all said the same thing: "It's the sales manager."

It turned out that Tom's sales manager, a longtime employee of the dealership, simply did not understand the value of managed services. He had spent his career pushing boxes and was stuck in a pre-solutions mentality. The sales candidates, on the other hand, had come up in the solutions world, and they understood that pushing boxes was a losing proposition. There was no way they would agree to work for a dealership where their direct manager did not understand solution selling. The candidates and the manager were speaking two completely different languages.

This scenario is more common than you may think. Over the past several years, every position in this industry has evolved significantly. Where technicians once needed to know how to fix a few select machines, today they are asked to troubleshoot hardware, software and connectivity problems on a dizzying



array of devices. Sales reps face a similar challenge: As they navigate and analyze their clients' complex operating environments, they must be familiar with a huge range of potential solutions.

In 25 years of recruiting exclusively for BTA Channel employers, I have never seen a more challenging hiring environment — people with the right skill sets are in extremely short supply. To recruit qualified candidates, hiring managers must constantly work at growing and maintaining their networks — from soliciting employee referrals to attending industry events to leveraging social media, every little bit helps. They must also be open to the possibility that some of their recruiting problems may signal deeper issues with their leadership. Without forward-thinking sales and service managers at the helm, the best candidates will simply not be interested in working for your dealership — which brings us back to Tom.

After explaining the situation to him, it became clear that our goal of recruiting a new sales rep would never be successful until we dealt with the underlying issue: Tom needed to replace his sales manager with someone better equipped to confront today's challenges. We used our Adaptive Retainer Recruiting service to transition our initial assignment into a search for a new sales manager. Before long, we found a game-changing candidate — a technology-focused sales manager with the experience and vision to take Tom's dealership to the next level.

Once the new manager was in place, we were able to re-approach some of the candidates who had previously rejected an offer from Tom. Lo and behold, now that the real problem had been solved, they were more than willing to go to work for the dealership. By looking more closely at what was holding Tom's recruitment efforts back, we were able to move his business forward in a major way.

If you have been facing a similar situation, before getting frustrated at your inability to move forward, it is well worth asking yourself: "What is holding us back?" ■

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