

Follow-up crucial in good candidate care

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The principles of candidate care are fairly simple, yet many recruiters don't get the most crucial elements right, according to Majer Recruitment director, Suzie Majer. Here are her tips for building better relationships.

Majer has, in consultation with her staff, developed a candidate care program to ensure candidates have positive experiences with the company.

Within this, each consultant is responsible for taking care of their own candidates, but there is also a dedicated admin person to handle correspondence and be an extra point of contact for when consultants are out of the office.

Gestures matter

Small gestures such as sending wine or flowers to placed candidates to celebrate events like their birthdays remind candidates that they are appreciated, Majer says.

"Some agencies don't do anything in this area, and it's probably a cost issue, but you can't put a cost on [candidate care]," she says.

"In the end candidates know they're in demand, and they want to be with an agency that does pay attention to detail."

Building relationships

Many recruiters still see placement as marking the end of their relationship with the candidate, Majer says, but really, the relationship is just starting.

From catching up over coffee to see how the job's going, to keeping up constant contact, the candidate should know you'll still be in touch, she says.

"Candidates are smart; they know they've made you some money. They expect to be looked after and if you do that, it comes back to you."

More referrals

One of the benefits of good candidate care is that it increases referrals. Majer says her company has a formal referral system in place that rewards candidates for referring their friends.

She says these systems require diligent follow up to work properly.

"If someone is referred to you, ensure that you interview them. Even if they don't have the necessary skills you should follow up with them out of courtesy - you can always refer them to a more appropriate agency if you can't help them."

Rewarding people for referring successful candidates to you will ensure they feel they're appreciated and knowing that "there's something in it for them" will increase their likelihood of doing it again, she says.

Return all calls, always

Often candidates don't have a great respect for consultants, Majer says, and it's because they don't feel looked after or like the consultant is working in their interests.

Returning calls is one of the easiest things to do to ensure candidates feel appreciated. "It only takes two seconds to return someone's call. Even if you're busy, you can tell them that you haven't heard anything back yet."

Follow-up is the other crucial element of candidate care and most candidates' biggest complaint.

Majer says some candidates expect consultants to call them all the time with jobs, so it's up to recruiters to manage that expectation and explain what will actually happen.

At interview, you should set realistic expectations for how the relationship will evolve by saying something like, "If you don't hear from me, it's because nothing has happened yet." You can keep in touch by saying, "I'm still looking, but nothing has come up."

If you have no intention of helping a particular candidate, for whatever reason, let them know that when you call a couple of days later.

"Explain that nothing is happening in their area, or refer them to another, more suitable agency with more suitable jobs," Majer says.

Aim to help everyone

Even if you can't help someone you should still be able to give them some piece of advice, or a tip, Majer says - "something of value".

If they've spent an hour with you, they should come away with something so it doesn't feel like a waste of their time - "nobody is too busy that they can't give some piece of advice".

Keep improving

Finally, it's important to collect feedback from candidates on their experience.

Even more crucial is to ensure that feedback is acted upon, "otherwise what's the point?" Majer says.

Some agencies ignore their negative feedback but it's particularly important to address areas where someone has had a bad experience, she says.