

**TALENT ACQUISITION**

# **Recruiting 101: 5 Tips for Better Communication with Hiring Managers**

By Roy Maurer | July 19, 2022

**L** leading an efficient and productive meeting with the hiring manager to figure out what he or she really wants when recruiting for a role is one of the most critical steps in the recruitment process.

"In order to create the most optimal recruiting environment, it is essential that the hiring manager and recruiter talk about open job requisitions, what's working and what's not working, challenges the recruiter faces, expectations the hiring manager has, and a whole host of other things that will essentially make both their jobs easier," said Will Staney, the CEO and founder of Proactive Talent, an Austin, Texas-based consulting firm focused on talent acquisition strategy, employer branding and recruiter training.

Recruiting experts and practitioners outlined the following tips to ensure that both recruiters and hiring managers are on the same page when it comes to finding the right talent.

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### 5 Tips for Better Meetings With Hiring Managers

# 1

## GO IN PREPARED

Show up with market research on the role, the industry and potential candidates.

# 2

## STREAMLINE QUALIFICATIONS

Be ready to cut down the job requirements to must-haves.

# 3

## GATHER INFORMATION

Collect valuable information about the role and the manager's specific hiring process.

# 4

## SET EXPECTATIONS

Ensure that the hiring manager commits to a timeline for reviewing resumes and conducting interviews.

# 5

## GROW THE RELATIONSHIP

Use the time together to build a bond. Communication is key.

### 1. Go in Prepared

**T**he recruiter's role in mature recruitment functions is shifting from being an order taker for the hiring manager to presenting information as a talent advisor. The intake meeting is the perfect place to put this new model into practice.

"You will immediately gain the respect of the hiring manager if they see that you're armed with data about the industry, competitors, geographies and salaries," said Katrina Collier, candidate engagement expert at Katrina Collier Limited in London and author of *The Robot-Proof Recruiter* (<https://www.amazon.com/Robot-Proof-Recruiter-Survival-Recruitment-Professionals/dp/1789660122>) (Kogan Page, 2019). "Understand as much as you can, and show you've done your research," she said.

Catherine Jaeger, recruiting manager at real estate technology company Compass, said she used to "fall into the routine of jumping on an intake call and taking down all the details the hiring manager wanted to give and running with that." But she realized that even though the manager oversees the position, he or she may not know what it's like from the labor market point of view.

"They're relying on you to bring that business intelligence data to the meeting, and if you don't, they will fall back on their experience to fill the role, and that doesn't help you at all," she said.

Jaeger advised recruiters to research the market they're recruiting in, look at the cost of living in that market, look at available talent pools and job openings, and even conduct a preliminary search before attending the meeting with the hiring manager. "If what you find is not sufficient, you're going to want to expand on the candidate profiles the hiring manager is asking for. The more data you can provide upfront helps them hire better talent," she said.

Collier added that it sometimes pays to walk hiring managers through the sourcing process during the meeting. "Run a quick search to show them what you do in order to test whether what they are looking for is realistic," she said.

Sarah Greer, an independent recruiter in the Washington, D.C. area., added that bringing a few sample resumes based on the job description to the meeting is another good way to get some immediate feedback before starting the candidate search.

## 2. Streamline Qualifications

**T**he opportunity to pare down the job description is an often-crucial aspect of the intake meeting. "Hiring managers will ask for ridiculous requirements because they don't understand the marketplace," Collier said.

Kris MacDermott, senior vice president of sales at Planet Technology, a Boston-based staffing and recruitment firm, agreed, saying hiring managers will often present a wish list of too many items that won't yield searches that work. "The first thing to do is narrow down the job description—find out what three or four things are most important," she said. "Have managers tell you in their own words."

Greer said this is the time to separate the must-haves from the nice-to-haves. "Ask for the role's minimum requirements, ask about deal breakers, and ask about the soft skills needed to be successful in the role."

## 3. Gather Information

**C**ollect as much information about the role and the specific hiring process as possible. Debbie Zoerkler, SHRM-CP, senior specialist in talent acquisition at the Society for Human Resource Management, recommended that recruiters inquire about specific aspects of the job:

- The position. Why is it open? Who was last in the role? Is it new? How would the manager sell it?
- The culture and personalities of the team. What kind of personality would be the best fit? "The skill set is only a piece of this puzzle; not all candidates that have the right skill set will be a match for the team's culture or manager," she said.
- The importance of filling the role. When is the candidate needed?

MacDermott clarified why this last point is key. "Are they looking to bring the person on ASAP or in a few months? Dig into the true time frame for the process, and you'll hear back that the hiring manager will be on vacation and won't be able to interview for a couple of weeks, or she expects the interview process to take a few months and there's no hurry, or that the department doesn't even have authorization for the hire yet."

Jaeger suggested taking notes and sending them around to certify that everyone is on the same page. "The notes also corroborate what was agreed upon if the hiring manager changes his mind later in the process or tells you your search is wrong," she added.

Collier advised recruiters to collect information about the role from the department and team, as well. "Go into the business, sit with their peers and discover what the role you're filling does."

Recruiters can also ask hiring managers and their teams for referral leads, Greer said.

*[SHRM members-only toolkit: Managing Successful Employee Referral Programs ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/tk-designingandmanagingsuccessfulemployeeefferalprograms.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/tk-designingandmanagingsuccessfulemployeeefferalprograms.aspx))]*

#### 4. Set Expectations

It's the recruiter's responsibility during the intake meeting to ensure the hiring manager commits to days or windows of time for reviewing resumes and conducting interviews. "There are too many recruiters sitting in their offices terrified of hiring managers," Collier said. "Don't be afraid of them. And don't let them fob you off with excuses."

Andre Boulais, a technology and talent acquisition executive at San Francisco-based talent sourcing software company Entelo, noted the importance of this step. "We've all experienced when a great candidate is sourced and sent to the hiring manager only to fall into a black hole where they never hear feedback," he said. "This causes frustration on both sides. The recruiters don't want their candidates hung out to dry once they are sent over to the hiring manager. The hiring managers are upset that by the time they want to talk to the candidate, [he or she is] no longer interested."

Experts recommend creating a service-level agreement to clarify roles and responsibilities for each step in the process, as well as expectations for turnaround times. For example, consider stipulating that resumes should be reviewed by hiring managers within 48 hours.

#### 5. Grow the Relationship

**R**ecruiters and hiring managers need each other. "This relationship is not going away," said Rachelle Roberts, senior manager of talent acquisition at Slalom, a business consulting firm in Salt Lake City, Utah. "Recruiters need to emphasize, 'We're both working toward the same goal, and the more we can communicate, the better I can anticipate questions and needs and be more proactive.' Once you have credibility and trust, the other pieces fall into place."

Growing a strong bond of understanding also gives recruiters more confidence to push back and say, "You don't need these 10 things in a candidate; you only need these five things," or to ask for support, Roberts said.

Communication is key. "Use the meeting to ask for communication preferences," she said. "Some hiring managers will want to talk about a position every day—it's for you to understand how much and what type of communication is needed."

"Always allow your personalities to show through," she advised, "because that's part of what you bring to the table. Don't inhibit yourself."

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