

The counter offer

We should have seen it coming

Finding top talent for your team is tough, as we know. What's even tougher is identifying that top talent, investing hours of time in the interview process and then losing them to a counter offer. As I look back at the times that this has occurred in my career in search, this situation could have been avoided in most cases if better due diligence had been completed early in the process.

Let's face it, there is always the "human" factor in talent acquisition and we should expect that a small percentage of the candidates will ultimately accept a counter offer. The following are ways that may help you to see this situation coming and cut the process off or take measures to derail the counter offer situation.

Look at the facts

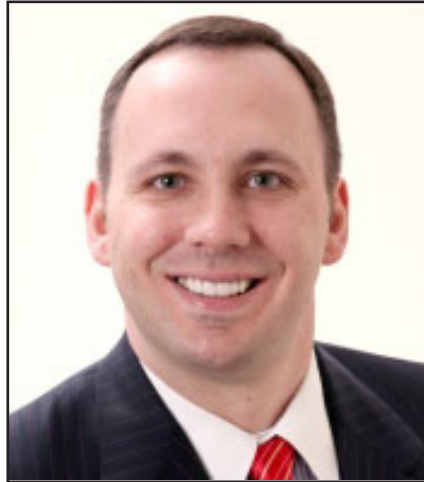
One area to look at is the tenure of the candidate with his or her current employer. Tenure is a great thing to see with talent, but also can make acquiring that talent even more challenging. These candidates have stayed with their company for a reason(s). These are candidates who have been loyal to their employer and may cave-in when they present their resignation letter to their boss who has probably become a trusted friend over the years.

When engaging the tenured candidate, ask them what their employer will do if they resign. More importantly, ask them how they will handle this situation. You might be surprised by the answers you receive, but at least you can begin the dialog and address a potential counter offer situation and why accepting it could be a very bad move for their career.

The behavior of the candidate is another tangible that should be noted. Stage components of your interview process so that the candidate is required to complete a follow-up action. When a candidate follows through with these actions, this is a good sign that they have a sincere interest in your opportunity. If you find yourself chasing the candidate more than they are chasing you, this could be a strong indication that they are going in another direction.

Listen to what the candidate is really saying

During the course of an interview process, you have many opportunities to find out what is really motivating the candidate. The early part of the process is the



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best time to find out why your opportunity may represent a better one than their current situation. Spend time really vetting out what makes your opportunity more compelling than where they are presently. This will help you to have a deeper understanding of a candidate's impetus.

If the candidate focuses on compensation as their main driver for making a career move, beware. As the hiring manager, you have to be able to dissect the candidate's motivation during the interview and then see if your opportunity truly matches their motivations. If there are not tangible reasons for making the move other than compensation, the candidate is not only a counter offer risk, but also a flight risk if you do in fact get them on your team. Moving forward, they will potentially make the same move for the next employer who is willing to dangle more money in front of them.

Stay close with the candidate

In many cases, a candidate is put under enormous pressure during the time between giving notice and starting the job. The candidate has to go into work every day and face the boss and coworkers. This is the time when the candidate can think

of many reasons why not to pursue your opportunity. They can get into a mode of thinking that it is easier to stay in a place they know the business and team. I don't care what level the role is, people go through anxiety in making the jump even when they know the opportunity is better for their career. Your company represents the great unknown; new business, new team, etc.

As the hiring manager, you should stay in touch with the candidate during this time. Proactively call them to see how the transition is going and to reassure them that they have made the right decision. If the candidate has been offered a counter offer, take the time to explain all the negatives that come with this perceived positive. If possible, schedule the candidate to come into your office during this period to help them acclimate to the new team. Take them out to lunch or dinner to further help build a more personal connection with you and/or your team. Having a signed offer letter and then waiting for the person to show up on their start-date is not always a great strategy.

"People should be banging on our door to work here"

Good luck if this is your view on the talent acquisition process. I am not questioning the fact that many companies are in fact great employers. However, to the candidate, you still have to prove this to them. Great talent is going to evaluate the opportunity since their career is one of the most important things in their life. A wrong career move can be devastating. A good employer understands that they have to show a candidate why their company would be a positive career choice.

Counter offers will always be a potential threat to a hiring process. Companies need to hone their skills on bringing threats to the surface early and develop effective interviewing processes to move through these issues as early in the hiring process as possible. In doing so, ratios like offer to acceptance and time to fill will improve by default. <<

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