

Seeking the Right Fit

Look inside your vendor's company to make decisions

By Tom Kosnik

Many human resource professionals and hiring managers struggle to determine whether a staffing provider is a good fit before handing over a job order or agreeing to a full engagement of services. Sure, most buyers have their methods. But more often than not, it is a quick decision based more out of frustration with an existing provider's inability to meet a specific need.

High-performing staffing companies in the marketplace will show certain signs that one can look at in order to evaluate a good fit. Rather than making a quick decision that can lead to another point of frustration, a checklist of a few key variables may be just what the doctor ordered to assist in a good decision.

There are six specific variables to review within a staffing firm. These are areas one can quickly investigate in order to make a lasting decision with a staffing vendor.

- Does the firm have focus?
- Does the firm have articulated processes?
- Is the firm turning over many employees?
- Is the firm providing good management?
- Is the firm investing in employee development?
- Does good leadership exist at the top?

Here is a little bit more about what to look for specifically in each one of these variables.

Focus. Staffing firms that specialize in a niche generally outperform those that claim to be "all things to all people." In fact, while general staffing firms have many advantages, I am hard-pressed to think of one staffing firm that actually excels at placing candidates in a wide variety of job categories either on the direct-hire side or the temp side.

In staffing and recruiting, focus is critical to success and superior service. This should come as no big surprise. Recruiting engineers is truly different from recruiting administrative personnel. Methods that attract engineers will not work in attracting sales professionals. A specialty niche staffing firm gains intellectual capital that it can offer to its customers.

Process. Staffing firms that have well-articulated and documented fulfillment processes will generally outperform those staffing firms that don't. Asking to see the documented fulfillment process is an excellent way to determine if a staffing firm will meet your standards.

In staffing and recruiting, quality customer service is all in the execution of the details. Process is king and

customer needs are just a few dynamics that need to be managed through a fulfillment process.

Think about your own company's recruiting efforts. A professional would typically use some process or procedure that maintains efficiencies and leads to successful placements. A staffing firm is no different.

Recruiter Turnover. A longer-tenured, stable

recruiting staff usually delivers better value than those plagued by high turnover. Finding out the average tenure of the recruiters at a particular staffing firm is a healthy evaluative question.

Recruiters over time will build up an invaluable network of candidates and contacts. The longer a recruiter is at a particular staffing company, the deeper the network of candidates and contacts this

recruiter will build. This rich landscape of resources is exactly what a customer will want to access from a recruiter.



ILLUSTRATION BY DAVE CUTLER

Recruiters will also amass a body of knowledge about recruiting in a certain field. The more experienced will know certain ins and outs about recruiting for a certain job or finding a particular candidate.

Management. Staffing firms that are managing their employees well generally outperform those that don't pay enough attention. When evaluating a staffing firm, ask about the specific management practices and tools that are being utilized to determine if there is a good match with your needs.

Management practices in a staffing firm are no different from such practices in

other businesses. One will find management that has a high concern for results, a high concern for people, or a high concern for running a country club!

Employee Development. Staffing firms that invest in their employees' development will generally deliver the best results. If you are going to work with a staffing firm, work with one that employs a group of recruiters that are smarter and better this year than last.

Training and development are critical to successful customer service.

Leadership. Companies that demonstrate leadership deliver greater value. Leadership in the staffing industry

is all about inspiring its internal employees to gain a competitive advantage by offering over-the-top customer service. Your company can benefit directly from this.

Assess the man or the woman at the top. Is this person inspiring? Or do you just get a so-so feeling? Research shows that high-quality employees are attracted to inspiring leaders. True leaders in the staffing industry are out in front of the rest of their company. They are not afraid to address difficult issues that come up in business, in the marketplace or at the customer location. Is this happening at the top?

Whether you are assess-

ing your existing staffing vendors or a list of prospective staffing vendors, a quick check list is a prudent tool to use as you evaluate. And on this check list, make sure to find out staffing focus, articulated fulfillment processes, recruiter turnover rates, management practices, ongoing employee development and leadership.

Understanding these dynamics of your staffing vendor can make for better choices that result in superior service. ●

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