

## Ask the Right Questions

Focus on two key criteria when evaluating vendors

By Tom Kosnik

**K**nowing the key criteria with which to assess a group of staffing vendors for the needs of your company is the difference between tremendous success and horrible failure.

Most human resource departments receive at least 10 cold calls a day from staffing vendors wanting their business. And with all the specialty staffing offerings available, it has become increasingly difficult to know if in fact you have the best staffing vendor for the job.

Historically, companies have evaluated staffing vendors by looking at the number of years the vendor has been in business, the client list, and the revenue size or number of office locations of the vendor. These criteria, for the most part, have become meaningless.

So, that begs the question, "How does one evaluate a staffing vendor to ensure a good fit for the organization's needs?" If there were just two key criteria that one could quickly fall back upon, what would they be?

### Metrics Are Key

The very first thing to ask a sales executive from a staffing supplier seeking your requisitions is, "Does your staffing company track performance metrics?" If they do, will they share these metrics with you? You want to work with vendors that track quality performance metrics and will share these metrics with you.

The proof of a vendor's ability to better their competition and your internal recruiting staff is in their metrics. One would be best served by focusing on the following three metrics and their ratios to one another: "candidate interviews" to "client submissions" to "hires."

A staffing firm should conduct a full-length interview of a prospective candidate. The interview typically takes 45 to 60 minutes. A staffing vendor that is managing the process well will have a set interviewing format followed by recording interview notes in a database system.

A client submission is when a staffing vendor submits to a client a candidate that meets the qualifications of the open job order. This submission is typically accompanied by a presentation document that highlights the notes from the full-length interview, a matching assessment that highlights what the client is requesting and how the candidate matches up, and a copy of the candidate's resume.

A hire is when the client hires a candidate that the staffing supplier has presented. Certainly with the hire comes negotiating the offer and/or any other additional items that a prospective employee or client may have as a concern.

A well-managed staffing vendor will typically interview nine candidates and submit three to the client in order

two more candidates than if you were working with a well-managed vendor. If the ratio of candidate interviews to client submissions is 18:3, then the staffing vendor is taking twice as long to fill your open job orders, which equates to down time in your organization.

Again, the evaluative criteria are the quality performance metrics. Get these

measurements and track them on an on-going basis to ensure that service is not slipping. You may discover other metrics that fit your specific needs. Additionally, you may find some variation in these ratios depending upon the skill sets or jobs you are seeking to fill. Stand these variations

up against other similar vendors to make sure that your expectations are justified.

### Focus on Fulfillment

The second thing to ask a staffing vendor bidding for your requisitions is, "How is your firm's fulfillment team different from that of other staffing vendors?" You want to work with staffing vendors that are all about an A+ recruiting team.



to achieve a hire. That means a 9:3:1 ratio.

If a staffing vendor is not tracking these quality performance metrics, then keep looking for another staffing provider. Failing to track quality performance metrics is a clear sign of ineffective recruiting, which would result in your time being wasted.

If the ratio of candidate submission to hire is 5:1, then you are interviewing

Even though the sales person is your contact back to the staffing vendor, it is the fulfillment team that delivers your results and needs to be your focus.

Find out what kind of "recruiting power" your staffing vendors possess. Superior recruiting comes from a well-trained team. I have heard it said that recruiting is not a job, but a series of small, detailed tasks.

Well-managed staffing firms have a formal training program for new recruiters that are not considered competitive secrets. Ask to see it. An untrained fulfillment team results in ineffective recruiting which results in your time being wasted.

Beyond initial training, well-managed staffing vendors will also have weekly training. Why? Tasks in the area of recruiting change regularly with the advancement of technological tools. Also, the work consists of a significant amount of detailed tasks and superior staffing firms are going to keep their internal employees sharp.

Superior recruiting also comes from what is called a core discipline match. One part of that lies in the job itself. Find out if recruiters are contract, direct hire or both. Focus equals success. If recruiters are working both contract job orders and direct hire job orders, then their effectiveness drops by 25 per-

cent. Unfortunately, the end user pays for this inefficiency.

The other aspect of a core discipline match is found in skill sets. Again, focus equals success. A recruiter who is recruiting candidates in accounting and legal will be far less successful than if he is recruiting candidates only in accounting or only in legal. You want to ensure that the fulfillment team of your staffing vendor is targeted so that you gain the benefits from their efficiency.

The evaluative criterion here is a fulfillment team that is well-trained and well-focused to ensure its customers efficient and effective candidate matches for their open job orders. You will find

staffing vendors that claim their recruiters can do it all. This will cost you money.

In the end, you want a staffing vendor that will not waste your time or your company's hiring manager's time. Cut out all the other questions you may be asking and ask about quality performance metrics and the quality fulfillment team. Finding out about these two key criteria will assist you in immediately evaluating if a staffing vendor is a good match for your requisitions. ❸

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Tom Kosnik is a certified organizational development consultant who specializes in the procurement of human resources. He can be reached at [tkosnik@visus.us](mailto:tkosnik@visus.us).