“PERCEPTION IS REALITY”: A RECRUITER’S GUIDE TO GOING FROM ORDER TAKER TO TRUSTED ADVISOR

Make the transition, and become a better consultative partner for your clients and candidates!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

people2.0

A Recruiter's Guide to Going From Order Taker to Trusted Advisor

Make the transition, and become a better consultative partner for your clients and candidates!

Introduction

When talking to a friend or colleague, has anyone ever said to you some iteration of the phrase, "When I first met you I thought you were [INSERT NOT-SO-NICE ADJECTIVE]"? Or have you ever been in a situation where something you said or did was interpreted in a way that was the opposite of your true intentions/how you meant it?

The age-old philosophy "perception is reality" has stood the test of time because of reasons and experiences like the ones mentioned above. Ultimately, the ways in which we present ourselves to others (whether it be the way we look, speak, act, perform, etc.) all serve to create long-lasting impressions on the people we encounter in our personal and professional lives.

As such, while the idea that recruiters are simply order takers for their clients is incredibly untrue (as you know from the work you put in day in and day out for your own clients); however, the perception that recruiters just fill job openings with whomever is available does exist. What's more, candidates might get hung up on the fact that you work for the client, and care more about filling an empty seat than you do about finding a job that best fits their skill sets.

So, how can you work to combat these false judgments, and make clients and candidates view you as someone they respect? This eBook will explore various steps and strategies you can take to stop being viewed as an order taker and start being considered a trusted consultant.

Establishing Yourself as an Authority on Talent

When it comes to dealing with the problems of the world, whether they be environmental, medical, or political, we turn to field experts to provide explanations and solutions that better a given situation.

As a focused-example of this, think about when someone needs to take their pet to the vet; while it's easy to tell that something is wrong, animals cannot talk to let us know what is going on. Veterinarians have to try and find a way to diagnose the problem and provide guidance for the owners.

> ***"An expert is [someone] who has made all the mistakes which can be made, in a narrow field."***
>
> – Niels Bohr, Danish physicist

The SOAP Method

In order to get to the bottom of a diagnosis, all medical professionals use something called the SOAP method. For a veterinarian specifically, they have to go through the following steps to determine what might be wrong with an animal brought into their office:

- Ask the owner **subjective (S)** questions to determine what it is they're seeing
- Ask the owner **objective (O)** question that deal with the history of the animal/their pedigree
- Based on the data collected, go through an **analysis (A)**, such as running tests
- Then, come up with a **plan (P)**, such as providing medication

If you take the same type of concept and apply it to the recruiting field, you can start enhancing your ability of being perceived as a trusted advisor and consultant.

Similar to the example above, while your client might have an idea about what the problem is and what they need (candidate-wise), as a professional in finding top talent, it is up to you to demonstrate that expertise by ask probing questions to help get to the bottom of things and help your clients make a plan for their job search.

Understanding the Big Drivers Behind Client Decision-Making

Diving further into the SOAP method, taking a hard look at what motivates clients can make a huge impact not only on getting to the bottom of their talent needs, but in bringing you one step closer to being perceived as a consultant instead of an order taker.

As such, here are a few topics to bring up when talking to your clients in order to help get them thinking differently, and have you serve as a consultant:

- **Volume of activity**: are they expanding, or do they need better people to handle volume increases (i.e. data entry)?
- **Deadlines**: are there any upcoming projects, relocations, seasonal needs, or filing dates to meet?

Your clients' motivators will change as their business needs evolve; top-performing consultants stay curious and never stop asking questions!

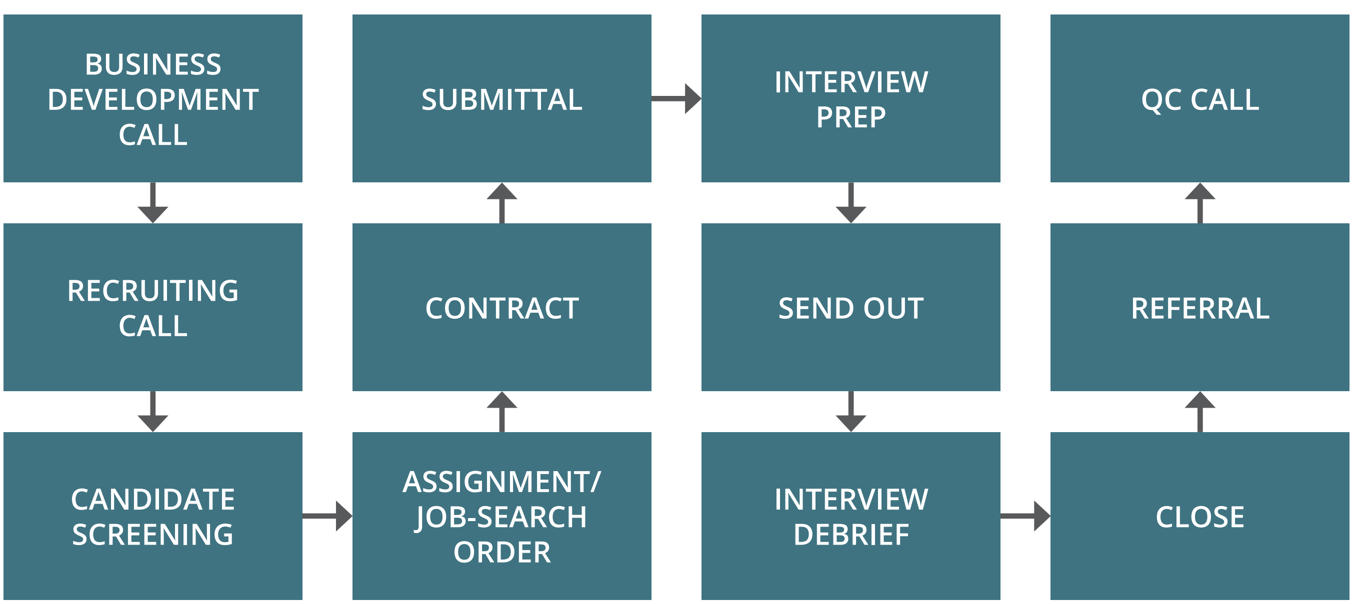
- **Systems and processes not functioning properly**: why do they need to bring a new person onboard? If it's a particular skill set or practice that might be outdated/hard to find, ask why they need it.
- **Lack of in-house knowledge/training time**: is there anyone in-house who knows how to handle certain processes, or how to take on current programs in place?
- **Transitions**: what problems are caused by someone leaving? How hard will it be for someone to step into to this role?
- **Personality traits or conflicts**: is there a top performer they would like to clone if they could? Or was there a past employee that didn't work out? What are the current personality dynamics that should be considered?

As you're going through these questions, make sure you avoid the "pitch and tell" scenario (e.g. telling them what they need and what you can offer); instead, use the "probe and sell" angle to better understand their requirements so that you can better sell yourself and serve your customers.

What's more, it's important to be curious and continue to stay curious. As your clients' business needs change, so will their motivations, so don't just rest on your initial observations as your relationships continue to progress.

Taking a Diagnostic Approach to the Placement Process

When it comes to placing a candidate, there are multiple steps and levels required to guide a client to a successful hire. While there are various iterations of the placement process, most involve the following stages:



While all of these steps play a major role in finding the best talent for a client, pretty much everything centers around the send-out phase (the interview between client and candidate). As such, all of the information you gather from your clients should work to make sure that the interviews your clients have with candidates lead to a successful outcome.

To increase the effectiveness of the send-out phase, it is crucial to evaluate the three major areas where recruiters have the opportunity to best prove their value as a consultant: the assignment/job-search order, the business development call, and the interview debrief phases.

Assignment/Job-Search Order

The most common interaction recruiters have when talking to clients occurs when there is a job assignment in the pipeline that they need to fill.

However, the important thing to remember when picking up the phone to discuss an open requisition is that it's not about the knowledge you walk in the door with, but the questions that you ask that can open up a dialogue that helps you better serve the client. Coming in with a lot of questions won't make it look like you don't know what you're doing—instead, it will help you come off as someone who is invested in really helping find the best person for the job.

When asking your clients job-search questions, make sure you follow the **SPIN** selling method. This strategy helps separate top performers from the rest!

- **SITUATION:** Learn where your prospects stand
- **PROBLEM:** Identify potential areas of opportunity
- **IMPACT:** Figure out the seriousness of their issues
- **NEEDS PAYOFF:** Encourage prospects to explain your recruiting benefits in their own words

What's more, since job descriptions are more of a legal document than an all-encompassing story about the role, it's important to keep asking your clients "why?" and learning more about their organizational challenges. The more you can learn about the problems they face, the more you can figure out the real issues they're wrestling with.

Here are a few questions that recruiters typically ask during this job-search order phase of the process (left), as well as some questions that can work to help you get to the bottom of what problems your client is really looking to solve (right):

Standard Questions (Mainly situation-based)	**Consultative Questions** (Deal with problem and impact)
Why is this position open?	If you don't hire, what sort of problem will that cause you?
What are the core responsibilities of the job?	What will you miss about the incumbent leaving?
What skills are required for this role?	What would you like to improve with this hire?
What will the interview process look like?	Who is the best person you've ever had in this role?
What is the compensation package?	Who was a person that didn't perform well?

By asking the right questions and continuing to probe into the problems your client is facing and how bringing in the right person will help work to alleviate a certain pain point, the more likely you are to not only help them find the right person for the job, but also alter their perception about what you bring to the table in this partnership.

Business Development/Recruiting Call

Another important phase in the placement process that can allow you to start moving from order taker to trusted advisor occurs during the business development phase.

While the standard approach is to call leads to explain what services you can offer them, with the number of calls and emails business leaders receive daily, you're most likely not going to get their attention. Instead, a much stronger, consultative approach to reaching out to a new client stems from identifying some sort of connection or relevance to them.

Regardless of which avenue you take to make the connection, remember to make it about them first, then move onto you! A few topics to connect with a potential client over include:

- Industry niche
- Geographic penetration
- Technology expertise
- Social (e.g. alumni of a common college, company, etc.)
- Mutual connections

Once you have your foot in the door, make sure you provide a story to help further drive your initial connection. Given stories help us connect people to what we're saying on an emotional level, having a short, specific, and succinct story about yourself, your business, and your goals to help your clients will help you create a long-lasting impression.

What's more, if you can connect it to information that is pertinent to who they are, instead of listing off a laundry list of credentials, it's more likely that the client will view you as someone they can rely on to guide them through and recruitment process.

Interview Debrief

While this phase of the placement process occurs after the send-out, it too serves as a crucial step in ensuring a requisition is filled. However, instead of serving as a consultant to your client, you're working to be one for the candidate.

Typically, when a recruiter circles back with a candidate about an interview, the usual questions asked include, "how did it go?" and "how long were you there?" While those questions can be a great launching off point, if you stop there, you end up falling back into order-taker status; make sure you recognize what's important to the candidate instead of only concentrating on what's important to you.

To move beyond the high-level questions, focus on the "power of summary" when talking to candidates. First, ask questions during the screening and interview prep portions of the placement process that show that you care and are paying attention (e.g. "this is what I hear you saying," "this is what's important to you," "if you don't accomplish this…," etc.). Then, when you're following up with your candidate post-interview, retouch on the topics they mentioned were important to them in the beginning, and open the floor to see if they have any questions or concerns about the placement. If something seems to be off, make sure to dig deeper.

Understanding what drives a candidate's decision can be the difference between them accepting an offer or not, so make sure they can view you as a trusted confidant and someone who's looking to help lead them in the right direction.

Moving the Needle

Ultimately, when it comes to perceptions, making a bad impression happens quickly and easily, while developing one of prestige and trustworthiness takes longer and requires more work. The reality is, most people aren't quick to trust, and in the world of business, it often takes showing you can hit the mark time and time again before you're viewed as someone they can count on.

However, if you focus on opening their minds and touching their hearts by showing that you care, you can begin to move away from being perceived as someone who just works to "serve" them and their needs, and start being seen as someone they rely on to guide them towards bettering their business. What's more, by slowing down and staying present and attuned to what your clients' needs are, you will end up moving faster in the placement process, and finding the right individuals to meet their talent needs.

A Partner You Can Trust

As a part of our comprehensive back-office solution, People 2.0 provides expert-driven advice and support for all things staffing and recruiting. Whether you're seeking guidance on recruiting strategies, looking to expand your placement capabilities, or want to offload your non-core business tasks, People 2.0 serve as a strategic resource in helping you efficiently and profitably place talent!

Learn more about how we can help you move from order taker to trusted advisor:
call 888-270-3579 or visit www.people20.com

people2.0®
GLOBAL WORKFORCE DEPLOYMENT

Sources:
1. "The Journey from Order Taker to Consultant," presented as a part of People 2.0's webinar series by Mike Lejeune, president of Lighting the Path.