

# CONNECTION

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# How to find and hire the right people every time

BY RIKKA BRANDON

WHEN I'M CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE at networking events, I nearly always get one of

two questions thrown my way:

1. "What is a headhunter?"
2. "How do you actually find the right people to hire?"

I hear the first one more than I'd expect or want to, but I hear the latter with a bit more frequency—and there's a reason.

One in three small businesses have unfilled job openings due to a lack of qualified applicants, and 43% of small busi-

nesses say their growth is impeded because of this shortage. (Wall Street Journal, July 9, 2014)

That's a loss of millions of dollars and huge, unimaginable amounts of stress that small business owners face. With all the other pressures companies in the cast polymer business must deal with, this is not a welcome addition to the load. Since I've been a recruiter for more than 10 years and filled over 400 jobs, I've developed my own sense about how to find and hire the right person for the job. Here are my tips:

## Why I recommend a phone interview

One of the main reasons I do a first interview via phone is because most of my clients are national and some are even in different countries. It's physically impossible for me to conduct those interviews.

However, that's not why I prefer starting with a phone interview and strongly recommend them to my clients.

No matter where you are—no matter how small a town you're in—it will take at least 10-15 minutes for somebody to get in the car, drive to your office, get out, wait in the waiting room and then sit down to get interviewed. Common courtesy dictates that the interview should be a longer than it took the interviewee to get to you. That means each interview should last at least 15 minutes.

So what do you do if you realize in the first five minutes this isn't going to be a fit?

### A phone interview will save you time.

A few questions by phone is an easy way to make sure the candidate is actually interested, and has the experience and qualifications you seek. It's also a great tool to gage deal breakers upfront such as compensation, commute, etc.

### A phone interview can help you focus.

Doing a phone interview helps entrepreneurs and people new to interviewing focus on what the person's saying without being distracted by their physical presence, such as how painful it must have been to get that nose ring or wondering why the candidate is fidgeting.

Without these distractions, you can make a more level-headed decision on whether to pursue this candidate. Non-verbal cues and appearance can be important, but for the initial conversation, you should be able to get the info you need from phone answers.

### A phone interview gives insight into communication skills.

Today most business communication happens over email, on the phone and then in person. I use email to set up the phone interview because it shows me little nuances such as whether they use all capital letters or if they have terrible grammar. Depending on your business, the candidate may exclude themselves simply by typing "I ain't going to be around on Monday, so it'll have to be Tuesday."

The phone interview then gives you a firsthand chance to experience how they come across to customers. Are they hard to understand? Do they talk excessively loud or fast?

## Step 1. Get really clear about the position

I can't find the right people to hire if I don't know the nooks and crannies of the job. The same goes for you. You need to outline the day-to-day responsibilities and recognize what positions or industries might have parallel positions. You should also recognize your own company culture so that you can see what personality type would fit well into the existing teams. You might also want to learn about the people who've been successful in the position in the past—and about the ones who haven't. (See "Writing a Good Job Description")

## Step 2. Build a recruiting platform

Most small businesses post one or two ads and hope that a decent candidate applies. This is wishful thinking. A recruiter knows you need much more. I use a minimum of 12 sources to publicize jobs—job posting boards, social media, networking, association contacts, direct recruiting, resume databases and more. You may not need that many since you're familiar with what works in your community, but if you want more qualified applicants, you need more places to look. I suggest at least three sources to drive applicants to your job opening.

## Step 3. Develop recruiting pitches

As manufacturers of a specialty product, you're a success because you've developed marketing skills. Use those skills in appealing to applicants. You'll also have better luck finding the right employee to hire if you put on your marketing hat, take a step back and see your job from the potential employee perspective. What makes this position appealing? Why would someone leave their current position for this? You've got to sell the job—particularly when you're pitching to passive candidates: people who didn't actively apply for the job, but may have come from other sources such as colleagues, suggestions from family/friends or current employees.

## Step 4. Execute

Post the job, seek out qualified people online, and email or call colleagues and associates who may know someone qualified. If you find someone in your own search who's qualified,

## Writing a good job description

### Step 1: Determine exactly what your business needs

Without a need to fill, there isn't any reason to go through the expense of hiring someone. Ask yourself: What gap will this new hire be filling? How will their expertise push your company forward?

### Step 2: Figure out what goals you have in mind for your new hire

If you're going to find and try to hire a highly qualified person, it's extremely important to have clearly defined expectations. Are you looking for a manager for the plant line or someone who has exceptional sales skills?

### Step 3: Define specific skills, experience and education requirements

After you've defined the goals you have for the hire, outline exactly what you are asking in the way of background. This will help you sort through resumes more quickly.

### Step 4: Address the intangibles. What kind of person do you want to be around?

Since you may be adding a new member into your team, it's important to decide in advance what kind of person would be the best fit for your company culture. What personality traits and work style will mesh best? If the role requires a high level of attention to detail and a methodical approach to work, be sure to include that in your job description. Likewise, if he or she will be cold calling and driving new business, the candidate needs to be outgoing, able to handle rejection and able to build relationships from scratch.

**Important tip:** When developing your position description, keep in mind the realities of people's personalities. If you were hoping to combine an outgoing business development person with a detail-oriented bookkeeper, you're likely to be out of luck. Don't hobble together one full-time role that would be better served by two part-timers. It's much better to have two people working part time at jobs they love than one person who is unhappy with half his or her time at work.

email that person directly. That's what we do as recruiters, but you can, too. This may take a few hours, but once the postings are up and emails are sent, lean back and wait for responses to roll in.

## Step 5. Review and assess

Now that you've got an inbox full of applicants, scan those resumes or applications quickly: Just give a 10-second perusal to each. Then, set up a system to sort the good from the less-than-amazing. Always start the interview process with a phone and see if anyone seems promising. (See, "Why I recommend a phone interview.")

## Conclusion

Reading an article like this one is an easy first step. Executing the rest of these steps requires time and effort you may not want to expend. However, it's well worth it when you find the right person for the job. ■

**RIKKA BRANDON** is a recruiting consultant, who recently published a new book *Hire Power*, which is packed with tips on hiring with confidence. She has a multitude of other employment tips on her website at [www.rikkabrandon.com](http://www.rikkabrandon.com).