



7 features of outstanding recruiters

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What talent acquisition professionals need to do in order to be successful today.

„Hey there, I'm currently looking for experienced IT project managers and your profile came to my attention.“ — sent to a Junior Accounting Expert via LinkedIn

We all know these messages on business networks: generic, vague, and not matching the researched role with our profiles. In these cases, we have the strong feeling that we are just another line item of a candidate longlist generated through some keyword search – without any value, neither for us – the candidate – nor for the hiring manager in need of people. This is just one example of a dysfunction that we can observe in recruiting these days and it's a pity, because there are best practice approaches that can really make a difference.

Recruiting is probably the most visible and recognized HR process across companies. It's the gateway into and first point of contact between organizations and future employees. Companies put great effort into continuously improving methods and tools to make recruiters' work more efficient and effective. Yet, many recruiting teams remain trapped between unsatisfied hiring managers, unhappy candidates and rising pressure. Often investments don't show the desired impact. A study among professional firms for instance showed that time-to-hire did not improve in the past 5 years despite significant optimization efforts.¹

Numerous projects in which we at Kienbaum supported a wide variety of companies, have given us valuable insights into what distinguishes successful recruiters. We have therefore put together the seven essential features with which outstanding recruiters can meet both the expectations of applicants and the needs of hiring managers – and at the same time keep costs streamlined.

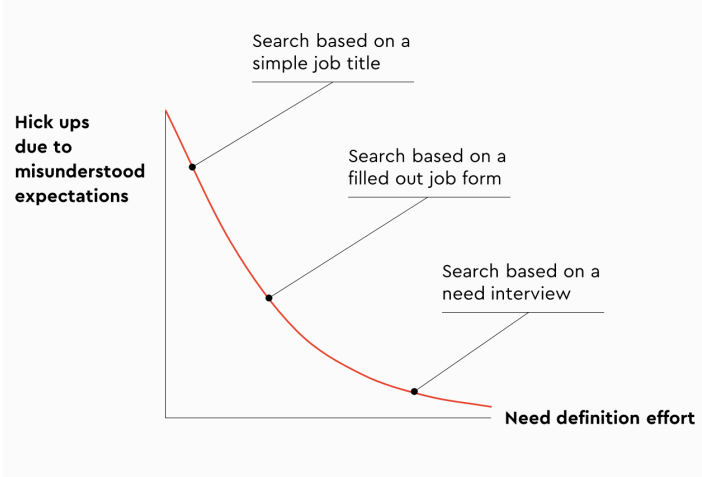
1. Understanding the real needs of the hiring manager

A Nobel Prize winner once said, “if I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.” Although proportions might be different in recruiting, it's worth it for a recruiter to take the time to nail down the precise need – this will save precious time and effort at later stages of the recruiting process (see chart 1). How often do you look for candidates who should be more skilled than needed? Typically, interview feedback reveals that hiring managers actually have a different need than stated at the beginning of the recruiting process.



¹ Services Performance Insight, LLC (2020). Professional Services Maturity Benchmark Report (p. 115)

Chart 1: Detailed need definition reduces recruiting hick ups



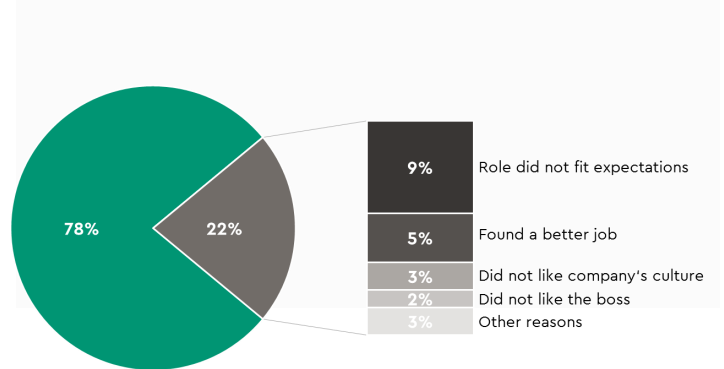
A proven method to describing the actual need is to engage in a discussion with the hiring manager about how the position that you're going to fill will create value for the business. The process is similar to modern product development, where you start with the customer experience and then work backwards to design a new product. Usually, the answer isn't trivial and further exploring the topic greatly helps establish the role's real scope, identify success factors and derive the most relevant skills. Successful recruiters are able to leverage their knowledge of skill sets that are available in the market, know how rare these skills are and what offers are appropriate for desired candidates to join the team.

Very often the hiring need will significantly evolve alongside the discussion. In some cases, it even leads to the hiring manager realizing that there might be a better solution for their need than hiring a new team member.

2. Create a realistic profile

Job profiles are key when it comes to matching expectations both on hiring manager and candidate side. The best job profiles are accurate, precise and don't oversell – they are realistic. If this was always the case, the rather high number of 22% of employee exiting within the first few months after joining would certainly be lower (see chart 2).

Chart 2: Share of employees quitting within the first few months²



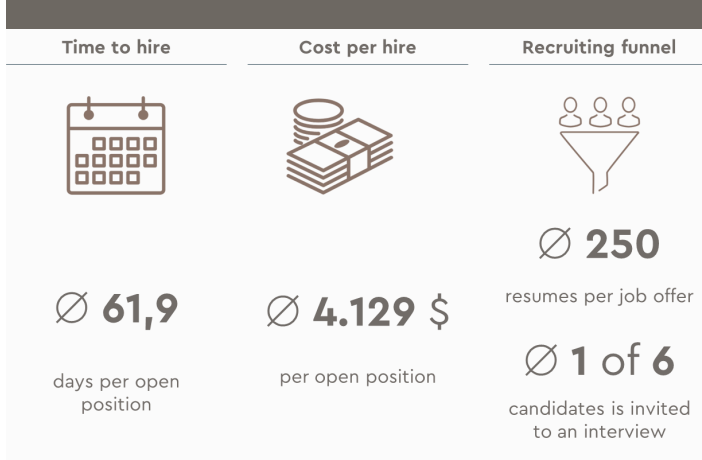
In practice, recruiters often receive job profiles from the searching area with which they appear to be able to immediately start searching for the most suitable candidate. This is rarely the case, because the profiles are formulated in such a way that they first need to be translated into the language of the job market. Since line managers usually only come into contact with recruiting practices on rare occasions, they need competent support and guidance from recruiters.

It's incredibly helpful to identify the 5 most relevant skills and competencies – those which will ensure a successful contribution to the business – and to focus on them. Overloaded and unrealistic profiles will suggest that you're looking for a unicorn and unnecessarily increase costs for search and hiring.

Furthermore, aligning all internal stakeholders involved in the recruiting process to focus on these top skills will also avoid the discussion of non-relevant observations or getting lost in the details (see chart 3). It will additionally provide candidates with transparency and reliability, which are fundamental aspects of a positive and professional candidate experience. A win-win-win situation.

² People Management (2017). CV-Library Survey

Chart 3: Key recruiting KPIs and average measures³

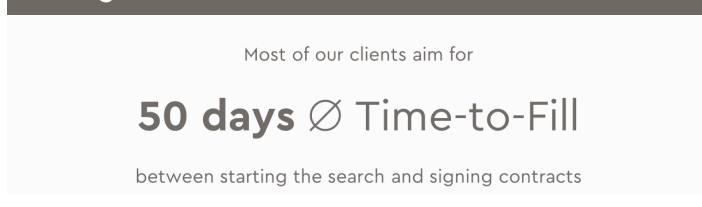


3. Set clear expectations

We've seen a good number of recruiting teams scoring well on KPIs such as time-to-fill, time-to-hire or cost-per-hire. They can be proud of their performance and should be. Nevertheless, key business stakeholders still complain about low candidate numbers, too much wait time or expensive hires. From our experience, such situations are due to knowledge asymmetries between recruiters and hiring managers on what is considered normal, good or exceptional practice. Too often recruiting teams lack the effort to inform, educate and proactively set expectations.

First-class recruiters can already provide the business with accurate predictions about how many candidates are expected along the recruiting funnel and how much time is necessary for each step when first discussing the need (see chart 4).

Chart 4: Expectations of stakeholders and reality are misaligned⁴



Best practice is to continuously crunch data not only to improve recruiting activities, but also to show what is possible and to be expected when reaching out to the

market. Benchmarks and talent pool analysis usually add to such briefing's relevancy and credibility.

On the same note, candidates appreciate clear information about what process and timings to expect. Today, it is part of a decent candidate experience to know exactly where you're standing and what lies ahead, and only recruiters can ensure that.

4. Be creative and courageous in finding the right candidate

Online keyword search and CV-parsing have made the recruiter's job of finding the right candidate for an open position much easier. Yet, or maybe especially because of that, recruiters might be inclined to get into a rut to use the core job requirements or the job title to filter a list of potential candidates matching the criteria. Why should the hiring manager ask for the recruiter's expertise if it's so easy to scan the market for the best candidates?

To support the hiring manager in finding a value-adding candidate, not enough recruiters search off the beaten track and find profiles the hiring manager wasn't thinking of. Most recruiters disregard that some interesting candidates might not fit 100% to the given job requirements but have earned some crucial and transferable skills, competencies, and experiences that will help them to thrive and grow in the new position. At best, candidates with different backgrounds uplift the value of the position by diversifying perspectives.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand how the candidate's overall skill mix can be used to fulfill the open position and add value to the company, even if it doesn't fit perfectly to the required competencies. At the same time, the hiring manager needs to be transparently involved to comprehend the steps taken in the process and align expectations and search strategy.

Additionally, candidates with high motivation and potential, but without perfectly matching competencies to all requirements, will appreciate the chance to prove that their mix of experiences and skills can add value to the organization and will be more committed to the process.

³ Services Performance Insight, LLC (2020). Professional Services Maturity Benchmark Report (p. 115); Society for Human Resource Management (2016). Human Capital Benchmarking Report; Turczynski (2020). 2021 HR Statistics: Job Search, Hiring, Recruiting & Interviews

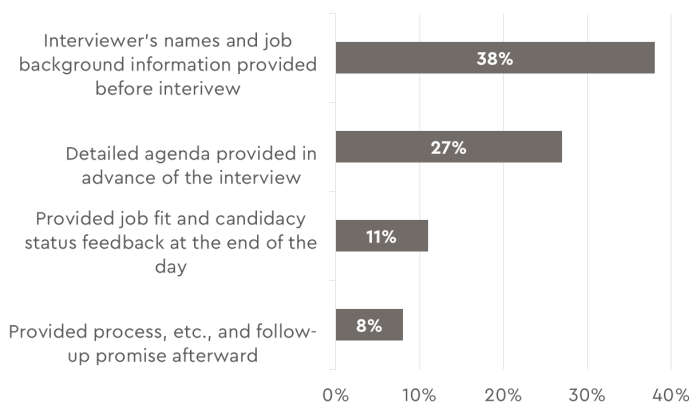
⁴ Kienbaum Benchmark Database (2020)

5. Understanding and empathy when addressing candidates

Before purchasing a vehicle, Europeans invest hours into research before making the decision to buy⁵, but when it comes to a candidate's resume, the average time spent by the recruiter to make a first decision is about 7.4 seconds.⁶ This might be enough to eliminate non-matching profiles but it is not sufficient to find the right candidate for the open position.

The more time that is invested in dealing with interesting profiles, the better the understanding of the potential and motivation of candidates. This is critical for the success of finding a wide range of suitable profiles and to stand out from other companies (see chart 5).

Chart 5: Empathy starting points in the process⁷



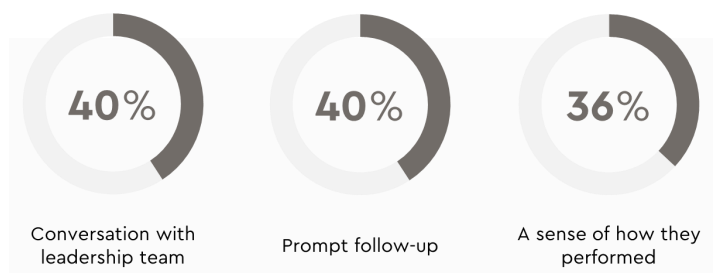
Even though this seems to be a "no brainer", investing more time to carefully read through interesting profiles is necessary to understand a candidate's skills, potential and motivation, and a significant factor for identifying the best profile for the open position. Before contacting a candidate, gathered key information should be validated from different sources. It is the job of an outstanding recruiter to find the closest link between the open position and the candidate's profile. This connection is the best and most appreciative way to step up to the candidates and suggest the open position as an ideal opportunity for their next step. Candidates will appreciate the effort and time taken to actually read through their resume and are more likely to answer, are more interested in the position and more committed to the process.

The hiring manager will be pleased with a longlist of highly qualified, matching, and committed candidates from which he can filter a shortlist of profiles which can make a real impact and add value to the company.

6. Open communication with the candidate

Too often candidates receive no update for several weeks after the first contact. In times and markets where talent is scarce, recruiters need to ensure transparency and keep candidates as well as hiring managers informed about possible changes in circumstances, the current process status, and next steps (see chart 6).

Chart 6: Prompt candidate follow-up and feedback⁸



For the recruiter it is essential to set rules for the recruiting process with the hiring manager to reliably share information with the candidates. This should contain clarification about what information is relevant for the candidates, a realistic timeline, milestones, and roles within the process. After clarifying these details with the hiring manager, trustworthy recruiters provide the candidate with transparent information about the hiring process from the very first step. In case of active sourcing, the initial contact should contain the recruiter's contact details, a brief outline of the job opportunity and the company, and a reason for why their profile matches the requirements. When it comes to the first conversation, information about the expected timeline and next steps should be provided. To keep the candidates on track, it is important to stay in contact with them and be transparent about why delays or changes might occur. Once a decision is made and a candidate is not selected, transparency is key to retain a positive image of the company.

⁵ Deloitte (2018). Global Automotive Consumer Study (p. 6)

⁶ Ladders, Inc. (2018). Eye tracking study. How job seekers can improve their resumes

⁷ Talent Board (2019). North American Candidate Experience Research Report

⁸ LinkedIn Talent Insights Report (2017)

7. Successfully closing the deal

Global talent scarcity in different industries led to a change in the markets: instead of just selecting the right candidate from a mass of applications, employers see themselves in competition with other companies to attract and win qualified talents. Accordingly, the recruiter's job is changing from the organization's administrative "search engine" to a sales executive and purchasing specialist. By representing and selling the company as the employer of choice to the candidates, detecting and attracting the most talented profiles for the organization and closing the deal with the best candidate for the open position, recruiters will add the most value to their company. A recruiter who is able to close the deal with the most wanted profile will win the war for talent for their organization.

As the main contact person who builds trust and a familiar connection to the candidate and the hiring manager, the recruiter is responsible for designing a positive hiring experience for both. Giving the responsibility for the entire hiring process, including negotiations and the deal making, to the recruiter will ensure a positive and appreciative recruiting experience for the candidate. Successful recruiters give hiring managers detailed and precise information about the candidates' competencies, motivations, and expectations even before the first contact. They also prepare candidates for focus topics and typical "pitfalls" in the interviews. Ultimately, this increases the chances of successfully closing the deal.

Last but not least ...

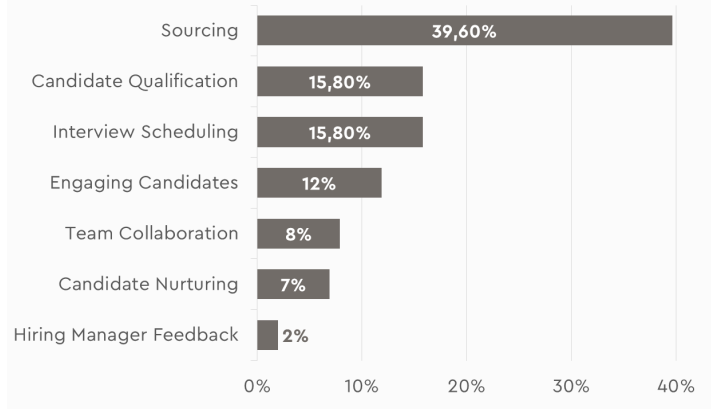
To support the 7 features of outstanding recruiters there is a broad range of technology available (see chart 7). The recruitment process can be supported by technology from start to finish. For example, through candidate identification platforms, application tracing systems, testing tools or many more. Each of these technologies can have a significant impact on the process, as well as on the final selection of candidates. With the steadily growing market for recruiting tools, which offers a multitude of tool alternatives in every aspect of the recruiting process, it is almost impossible to keep up to speed with what technology should be used (see chart 8).

Companies should ask themselves: Which technology actually helps candidates, recruiters and managers the

Chart 7: Importance of recruiting tools for talent acquisition⁹



Chart 8: Where recruiting automation is most useful¹⁰



most to match the right person with the right position in the company? Generally speaking, it cannot be said which technology best fits which recruiting process or how much technological support is required. To keep the complexity manageable and the recruiting process intuitive, it should be ensured that there is one leading technology that runs through the process. This can then be supported by additional tools with seamless interfaces, thus optimizing the recruiting experience. Bringing together these 7 features of outstanding recruiters will enhance process and outcome satisfaction from the hiring manager's as well as from the candidate's perspective. Recruiters using these features elevate their role in the company from an executing service provider to a value-adding strategic partner to the business as it now not only contains the search task but also the strategic consulting of line managers with recruiting expertise.

⁹ Entelo (2020). Recruiting Trends Report

¹⁰ Entelo (2020). Recruiting Trends Report

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