



Recruiters: How to Get More Business in a Down Economy

Learn how to connect better with your buyers and build critical relationships and credibility that will lead to more business.

Part 1 of a three-part series.

By John Vlastelica and Jenifer Lambert

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Insights Into the Buy-Side

First, we don't need to tell you that it's rough out there. Companies are downsizing or staying flat and HR and Hiring Managers are busy, often trying to do more with less. Growing – even maintaining – business in this economy isn't easy. In this three part series of articles, we'll focus on...

- What you need to know about your buyers' mind-set to get business in this kind of market
- How you should engage with corporate recruiters and HR managers so that you're top of mind when they're ready to hire an outside recruiter
- How to address the misperception that companies don't need you now

How do you address this common perception held by Corporate HR and Hiring Managers?

"Many of the resumes I'm getting from recruiters are unemployed, active job seekers. I can find those people on my own. Why pay a fee?"

"I understand that you would like to fill this position on your own. In this market, I have no doubt you'll get a lot of response to your posting. However, I have a candidate who won't be responding to your posting because she's not actively looking for work. She's currently employed and succeeding where she's at. She is working through me on a confidential basis to be kept aware of opportunities that could be the next step in her career. I'd like to have you speak with her as a comparison to the candidates you surface on your own. If you find a stronger candidate, there's no harm done. You only pay a fee if you decide that she's the right choice for this role. Are you willing to have an exploratory conversation with her on that basis?"



Best Practices for Developing Opportunity & Demonstrating Value

Good news! Companies are still hiring. Thousands of new jobs are being posted each week. But to convert these opportunities into closed business, you need to be savvy about uncovering the opportunities and demonstrating how and where you add real value.

Instead of asking for the exclusive search, offer a really strong candidate as a comparison to their internally generated candidates.

1. Leverage technology. Set up job search agents on your job boards and on your target clients' corporate career sites to learn about new openings. Watch for jobs that have been posted for more than 30 days. It's quite possible that your client may have hit a wall with their own efforts and they will be much more receptive to your offer of assistance. Also watch for roles that were posted, then taken down, and then reposted weeks or months later. The company may have frozen hiring temporarily, and – therefore – lost internal sourcing momentum. The fact that they've reopened a job may tell you that it's a critical opening (or a bad hire was made); the HR team may need significant, immediate help to generate candidates.

2. Be prepared to audition. When responding to a posted position, you must 1) do something to differentiate yourself from every other recruiter who saw the same posting and 2) overcome a general reluctance your buyer may have to see candidates from an outside recruiter. Do this: Instead of asking for the exclusive search, offer a really strong candidate as a comparison to their internally generated candidates.

Talk about the niche candidate sites you use, the personal networks you've developed over the years and your success at pulling passive candidates out of top companies.

3. Put a "game changer" on the field. Look beyond just chasing open requisitions and use high-value candidates to create openings. For any company, in any economy, there are some candidates they simply can't afford not to hire. Ask a hiring manager: "What direct competitors do you want to target? Are there key people that you know by name that you haven't been able to successfully land in the past? Describe the type of candidate who could make a huge difference in your business." Once you know what type of talent this hiring manager will find irresistible, have recruiting conversations with these candidates. If they're open to making a move, you make the introduction and reap the rewards.

4. Show your sourcing expertise. No one wants to pay you to post their job on a job board, and route them screened candidates; they can do that on their own. Give your clients insights into your sourcing expertise and tools in your toolbox. Talk about the niche candidate sites you use, the personal networks you've developed over the years, your success at pulling passive candidates out of top companies, and the speed at which you can develop a quality slate of candidates.



5. Strategically approach fee objections. In general, you never want to reduce your fee. But, if we're realistic, we know that sometimes we must (especially to get into the door with new clients in this economy). If you decide to offer a lower fee, don't do it from a position of weakness. Instead, acknowledge their budget issues, and let them know that you're willing to temporarily work for a reduced fee during this first search (the "audition period"). But don't just give it away. Negotiate something in return, like some money up front, faster payment terms, or a testimonial that you can use in your marketing materials upon placement. And, when you go to invoice them, show – right on the invoice – your regular rate first, then the special discount, and then the final fee. Remind them that they're getting a special, temporary deal (it can also make them look like a cost cutter with the finance organization).

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