

CONTRIBUTOR

## 6 Tips for Employers to Win the War for Talent

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Multiple job offers & counter offers – oh my!



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Seeing an uptick in candidates with multiple offers? You're not alone and it's not surprising. The demand for talent is expanding right along with the economy. You might feel like your hair is on fire, but keeping a cool head is more important than ever. I've been sharing best practices for [recruiters](#) and for [candidates](#) in this [series](#), and here is some advice for employers.

### Move smart, but move quickly

If you've found a great candidate, don't play the hold-out game. Don't let the competition snatch your golden egg while you wait for a second one. Dragging your feet also can color a candidate's perception, making you seem indecisive — is this an indication of how long it takes to get things done in your company?

### Get engaged

Be intentional about engaging candidates before the close or before a new hire's start date. The more you involve a prospect or hire, the more they will feel married to the

position and your company. Invite a top prospect to lunch, or to an internal celebration or holiday party.

Many talk about “candidate control” during this period, but “candidate engagement” may be a better term. We never really “control” candidates, according to Decision Toolbox Recruitment Partner Craig Venable. “The best way I have found to stay ‘in control’ of candidates is constant communication.” Reach out regularly, even if you don’t have new information. It lets candidates know that you are still interested.

### **Don’t play games**

If you know what a candidate is worth, what the market is paying, and what the candidate is asking for, you have all you need to make a fair offer. Lowballing the offer will just put a sour taste in everyone’s mouth. The Peter Prospect may conclude that you aren’t really serious, or that you don’t value what he brings to the table. You might win the negotiation but then lose the candidate.

### **Don’t question the questions**

Some people get upset if a candidate asks questions. But the process is a two-way street, and asking questions is a sign of engagement. At [Decision Toolbox](#) we had a client once who rescinded an offer when a candidate for human resources role asked to see the benefits package. If any candidate should be interested in benefits, it’s an HR professional. Another client declined a candidate for a sales position when the candidate tried to negotiate an offer. Don’t you want a sales person who negotiates?!

### **Count on counter offers**

If multiple offers are increasingly common, counter offers also will be on the rise. These actually put candidates in a vulnerable position. This scenario is all too frequent: Candie Candidate declines an offer from New Company because Current Company made an enticing counter offer. However, the counter offer never materializes. Now Candie has burned bridges with New Co. and is stuck in the status quo at Current Co.

If you find yourself making counter offers, follow through and deliver if Candie accepts and stays. It may be even more important to talk with Candie before she makes a final decision. What other things motivated her to think about leaving? Chances are, it’s about more than just money. Candie has the skills you want, but be open to the possibility that Candie and your company have “grown apart.” Maybe it’s time for both of you to make a change.

### **Stay positive**

Eliminating options makes any decision more manageable, but don’t just focus on reasons to *reject* candidates. We worked with a client once who interviewed a candidate who was a near-perfect match — and then declined because she wore open-toed shoes

to the interview! Focus on why a candidate might be a good choice. You can bet that open-toed shoes are not a problem for a competitor.

A fast, competitive market can seem like desperate times, but resist the temptation to take desperate measures. You need to move quickly and be creative, but act with integrity and keep an eye on the big picture. You are the personification of your employment brand, and you want to project a positive, attractive image for today and for the future.

*Nicole Cox contributed to this article.*

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