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Recruiters To The Rescue: Keep Everyone From Being Burned In A White-Hot Talent Market

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Tom Brennan

Tom Brennan is senior writer at leading nationwide recruiting firm Decision Toolbox.



Unemployment continues to decline while business continues to expand. Demand outstrips supply in almost every niche of the talent market. For everyone involved, it's tempting to do whatever it takes, without considering consequences. This is the second in a three-part series on the importance of talent market etiquette, *especially* when the market is on fire. Check out [my last post for advice to candidates](#). Now let's look at the recruiter's role.

As liaison between employers and candidates, recruiters are constantly juggling competing priorities. Working with candidates who have multiple offers can make it seem like going from juggling rubber balls to juggling machetes. But recruiters also are uniquely positioned to protect the interests of both sides — including protecting employers and candidates from themselves.

In this situation, knowledge is power. Recruiters often are under the pressure of ABC — always be closing — but if you push Candy Candidate through even though she's not a good fit, she may not stay more than a couple of months. Then you and your client are right back where you started. To balance the ABCs, recruiters need to dig in, from the beginning, to be clear on the Who, What, When, Where and Why.

Who is your client/hiring manager? What are their goals and challenges, and how will this new hire help in addressing those? Perhaps more challenging is understanding who the candidate is. As a recruiter, you have to back up every hire, and your reputation is on the line. For example, if Peter Prospect has a history of leaving every time he gets frustrated with his boss, is Peter really the person you want to place with your client?

What are Peter's career goals? Is this new role the right path to that goal? What is Candy looking for in her next job, her next employer? What kind of culture does she thrive in?

When will Peter Prospect be available to start? It's a huge waste of time to go down the path only to find out, at the eleventh hour, that Peter won't be available until he gets his commissions in three months. On the client side, how quickly will they make a decision? If they have a longer interview process, advise them to shorten it, educating them on market demands. Delays can cause interest to wane, especially if candidates have multiple offers.

Where is the job located? Is the commute realistic? If Peter Prospect says he is happy to relocate to another state for a position, dig in and understand why. Make sure he isn't just saying that because he is caught up in the excitement of a new offer. At Decision Toolbox we recently supported a client who was hiring nurses to work over the phone from their home office. That's a big change from going to work every day in a clinical setting. Is it really the best fit?

Why is Candy looking? This can be the most important question to ask and the most difficult to answer. If money is her first or only reason, that should be a red flag for the recruiter: you need to dig deeper. If she answers that her current job isn't challenging, keep digging. The new position needs to offer more than just something different — it needs to offer exactly what Candy is missing in her present position.

When asking these questions, listen for what's NOT being said. The better you understand what the open position offers and how well it meets a candidate's needs, the more value you can provide to both sides. Reducing doubts will make closing the offer much easier.

Next up, I'll dig into what employers need to do to survive the heat of battle in that war for talent.

Nicole Cox contributed to this article.

[Nicole Cox](#) serves as Chief Recruitment Officer at leading nationwide 100 percent virtual recruiting firm [Decision Toolbox](#). With more than 15 years of industry experience, she oversees all corporate recruiting operations including quality, training, sourcing and advertising. Nicole holds a master's degree in organizational leadership and a servant leadership certification from Gonzaga University, as well as a bachelor's in communications with a public relations focus from California State University, Fullerton. She may be contacted at ncox@dttoolbox.com. You can learn more about Decision Toolbox at www.dtoolbox.com.