

THE PHONE RANG

SUCCESS PRINCIPLES FROM A MASTER RECRUITER



Bob Marshall

2 BUSINESS IS WAR

AS I PONDERED THE DOCUMENT'S DESCRIPTION OF A recruiter's responsibilities, my mind wandered to the countless other professions out there. Whether you're a salesperson, a consultant, or an entrepreneur, the path to success often follows a similar trajectory.

I thought back to my early days in recruiting when I was just starting to find my footing. I remember setting ambitious goals for myself, visualizing the day when I would finally make it big. But I quickly learned that success wasn't just about dreaming big—it was about putting in the work, day in and day out.

I recall a conversation I had with a fellow recruiter coach named Jerry. We were both attending a conference, and during a break, we got to talking about what it takes to stand out in our field.

"You know, it's not just about making the calls and filling the orders," Jerry said. "It's about going above and beyond. It's about building relationships with your clients, anticipating their needs before they even know they have them."

I nodded in agreement, thinking about the countless hours I had spent researching companies, crafting personalized pitches, and following up with candidates. It was the little things that made all the difference.

But as Jerry and I continued to talk, we realized that the same principles applied to any business. Whether you're selling products or services, the key to success lies in the fundamentals: setting clear goals, developing a plan of action, and executing on that plan with unwavering discipline.

Of course, that's easier said than done. In any competitive field, there are always going to be obstacles and setbacks. But the most successful people are the ones who refuse to let those challenges hold them back. They're the ones who keep pushing forward, even when the odds seem stacked against them.

As I reflected on the lessons I had learned throughout my career, I couldn't help but think of the wisdom imparted by some of the greats. Zig Ziglar once said, "You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help other people get what they want." That simple idea had been a guiding principle for me from the very beginning.

I remember early on in my career, I listened to a seminar led by Og Mandino. He spoke about the importance of setting clear goals and developing a plan to achieve them. "The greatest secret in the world," he said, "is that you can have anything you want if you are willing to give up the belief that you can't have it."

Positive thinking was the buzz word back then, and it still holds true. Those words stuck with me, and I began to apply them to my own life. I started by setting specific, measurable goals for myself. Whether it was hitting a certain number of calls per day or closing a certain number of deals per month, I made sure that I had a clear target to aim for.

But setting goals was just the first step. I also needed to develop a plan of action to achieve them. That meant breaking down my goals into smaller, more manageable tasks and then tackling those tasks one by one.

Of course, even with a solid plan in place, there were still challenges to overcome. Rejection was a constant companion in the world of recruiting, and it was easy to get discouraged when things didn't go my way. But I learned to reframe those setbacks as opportunities for growth.

Keep in mind that failures and setbacks are going to happen. Failure is an event, not a person. We must refuse to let our failures define us, and instead use them as fuel to keep pushing forward.

Looking back on my journey, I realized that success wasn't just about hitting a certain number or reaching a certain milestone. It was about the person I had become along the way. The discipline, the resilience, the unwavering commitment to my goals—those were the things that truly mattered.



WHAT IS IT We as Recruiters Do?

Some years ago, I came across a very detailed description of what we, as recruiters, do for a living. This is the first paragraph of that six-page, 1,469-word long document*:

“The basic function of this position is to promote sales of Placement services to customers and prospective customers within the assigned desk specialty. To maintain and develop satisfied customers for the company through proper handling of customers and candidates and cooperate with management in resolving problems in areas of collections, guarantees, and any other negotiations or functions that may be assigned.”

It went on to list our nine major responsibilities:

1. Selling Placement Services
2. Account Development
3. Pricing
4. Customer Service
5. Sales Estimates
6. Candidate Development
7. Records and Reports
8. Expense Control
9. Maintain Professional Standards

Does this sound like what you do? While in some ways I admire the detail (and I hope I handle all of those responsibilities effectively on my desk on a daily basis), I am not sure that it gives a true sense of what we recruiters truly do for a living.

To borrow liberally from a recent article of mine, there are five major tasks that we perform on a daily basis—and they all have to do with picking up the telephone!

And yes, in this case, the phone is both representative and practical. For most of us, the phone is the one instrument we can count on to create business opportunities. If your business is more in person or via web-meetings, then substitute that visual metaphor. What it means is the practice of actively connecting with your clients or product line (candidates, in our case). Leaving a voicemail is not active. Sending an email is not active. Crafting a clever newsletter is not active. Those are (at best) supportive or passive marketing activities.

Oh, yes, I hear you. "But Bob, I make money from those emails," or "I've made Placements using voicemails. My client will not pick up the phone or take a meeting."

The response I would give my students is to "Find a new client. One that will respect you as a professional." And yes, you may make money from using more passive techniques, but is it scalable; can you do it consistently and predictably? I would argue the answer to that will generally be no.

3 WHAT WE ARE

FIRST, AND FOREMOST...

1. We are **Marketers**. We make daily marketing, or sales, calls. It is our first key to success. In the immortal words of the famous Sidney Boyden who founded Boyden Associates in 1946 (as quoted in “The Headhunters” by John A. Byrne), “When I employed an associate I was interested in a man who could be a business getter and a merchandiser. I was looking for widely acquainted top sales executives. Because the ability to go out and promote business and get business is more important than finding the men. I was least interested in somebody who would know how to track down a man and find him.”
2. We are **Recruiters**. We recruit for a living. That means we find prospective recruits who are happy, well-appreciated, making good money, currently working, and we entice them to move for better opportunities (i.e., our search assignment-quality JOs). We don’t work with job-hoppers, job-shoppers, or rejects.
3. We are **Discriminators** (in the positive sense of that word). We are especially selective of our job orders, only choosing the best

search assignment quality job orders on which to spend our straight-commission time. These JOs fall into the following three distinct categories:

- Those JOs that have a tremendous urgency attached to filling the position. We are often paid to circumvent the time factor.
- Those JOs that are very difficult positions to fill. This is where our client companies have run ads, offered referral bonuses to their employees, checked with competitors, consulted with colleagues, and extensively interviewed with no success. In these scenarios, the recruiter offers the company a window of opportunity—a ‘court of last resort,’ if you will.
- Those JOs from forward-thinking client companies who wish to be kept apprised of top-notch talent as those talented people surface, regardless of whether there is an opening.

4. We are **Negotiators**. We pre-prep, prep, educate, debrief, act as buffers, and close our deals.

5. And ultimately, we are **GREAT Salespeople**. We thrive in a marketplace where our normal Marketing Attempt to Marketing Presentation ratio is somewhere between 10% - 25%. We are successful in that marketplace where we only place with 4% of our client base. And we deal, on a daily basis, with emotional people on both sides of our transactions (refrigerator salespeople don’t have to worry about their refrigerators changing their minds, getting pregnant, or moving to Topeka)! And we do all of this via the telephone, which effectively eliminates 3/5^{ths} of our sales tools. We can only talk and listen. We can’t reach out and touch, use body language and physical mirroring, or make eye contact. We must be exceptional to accomplish all that we accomplish!

The Qualities We Possess

Now, what qualities must we possess? I believe that five are essential. We must bring these to the table. They cannot be taught:

1. Intelligence—not Mensa membership, but we must be smart.
2. Creativity—because each phone call, no matter how it starts, may go in a different direction; we must be flexible enough, creative enough, to flow with the call. We must be noted for our flexibility.
3. Corporate Maturity—this is not a function of age, but of maturity at the corporate level. Having the ability to call the CEO of a client company and not being intimidated if we're asked to make that call.
4. Tenacity—this is important in any endeavor. If you want to put a 'star' by one of the most important traits, star this one! The ability 'to hang in there' is critical. This is important in any profession, but especially in ours.
5. Balanced 'X' Factors—any changes in your life—even good ones—produce stress. Stress is a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. This tension itself is stressful, often leading to illness or depression. So, we must have this element under control.

After these 'Have to Possess...' traits, I like to see the following, but I can live without them:

6. Successful Failures—people who were successful, but their past employers failed them.
7. Positive Hostility—the ability to be confrontive, but in a positive way. We don't want to be a 'professional visitor' where everyone loves us, but nobody buys from us—but we don't want to be purely hostile either, since rapport building is so important to our success.

8. Good Sense of Humor—the ability to not take ourselves too seriously; to be self-effacing. Humor can go a long way in getting us back on the phone. Our job is supposed to be fun. If we carry that humor out with us to our marketplace, it will come back to us.

9. Empathy—the ability to understand both sides, from their points of view.

10. Ego Driven—we must have a big ego. It's amazing to me how a group of Big Billers all fit in the same room at the same time with their giant-sized egos.

11. Need to convince others to do what we want them to do—the ability to want to convince others of the right way to do our business, not to buy off on the first objection when we hear it.

12. Ability to Listen and Give Positive Feedback—this is key; we are not in a profession made up of 'silver-tongued' devils; listen between the lines, don't answer questions too fast; the other side will give us the information we need as long as we listen and give positive feedback.

13. A decisive person—we can't be 'wishy-washy' in our profession.

14. Intuitive—usually our first sense about something, whether it relates to our candidate or to our client company, is true. Go with our intuition. Things don't go sour unless they smell a little along the way.

15. A tight need for Organization and Planning—it's not that we love it, but over time, we become expert at it.

16. A Leader—someone who wants to lead, even if it is just on our own desk—our own manufacturing plant. This trait encompasses many of the preceding ones.

And finally, after all of these, I think of the attributes that the

legendary recruitment trainer, **Lou Scott**, spoke about. He used to say that the biggest billers:

1. Ignore conventional wisdom; they are never satisfied with the norm; they play outside the box.
2. Have written goals for measurement; if they are not written down, they are wishes, not goals.
3. Visualize completion of their goals; have a clear visual picture of their goals.
4. Learn to deal with their anxieties regarding their performance; everyone has anxieties; big billing is not the absence of anxiety, but the controlling of anxiety. Courage is not the absence of fear, but positively dealing with that fear. You need fear in order to have courage.
5. Avoid comfort zones; take calculated risks.
6. And, live in the present. Be where you are. When you are at work, be there. When you are at home, be there. But don't be at home when you are at work and don't be at work when you are at home.

4 SECURING LOYALTY

I GET STORIES ALL THE TIME FROM RECRUITERS COMPLAINING about candidates who ghosted the interview or hiring managers who won't return their calls. Securing loyalty mainly depends on three things: working with the right people, having a solid set of ground rules that everyone agrees to, and keeping the process on track.

The Power of Urgency in Recruitment

In the world of recruitment, urgency is the name of the game. Just as in brick-and-mortar retail, where location is everything, in our business, the three most important factors for success are urgency, urgency, and urgency. Now, you might be wondering, where does this urgency come from? Well, let me tell you—it comes from small and mid-size companies. These are the businesses that are driving job creation, accounting for a whopping 65 - 75% of new jobs. So, if you want to succeed as a recruiter, that's where you need to focus your efforts.

The Three Types of Companies That Need Us

As recruiters, we work best with three types of companies:

1. Companies with a tremendous urgency to fill a position.
2. Companies with a difficult position to fill, who have exhausted all other options.
3. Progressive companies that want to stay informed about top talent in their industry.

Our job is to educate these companies on how we work and the value we bring to the table. Remember, education takes place on every call. Either you educate the hiring manager first, or they educate you. The fastest person wins this race. Either you will educate the hiring manager on how you work, first, or they will educate you on how they work, first. And the fastest person wins this race.

The TBMG Job Order Qualifying Technique

To make the most of your time and effort, you need to focus on search assignment quality job orders. That means qualifying each and every job order you write at the front-end, using the TBMG Qualifier Job Order technique.

This six-part methodology helps you determine the quality of your Job Order.

The initial key points to cover are:

1. Contact Information
2. Duties & Responsibilities of the position
3. Salary & Fee
4. The Hiring Process
5. The Recruitment Target information
6. The Personality of the Hiring Manager

You now have the six critical pieces of information—your skeleton JO. Leave it alone at this point. Later call the HM back to get more information. If they are reachable, that is your first positive sign that

this is a top quality JO. If not, it is your first sign that this JO is not workable on your terms. What we refer to as a Can't Help JO.

The Theory of Threes

Once you have a qualified job order, it's time to put the Theory of Threes into action. This involves using the power of competition and the fear of loss to create urgency and drive the hiring process forward quickly. At the same time, you need to establish a mutual exchange of cooperation with the hiring manager. This means setting clear expectations and timelines and holding each other accountable for meeting them.

Becoming A Recruiting Doctor

Remember, as a recruiter, you are the expert—just like a doctor. You need to be committed to excellence in your business and establish the procedure for your clients to follow. Don't let hiring managers dictate how you do your job. Educate your clients, maintain open and honest communication, and always strive to be respected first. If you do that, the rest will follow. So, there you have it—the key to success in recruitment on the employer side is urgency, qualifying job orders, and establishing yourself as the expert.

Mastering Candidate Management

Alright, folks, let's talk about the other side of the recruiting coin—candidate management. Because let's face it, without a strong stable of candidates, all the urgency and qualified job orders in the world won't matter.

Building Your Candidate Pipeline

The first step in effective candidate management is building a robust pipeline. This means constantly sourcing, networking, and marketing yourself to top talent in your industry. You want to become the go-to recruiter for the best and brightest. And how do you do that? By leveraging every tool and platform at your disposal. From AI,

LinkedIn, and industry-specific job boards to referrals and good old-fashioned cold calling, you need to be proactive in your approach.

Qualifying and Assessing Candidates

Once you have a pool of potential candidates, it's time to start qualifying and assessing them. This involves more than just looking at resumes—you need to dig deeper to understand their skills, experience, motivations, and career goals.

Conduct thorough interviews, use assessment tools, and most importantly, listen to your candidates. The more you understand them, the better equipped you'll be to match them with the right opportunities. What will be motivating their move to a new job? What might prevent them from moving forward? We will touch more on this in later chapters, but it's important to know more than what a single piece of paper will tell you.

Setting Expectations and Communicating Effectively

Clear communication is the foundation of any successful relationship, and that's especially true when it comes to working with candidates. From the very first interaction, you need to set clear expectations about your process, timeline, and what they can expect from you. Keep your candidates informed at every stage of the process, whether it's giving them feedback after an interview or updating them on the status of a job opportunity. Remember, even if they don't get the job, a positive candidate experience can lead to referrals and future Placements.

This is an area in which I have a firm rule—Pick up the phone. Talk to them live. Text messages, IMs, Voicemails, and Facebook messages are insufficient. Hear their voice. Make them commit to being prepped and ready for the interview. Build that trust and friendship in the most direct means possible.

Preparing Candidates for Interviews and Offers

Your job as a recruiter doesn't end when you submit a candidate for a job. You need to be there every step of the way, from preparing them for interviews to guiding them through the offer process.

Help your candidates understand the company culture, the hiring manager's expectations, and the key points they should emphasize in their interviews. And when an offer comes in, be there to advise them on negotiation strategies and help them make an informed decision.

Building Long-Term Relationships

Finally, remember that candidate management is about more than just filling job orders. It's about building long-term relationships with top talent in your industry. Stay in touch with your placed candidates, offer them career advice and support, and celebrate their successes. By doing so, you'll create a network of loyal candidates who will not only work with you again in the future but will also refer their colleagues and friends.

Conclusion: Putting It All Together

Effective candidate management is just as important as working with urgency and qualifying job orders. By building a strong pipeline, qualifying and assessing candidates, communicating effectively, preparing them for success, and nurturing long-term relationships, you'll set yourself apart as a top recruiter in your industry.

Remember, your candidates are one of your most valuable assets. Treat them with respect, honesty, and professionalism, and they'll become your biggest advocates and the key to your long-term success.