UNIT-3 Candidate Management

Learning Outcomes
By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

Unit 3

Candidate Management

This chapter deals with how to manage your candidates. Ensuring you give a great service to your candidates is as important as managing your clients. Candidates remember the recruiter who gives a great service, spends time with them, cares about them and above all finds them the jobs they want. Looking after candidates therefore means you will make successful placements, gain referrals to other candidates and develop your personal and agency brand, as well as gaining a significant amount of job satisfaction.

The candidate management process may vary in its starting point, but is always, candidate driven. In this chapter we pick up candidate management from its earliest point: an awareness of you as a recruiter – or of your company or consultancy – by your candidate. The resources include a range of tools to support the candidate management process. There are tools to analyze CVs against specific role for example, checklists for qualifying strong candidates, techniques on interviewing and templates on writing candidate notes, along with other tools and perhaps most importantly a flow chart detailing the candidate management process.

The chapter looks at the employer or recruiter brand, and the proposition you offer as part of that brand. It examines the candidate management process in detail, starting with evaluating candidates, qualifying them, interviewing them and deciding how to help them find their new jobs. We look at whether a particular candidate fits an existing role specification you are recruiting for a client, or is someone whose skills a range of clients in your area, sector or business would be interested in learning more about. We look at how best to market your candidate to secure the greatest chance of an interview, and then how to manage the placement opportunity through the rest of the process from briefing and de-briefing in interviews through to offer management and closing the placement down. An important theme running through this whole process is that of managing expectations; whilst this is one of the most important aspects of successful recruitment consultancy, it is never more so than when managing your candidates.

The Components Of The Recruiter's Brand

Candidate management plays an important role in the development of your brand. It maintains or diminishes the brand, or keeps it in a steady state. All are possible outcomes of the ways you manage your candidates.

Managing the brand is about managing expectations and then exceeding them wherever possible by doing the best you can with all of your candidates.

For either an employer or a recruitment consultancy, the brand proposition (and for temps and contractors their recruitment consultancy is as much of a brand as other employers) has to be clear and is all-important, so we consider it from all angles.

Your brand is communicated through :

- how clear you are on the roles you offer for your clients;
- what the career progression path and the company's view on succession planning are;
- how many people you promote internally;
- what your policy and offering is in learning and development;
- what your benefits package says about you;
- how good the leadership in your organization is;
- what your market position in your sector is;
- how much work you can offer and whether the candidates need to register with a range of agencies;
- how often you pay your freelancers;
- What your unique selling points (USPs) are and why someone would want to work for you.

Candidates can learn an enormous amount about a recruiter or employer (but particularly the latter) not just by what they are told at their interviews, but rather what they are not told.

From an employer brand perspective, what will the candidates learn about you in the following areas?

- What is reception – and the receptionists – like?
- How flexible are you for interview times?
- How much do you treat applicants as individuals rather than as one of the crowd?
- How long do you keep candidates waiting when they arrive for interview?
- How friendly are you as interviewers?
- What sort of interview do you use? Competency-based? Behavioural? Biographical? Unstructured chat?
- How good do you make your candidates feel during and at interview? How much emphasis do you place on maintaining their self-esteem?
- What tone is set by your communications with them between interviews? Does this match your culture?
- How much does your overall culture reflect your interview process and vice versa? So, if you are a young think-tank ideas organization with some key clients and you are looking for brains above anything, and your offices are full of beanbags and pool tables, how does your interview process and communication style in between interviews, along with your attraction strategy, communicate your intentions?
- Do you contact them when you say you will and in the way you say you will?

- Do people seem to be smiling and enjoying themselves at this place or does it seem a bit miserable?
- What does the layout of the business say about you? Is it open plan or do some people sit in corner goldfish bowl offices and survey others out on the floor?
- What does your salary and benefits package say about you? Are the benefits flexible, making them work for everyone, not just the average white middle-class male?
- How diverse are you are as a business?

Branding and the employer proposition is a matter of being clear about your company brand and then fulfilling that through the interview process. This will not only reduce an organization's labour turnover but also ensures you have a good match in the first place, recruiting the people you want and finding that they stay.

It's worth analysing the percentage of rejections-to-offer that you get and tracking that over a period. It's hard to give a guideline of acceptability as you may be in a very candidate-short market with all the candidates you offer having three to four other options to consider, which will by necessity reduce your percentage. However, if you are not getting at least 50 per cent of your offers accepted (as a company), and ideally 80 per cent (as a company or a recruiter – some companies or recruiters will look for 95 per cent), then you might re-consider your brand and/or your recruitment process to see how you are managing your candidates.

Equally worth analysing is the proportion of your hires that stay longer than one year, as in many companies they then tend to stay for a much longer period. It is particularly important, then, to look after your candidates in the first three to six months of their time in new jobs. This is the time when they can be the most vulnerable. On boarding then and the employer brand are important components of managing the candidate through after their start with the business.

The Key To Candidate Management

The role of the recruiter is to manage the candidate proactively and control the process.

Recruitment is about successful project management. If you manage candidates effectively the outcome for both you and them will be positive – even if they don't get the job. If you do not manage the people well, relationships can be damaged and opportunities missed. So, if candidates go for job interviews where the jobs in question bear little resemblance to that which you briefed them on, they will be disappointed, the clients will be perplexed and you will not have made a placement. Equally if a candidate is one of three contenders for a really desirable job who all interview well, the client is spoilt for choice and could potentially hire all of them. She hires one, however, and if you manage the two candidates who didn't get the job well, you may gain two new clients as well as two great candidates you can place elsewhere.

As candidates and clients can be inter-changeable it is important to manage both parties' expectations. Setting the scene and managing expectations are the most important things you do every day. This starts right at the beginning, with the evaluation process. Right away you have an opportunity to do well or badly in managing your candidates. You either have to reject or progress them. There is an art to doing both well.

Your evaluation process may start with a CV. In this case a screening tool may be useful both to help you and to ensure there is no unconscious bias in your assessment of candidates' CVs.

The First Contact

Greeting your candidate is a basic aspect of the process. First impressions count for a lot. Just as you have an instinctive reaction to a candidate within the first 15 seconds of starting an interview, so the candidate will form a similar impression of you upon meeting or speaking to you for the first time.

How should you aim to come across?

- Be professional, but warm.
- Show you are credible – let the candidate see you know your sector and business.
- Use the right pace for the candidate (match theirs).
- Use open, clear questions to get the candidate talking.
- Ask how to spell the candidate's name if you don't know.
- Build rapport through questioning or finding common ground.
- Listen – giving the candidate your full attention.
- Take overall control of the call.
- End with commitment or action.

Evaluating The Candidate

Candidates need to be evaluated either during or directly after the attraction process. If you were searching for such candidates, or they had phoned in, you may have rejected them before you acquired their CVs. However once you do acquire a candidate's CV, or he or she is sitting in front of you, having walked in off the street, you need to evaluate that person against a range of criteria that you need to set on the basis of what your market requires.
How you handle each of these outcomes has a strong impact on developing your brand with the candidate. At any point your brand can be improved or impaired and it is particularly when rejecting a candidate that there is opportunity to upset. Below we look at professional ways of dealing with each of the evaluation outcomes.

Reject

'I'm really sorry but I don't think we will be able to help you. Your skills are excellent but they are very different from the ones our clients ask us to help them recruit for. I'd like to say we'll hold on to your details but I would not wish to mismanage your expectations at this point. You might find a more general recruitment agency in your area more able to help you.'

Reject and re-direct

'I'm really sorry but I don't think I will be able to help you. However, my colleague Barbara deals with contract and freelance staff in your sector and I am sure she can help you. Let me have her give a call back within the next half hour. What's the best number for her to get you on?'
Or
'I'm really sorry but I don't think I will be able to help you. Have you tried posting your CV on a job board/looking in the paper/contacting X agency who deals specifically in the medical sector?'

Hold for the future (candidate-rich market)

'I don't believe I have any clients with live opportunities that might suit you currently. However, you do have exactly the type of skills my clients seek and I am sure it will not be long before a suitable role comes up. I'd like to keep your details on our database so that when something does come up we can contact you straight away to discuss it. Is that OK?'

Potential progress to clients

'Your skills are exactly what my clients are looking for at the moment so you have chosen a good time to make a move. I'd like to consider approaching a range of my clients on your behalf – we'll agree which ones between us – and set up some meetings so you can explore all the best opportunities on the market. Now, here's whom I suggest…'
Potential short-list

'I'd like to explore what you are looking for and your skills in more detail, and if we agree that it makes sense I'll arrange for you to meet with my client. Now, what would make a move attractive for you?'

Notice here, you need to be clear about what they want as although you have already decided to short-list them from their CV you need to understand about what will attract them. Then you can present the role you have to them appropriately or re-direct them. You will also need to qualify them further before progressing, which we'll come on to shortly.

Potential long-list

'Thank you so much, Sarah, for sending in your CV for the role of XXX following our advertisement/your conversation with our research team. I'd really like to meet you/catch up for a coffee to discuss the role further. When's good for you – Monday next week or Thursday evening?'
The next stage, having decided it will potentially be possible to work with particular candidates, is to qualify them.

Qualifying The Candidate

This differs from evaluating and goes one step further – it is identifying whether this is definitely a candidate to work with now or progress to your client. Some sectors will have more flexibility on qualification than others. In some sectors you will be able to find a role for the vast majority of candidates who approach you so long as they have some skills and qualities. In others you will need to qualify them very hard before deciding whether you should work hard on their behalf.

Categorizing Your Candidate

There are two types of candidates you will want to qualify in, regardless of whether you are candidate or client driven: REQ candidates and SPEQ candidates. See the table below

REQ	SPEQ
Candidates who suit client requirements you currently have	Candidates in demand from your clients but without a specific brief
R – Ready to move **E** – Experience fits the client need **Q** – Qualifies in against CV checklist	**S** – Scarce skill P – Personality/cultural fit **E** – Experience fits the client need **Q** – Qualified candidate

REQ or SPEQ

You will want to be working with both types of candidates but if you are working with candidates who do not fit either category – and also do not meet any of your networking needs – you need to ask yourself what you plan to gain.

Qualifying a candidate in

This will vary from requirement to requirement and you will need to develop your own list but here are some key pointers:

- clear they want to make a move;
- interviewing elsewhere in last six months (demonstrates commitment) although not an important criterion for a search candidate;
- discussed their thoughts about a new role with other people in the family, if relevant;
- considered how they will deal with a counter-offer;
- keen to come and meet you;
- have not been interviewing with every other recruiter or employer in town;
- are realistic about what they want;
- Have few constraints around location or the working week.

In short, to the best of your assessment, are these candidates who will work with you in partnership to find their next move? Ideally you'll want to ask them to agree to use you exclusively as their recruitment advisor. So long as you feel you have a good range of options for them and you are genuinely prepared to put a lot of work into finding them the right role, then this is a win–win for both you and them. It is particularly useful to take this approach with SPEQ candidates.

SPEQ candidates are a top priority if you are deciding where to spend your time. If you work in anything other than a purely client-retained environment, as an external recruiter you will find SPEQ candidates, in the right market, offer not only opportunities to place them – and make fees – but also your best opportunities to deliver credibility, and open doors to new potential clients you are not currently dealing with.

Task

Decide whether any of the candidates you are dealing with currently are REQ (you'll know if you have a role for them) or SPEQ candidates in your market. What still seems unconfirmed that you might wish to qualify further?

If you have simply qualified your candidate as someone you want to work with then the next stage will be to interview him or her. An interview can take a range of forms. It can mean registering a candidate who walks in off the street in a regional agency, checking the skill set of a contract consultant whom you are unlikely to meet before you recruit him or her, or setting up a whole interview and assessment process for graduates or senior hires that you are running. We will cover a basic interview, with some evidence-based hiring techniques.

Interviewing Your Candidate

It does not matter whether the interview is face to face or over the telephone, it is still important to follow a process. This is particularly important if you are interviewing a range of consultants as part of a selection process, because structured interviews, being the same for all candidates, deliver a higher degree of interview validity.

The objectives of an interview

You will want to develop a good relationship with your candidate; the interview is a great opportunity to do that, as well as establish how you plan to work together. It is also important to understand your candidate's motivations and aspirations so you can find roles and organizations that will meet those needs. The interview will also give you clear evidence on how the candidate performs at interview, and this will help you in preparing him or her for interviews with your client; one of the most valuable services a consultant can offer their candidate.
If you are an in-house recruiter you may not wish to brief the candidate so fully, as you may wish to see how much homework he or she has done on the company. Your key objective will be to assess whether this candidate has the capability and cultural fit to join the business you work for. There is a slightly different feel to an in-house interview. It is most closely aligned to an inter-view during a selection process where the objective is to see if the candidate can do the job.

It may be necessary to write detailed notes on a candidate after the interview to progress them through to your client as part of a short-list or if you particularly need to convince the client to see the candidate and cannot persuade them to do so over the phone.

Design your interview with the rest of the recruitment or assessment process in mind so that you and colleagues are all assessing a range of competencies or behaviours. If you are interviewing after psychometric testing there may be areas of the test results you wish to explore further at interview. All of these need factoring in to the interview design.

The contingency interviewer will, of course, be concerned with a candidate's motivations and determination to move. Most recruiters are measured on the revenue they deliver so they would be less able to spend a significant amount of time on a candidate who is just securing an internal rise by way of an external job offer. All recruiters will be happy to help with information on the market, market rates and salaries when they know where a candidate's real motivations lie.

Interviewers also need to manage the candidate's self-esteem. It is important that the candidate leaves the interview feeling challenged perhaps, but not interrogated. A simple way of doing this is to manage the time element of the interview – suggesting an interview will take an hour and then finishing in 20 minutes clearly suggests you had better things to do. However, taking an hour to interview a candidate if you have established within 20 minutes that this will not be someone you can work with is also a poor use of your time. So allow for about 40 minutes on average.

Lastly, an interview provides a real opportunity to manage the candidate's expectations about possible roles, opportunities and remuneration.

Preparing For And Conducting An Interview

There are numerous interview plans and structures. It does not really matter which one you choose, so long as you choose one and cover all bases.

A simple one is WIGGS as outlined in this illustration below

W Welcome and rapport
I Introduction
G Gathering Information
G Giving Information
S Selling and Closing

Candidate interview structure

Welcome and rapport

Introduce yourself. Put candidates at their ease – offer drinks etc. Make some 'small talk' to start the interview off. You will get more from your candidates if you are friendly but professional. Say how long the interview will last and what you plan to cover. If you are planning to use any evidence-based (competency or behavioural) questions it will be useful to let them know that now. Reassure them they will have a chance to ask lots of questions about either the role or the way in which you suggest you both work together at the end of the session. Check the timing works for them. Say that notes will be taken. Check they are happy with that and are ready to start.

Introduction

Tell them a brief couple of sentences about the company you are working for or the business you are representing. This is just to further relax the candidate but is also a mini 'sales-pitch' to remind them of why you are both meeting and what the benefit might be to them. Resist the temptation here to tell them 'all about' the job (or your company if you are in-house); you don't want to tell them everything so they can successfully sell it back to you. You will have plenty of opportunity to sell back later.

Gathering information

This is the largest section of the interview. Here you need to collect the following:

- **Housekeeping:** Location, salary/pay rate and benefits/expenses, their minimum and what they want, willingness to re-locate (if relevant) and criteria for doing so, working hours, any personal circumstances that affect their work. Show-stoppers – eg they are getting married in five weeks and need a month off for their honeymoon.

- **Then move on.** If they work for a company you are interested in exploring

Career highlights and reasons for moving on: A broad biographical sketch of their career history and why they have taken the roles that they have and as a client, without taking up the entire interview by asking questions about it, it is a good opportunity to ask the candidate about the firm and perhaps source some names to contact. Or you might ask them: 'I gather there's quite a bit of recruitment going in your firm at the moment. What do you know about all that?'

- Motivations and aspirations: What is important to them, and crucially why: why they want a new role now, their career aspirations for the future. This will help you when you come to match your candidates to a role and under-stand whether it is likely to work for them. Crucially here you'll want to understand their reasons for looking for a new role. If permanent candidates are only interested in moving for money, they will always be open to counter-offers from their existing employer or another agency. You'll need to develop a relationship with your temp or contractor so they are not vulnerable to other financially better offers.
- KSPs (Key selling points): This is one of the most important parts of the interview process. Unless you clearly identify the candidates' KSPs it will be harder to market them most effectively. Bear in mind that KSPs may be different for different clients. Here you are matching the needs of the clients with the attributes of the candidates. These could range hugely from – 'They are available now and have an up-to-date HGV licence and are willing to work over Christmas,' through 'They have managed a range of accounts and sold from cold into Sainsbury's' to 'They have a good under-standing of US GAAP regulations.'

Task

Key selling points

Choose four of your current candidates. What are their KSPs? How will you present them to a client, whether they are REQ or SPEC?

Competency or behavioural interviewing section

You may offer this service as part of a search or selection process or it may be a normal part of your interview process in-house. You ask open and probing questions against a range of competencies, capabilities or behaviours in this section. Tell the interviewee that you are about to change over to competency-based questions – perhaps after you have had them take you through their CV in brief over, say, 10 minutes.

At the end of the behavioural section you should have enough information about whether the candidate meets your role criteria (REQ) or how to market them out to a range of clients as a SPEQ candidate. It may also be that candidates are temps and you cannot use them immediately, but you can also see that you can use them in the future and therefore they are a very useful addition to your database; or again, some candidate, who has come in to register at your high-street office, could be very useful at XYZ company at their contact centre when they have a vacancy.

If you are using competency-based interviewing Figure 6.6 may be useful. When you are asking your candidate questions it's easier to gather evidence by framing them in this way. Each question has four distinct parts and the idea is to get an answer to each part.

Candidate status

The last piece of information gathering is designed to understand what candidates have done so far in relation to their job search. This sits in the qualification section and you may have already covered this before inviting the candidate to interview, but even so now is a good time, having developed the relationship further, to probe this a little more fully. The probing will establish what other options candidates are looking at and where they are with them. They may also give you some clues as to the type of companies and roles they are looking at already so you can see if this is in line with your thoughts and options. For example, if they say they are looking at temp roles but tell you they have been interviewing for several permanent roles, you can know that this is also in their minds. The key skills you need to demonstrate here are asking questions and listen-ing. It may sound ridiculously obvious but it's all too easy to miss them out, which means you miss an opportunity either to match candidates to something you had not thought of before or to understand why they will buy. Listening is a skill that will also gain trust between you and the candidate, and you may learn things that will help you.
For each competency, capability or behaviour you are assessing, this is a useful framework for gathering answers.

S	Situation	What was the situation?
T	Task	What did you want to achieve?
A	Action	What did you do?
R	Result	What happened as a result?

If you do not have a full STAR and cannot achieve one through more probing, then it is unlikely the candidate can meet that competency, capability or behaviour.

Giving information

You may wish to by-pass this section or use it fully. You may have decided that you will not progress your candidate to short-list and therefore will not be giving detailed information on your client – although some brief information would also be appropriate. If you can only re-direct the candidate there is little point in speaking at length about how your agency works. Much fairer for the candidate to have five minutes help with where else they can look. However, if you do want to work with or progress this candidate, this is the time to go into advice or sales mode.

Selling and closing

Here you may agree the job opportunities open to the candidate, you may tell your candidate much more about your client and the role, you may agree a list of companies to approach on their behalf, and you may give them some advice on their career direction or some information on the market for jobs in their sector at the moment and the rates and salaries being paid.

This may also be the point at which you present to a candidate a role that you are recruiting for, or this may come after the interview as a role becomes avail-able. In the client strategy stage you will have developed a client role proposition, which you will use to attract your candidate. Understanding therefore what's important for your candidates and what they want will enable you to both match the attributes of the role closely but also to explain clearly how the role you have chosen to progress them for matches their motivations and aspirations.

You will also, at this point, agree how you will work together, what the next steps and timescales are. It may be helpful to outline how the process works for people who have never worked with a consultancy or an agency before. Perhaps take them through a typical recruitment process and what you would need them to do as their part in that process; ensure they attend interviews, do some of their own research on the organization, let you know if they become unavailable for work at any point.

Before you Part Company it is a great idea to ask them if there is anything you have not discussed with them that might affect you working together or them taking up any job offers. Agree when you will next speak.

You want your candidates leaving your interviews feeling good about them-selves, and positive about your company and your capacity to help them. You want them to go out and be ambassadors for your business.

Placement Strategies

Assuming you are working with your candidate after evaluation, qualification and interview you now have four choices around what you will do with them, ensuring you are working within both legal and ethical boundaries. In reality you can choose a blend of all four for each candidate or one or two. These are outlined below. Your strategy will depend on whether they are a REQ or a SPEQ candidate.

Client penetration

Submit your candidate to an existing client who has an existing role spec. This may be the only option available to internal recruiters, but there should be consideration about which internal clients this candidate is suitable for. In some firms there may be up to 15 or 20 clients to introduce the candidate to. Whilst there is a need for internal recruiters to add value in terms of screening, there is an equal danger in making too many assumptions and limiting the options for the candidate and the business as a whole. Client penetration is a good strategy for the candidates as they are not required to attend a speculative interview, and good for the client as they get a qualified candidate for their role and, if the matching is good, a placement. Doing this in isolation however means that your candidate has fewer choices and you have no means of extending your market.

Client acquisition

Introduce your candidates to a new client that you are aware has a specific role that is suitable for them. You are aware of the role through market intelligence or perhaps you have seen the client advertising the role as well. This is a great method as you know there is a role, the client can see a candidate whom it might not have been aware of, and you have an opportunity to introduce yourself and begin to develop a relationship with a new client.

Organizational development

Present your SPEQ candidate to your client where you are not aware of a specific role but you would like to introduce the candidate as you feel there could be some synergy and a role could be created. These situations are often best in revenue-generating roles or where you know the business has plans to recruit someone in such roles in the future. It does have disadvantages in that both your client and your candidate need to invest some time and effort (as do you!) into the meeting. However, it can be a great way of really cementing a relationship with a client and adding value over and above ‘filling live jobs’, as it shows you understand the clients’ business and you think of them from a business partnership perspective.

Brand marketing

Although this last option is clearly not just about brand marketing, it is a great way of contributing to your brand’s worth and perceived value in the market. In the same way that shotgun scattering of CVs into the market hoping some will hit does not help your brand, a targeted campaign for a key candidate can develop strong credibility in new markets. Clearly this is the highest risk in terms of managing your time, and your own desk development strategy would be unwise to include a high proportion of this option, but it is a great way of offering value to all – your candidate, your client and you.

Developing your process

1. **Market:** Draw up a list of organizations or people you think would be interested to learn that this candidate is on the market. Agree this list with your candidate and ensure that s/he has not already started talking to these organizations, or is not being put forward by another consultancy. Discuss with the candidate the types of role you will agree between you to focus on
2. **Product:** Decide on the candidates' KSPs; if they have worked for a key competitor this may be a KSP to a particular client. When interviewing the candidates, make sure that you have established some of the great results that they have achieved during their careers and particularly in their last role, but also what the fit of each candidate is. You'll have seen from the case study on the 'off PSL' placement that the key knew the candidate really well, not just that person's skills. In that case it was the capacity to understand what was important to both candidate and client. Both of these aspects will help you work out what a candidate may be able to offer an employer to increase your chances of getting this person an interview.

3. **Price:** Agree with your candidates the parameters of their required package or fees/rate and the variables that affect this. Consider this with them in light of the market rate and what you think your clients will pay. You may need to manage candidates' expectations about what is realistic in market conditions. The 'price' you can achieve also of course depends upon how quickly various candidates want to find work and how close a match they require to what they want. The more exacting they are on price and role the harder they may be to place.

4. **Promotion/Place:** Decide on the best approach to each of the organizations you have on your list. What is their normal recruiting modus operandi? Whom should you contact? How? Should you send an introductory e-mail or a CV with it? Many of these decisions are based on personal choice but you may want to consider sending an introductory e-mail or making an introductory phone call to explore whether there would be some interest in learning more about your candidate.

Interview Arrangements

Let's assume as a result of this activity that you now have a range of interviews for your candidate. Clearly you need to arrange the interview. This in itself can be a challenging affair. It is one of the tasks that is most tempting to delegate, but think of it as a great opportunity to build relationships each time, if not directly with the decision-makers then with their PAs, and with your candidate.
Sometimes it requires a level of assertiveness that will be hard for someone else to achieve. Whilst arranging the interview you will also be able to prepare both parties for their meeting so it all runs smoothly. Your preparation at each stage will depend upon the number of stages your candidate is likely to need to go through.

Interview preparation

This is a vital part of the interview process, and setting the scene for both candi-dates and interviewers will set them up for a fruitful meeting. You'll need to tell your client about your candidate and what they can do for their business or organization and your candidate all about your client and what the organization can potentially do for them. If both parties are meeting with a view to being interested and impressed by each other than they stand a much better chance of a successful meeting. Make a point of talking, if at all possible, directly with your candidate's interviewer as this both builds the relationship with you the supplier, and enables them to hear first hand about your candidate.
However, where this is not possible you may want to brief the internal recruiter or HRM so they can pass the briefing on. Your candidate may be being interviewed over a day by a range of people on a panel so, at the very least, most internal organizers or RPOs should be provided with a cover sheet that you can use to brief in writing or you can attach notes to the CV.
This is what you should cover with your candidate and client, using a prepara-tory checklist:

Your candidate:

- The company – present a balanced perspective.
- The role – same.
- The interviewer – background, values and personality.
- Commonality between the candidate and the interviewer.
- Interview tips and techniques if useful, perhaps feedback from your own interview with them.
- Housekeeping – interview time, location, travel time from candidate's start point, any dress code.
- Pre-closing – depending upon the process, you may want to check what the candidates' thoughts would be about accepting a satisfactory offer, if they like what they see and hear.
- Check they will catch up with you after the interview.

Your client:

- The candidate – career history, job motivations and aspirations.
- Issues you have concerns about that you feel the client should explore further (senior/retained roles only in depth)
- Candidate status – are they active or passive and how, therefore should the client behave with them (is this an 'interview' or 'an exploratory chat'?); what other opportunities is the candidate looking at?
- Arrange a time to de-brief with them after interview.

After The Interview

Fast follow-up here is really important – potential placements can be lost because a recruiter has not managed to keep a level of interest and urgency alive in all parties. Try to take response and feedback from your candidate first, and as soon after their interview as possible. This means you can get their true 'first impressions' rather than considered ones after long conversations with other people. Then call your client and say you'd like to give them your candidate's feedback on them and the role. Most clients are keen to get feedback on them-selves and are more likely to want to take one call where they can both give and receive feedback than they are two, one with their own and then another with candidate feedback.

These are the post-interview questions you need to ask your candidate and client:

Your candidate:

- How did the interview go?
- How did you find the interviewer/the panel?
- Was the role as described?
- How well can the role satisfy your XXX (motivations and aspirations – short and long term)
- What was the journey like/the offices/the panel (or any other area of possible concern)?
- What information might you still need?
- How interested are you?
- How does it compare with the other interviews you have been on this week?
- Are there any issues that concern you?

Your client:

- How did the interview go?
- What were your impressions of the candidate?
- What were their key strengths?
- How well could they do the job?
- How would they fit in to the team?
- What did you think about the areas I had some concerns about (if needed)?
- How did they compare with the other candidates? Who would be your first and second choices at this stage?
- What is the next stage?
- What further information do you need?
- Will anyone else need to be involved in the decision?
- Is there anything else I should be aware of like internal candidates or a possible spec. change?

- Is there anything else you need from me at this point?
- If you were to move ahead, are you confident you could offer a good increase on my candidate's current package?

In-house processes can also win here by taking care about how they stand out from the crowd if a candidate has had a range of second interviews.

At second interview you will cover some of the same questions, but you will be moving towards trial closing both your candidate and your client.

Questions to ask:

- If you were to consider making an offer, are you confident you could offer a good increase on my candidate's current package?
- If you were to be made an offer you are happy with from my client, what might that offer look like/be?
- Say my client made you an offer you are happy to accept and when you resign your current company offer you more money, what might you do? Suppose they offered you a promotion? Or a £5,000 salary increase?
- Are there any other considerations we have not discussed that I need to be aware of as we move towards an offer?
- How are you feeling about an offer?
- How does this candidate compare with the other candidates you have seen?
- What other steps do you need to take in the business to enable you to move towards an offer?
- Is there anything that could stop you making an offer to my candidate?
- Are there any concerns about my candidate?
- Are there any concerns about taking the role?
- What are going to be the decision-making criteria for you to choose to take this role?

After all the interviews you will either be moving towards an offer or a rejection of your candidate.

Managing A Rejection

The objective of a rejection is always to try and manage the candidate's self-esteem, to allow them to complete the process while still holding the recruiting organization in high regard, and perhaps having learned something to their benefit

At the very least having found the process an interesting and good experience. The best companies will not promise progression or make offers to candidates

They have no interest in hiring and will give comprehensive feedback. Occasionally you will have inexperienced junior hiring managers who say to the candidate they would like to put him/her through to the next stage but then change their minds, and you are left to deal with an enthusiastic candidate whom you have to let down. Sometimes you will have no feedback to pass on. There is not space here to cover all eventualities but there are a few general guidelines that you might find helpful, not least of which is 'do as you would be done by':

- Don't reject immediately after interview. We'd all prefer to think the rejec-tion took at least some level of consideration.
- Tell the truth, but judiciously. If there was a better candidate, say so, and why. If the one being rejected was bottom of four, there's no need to point that out.
- If you have a relationship with the candidate always make the rejection over the phone.
- Don't leave a cheery-sounding message only for them to call back to bad news. Let them know in your tone this is not great news.

If the rejection is for an interpersonal skills reason, you may not wish to be the one to deliver this feedback. Your feedback is unlikely to occasion a change, and worrying about one person's opinion is likely to do more harm than good. You can however say that their lack of practice at interviewing skills may have let them down and suggest they get some coaching for next time.

This is one of the more challenging parts of the recruiter's role, particularly with candidates who go through a long process, really want the role and fall at the final interview stage, as some invariably will. If you are an internal recruiter it's good to have a standard form of interview feedback and policy on this so you can become practised at delivering it to all candidates. External recruiters will have to work with a range of differing client practices.

A more satisfactory part of the recruitment process is managing the offer. Often, the success factors in such cases are already determined by your early management of those 'show-stoppers' discussed in the section on 'Qualifying the candidate' earlier in this chapter. Actually making an offer should be 'like a hot knife through butter', and below we deal with how to make it so.

Managing The Offer

Any job offer will comprise a range of factors:

- job content;
- prospects for progression, learning and development;
- boss and/or co-workers;
- working environment;
- location and travelling times/travel;
- Pay.

The objective is to create a win–win situation so that your client and candidate are both happy with the outcome. The way to do this is to manage expectations from the outset.

As part of your interview you will have established what is important to your candidate out of the above list, and so the rest of the offer should be clear enough. The last thing to be negotiated usually is the pay, which can be a make or break part of the process. As you will have put a huge amount of work into getting this potential placement to this point, you do not want to fall at the last hurdle.

However, it is also important that all other possible areas for negotiation are discussed first. Otherwise you can spend a lot of time negotiating a salary that your candidate is happy with, only for him or her to say 'there's just one more thing' – a dreaded few words that no recruiter wants to hear as it shows the job has not been done as effectively as it might! To avoid this follow the checklists on qualification to ensure you have covered all bases.

Closing The Deal

If you do need to 'close' the deal there are a variety of 'closes' available of course. You can be assumptive – offering alternative start dates, simply asking whether they are taking the role, though if you have pre-closed them none of this should be necessary. Sometimes however you might need something more sophisticated.

Managing The Resignation

Once you have agreed an offer and your candidate has accepted it verbally and received the client's offer letter or contract, they'll need to resign from their current role, which can be crucial for permanent scarce-skill staff.
Counter-offers need discussing at interview before any likelihood of one occurring. If your candidate receives one here are some thoughts to share:

'It is never a good time for you to leave your current role (unexpectedly) as there is unlikely to be a replacement waiting in the wings, so your employers are likely to act in one of three ways if they are more concerned for themselves than for you: make you a counter-offer and give you the corner office you have been coveting for years; love you to bits and be terribly nice in the hope you might mind – they may ask you to delay your start date; or make you feel very guilty change your and spend a great deal of time working on you 'not to let them down. Generally when people leave jobs they only do so for money if they feel significantly underpaid and so undervalued. These candidates are especially vulnerable to counter-offer and need to be identified early on in the process.

Managing Your Candidate Through To Start Date And Beyond

You'll need to keep in touch with your candidates through to their start date and increasingly support their on-boarding process as well, particularly if their new company does not place a big emphasis on this. The risk of not managing your candidate is that they may find other opportunities.

Develop an understanding of what your candidate's plans are after accepting the offer. Are other roles now fully rejected, or is s/he still waiting to hear from that dream job in Rio? Is the candidate at home on gardening leave for three months? Your candidate's notice period or time before starting can vary hugely but in general try to keep in touch on a weekly basis and do the occasional lunch or coffee, ensuring also that your client keeps in touch and invites the candidate along to team social outings or meetings without breaking any contractual constraints. Keep in touch too during the first weeks of the new role as this can sometimes be challenging and you can provide a bridge between the old role and the new.

For contractors and temps it is as important to keep in regular touch but this is always the case and if you are running a group of contractors or temps you will have systems in place to ensure a regular telephone contact, backed up with the odd get-together on client site. If you do not have a system in place, develop a diary-based system now that enables you to speak to temps once a week and contractors once a month, or every fortnight on a shorter contract.

Of course once your candidates are placed in work they also become great people both to network with and to act as advocates in developing new client relationships

Further Reading: