



# UNIT-6

## Candidate attraction

### Learning Outcomes

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

## Unit 6

### Candidate attraction

Candidate attraction is defined as any means you may use to find a candidate or a range of candidates. This unit explores ways to deliver candidates: resourcing from the database, advertising, social networking, talent bank development, headhunting and networking, plus developing a range of attraction strategies for in-house recruiters.

Candidate attraction starts as soon as you have worked out 'what to do' and ends as soon as you have acquired the candidate CV, at which point you move on to candidate management.

Your strategy could include just one, or a range of, attraction methods. Each method begins with a definition, making it easy for you to work out if it is the right method for you to choose whether it is an ideal or a poor choice under particular circumstances. The section then goes on to tell you how you can implement the method and what to say and do.

Decide which of the methods most closely suit the situation you are in with your client and develop a strategy from there.

#### Resourcing From Your In-House Database

- Defined as - Contacting candidates whose details you already have, either on your internal company or recruiting consultancy database.
- Ideal: If you have a great database with a wide range of skills on it. Great if you are in a hurry and in a competitive situation – a freelance, contract or temp role needs filling this morning for example. Cost-effective as you have already acquired the candidates, so the more you can use them the more profitable the cost of acquisition is.
- Poor choice: You are searching for someone with skills that differ from your normal candidate base. You have never recruited for this role before and neither has your company. You are doing a search.

It's easy to slip up here and assume that as the candidates are on your database they will be interested in what you have to say, pleased to hear from you, and exclusively yours! In fact, of course, they may have already taken six calls from recruiters this morning, be on all of your competitors' databases too and not too keen to hear from you. Take care not to make assumptions.

Start resourcing a role after preparing your pitch, as discussed in the last unit, and have your search list in front of you. Make sure you have access to the history of each candidate. Be well prepared on your requirement or brief.

Good candidates can be won and lost on the strength of your approach. Your knowledge and enthusiasm for the organization you are representing is crucial; this often depends upon a good relationship with the hiring manager, which you will have developed through the client strategy phase.

**When you are pitching a job to a candidate use your planned pitch:**

- Summarize your previous discussion.
- ‘When we spoke before you said...’
- Think how the candidate might like the role presented, given what you know about them.
- Assume that the candidate will be interested in the opportunity. After all, if you have done your work well, listened carefully and taken trouble to match well, they will be.

**Describe how the opportunity fits with their motivations uncovered at interview.**

- Be positive about the organization you are marketing – often we do best when ‘selling’ the organizations we would ourselves like to work for. Don’t hide the negatives but keep them in proportion. A negative for one person could be a positive for someone else.
- Check out how the candidate feels about what you have said: ‘How does that sound?’
- Handle any objections as you go through and check there are no further concerns at the end.
- Gain diary availability for a meeting with the client. Check there is nothing to preclude the candidate from attending.

**In client acquisition we used the acronym AIDA to structure the approach**

**A/I – Attention and interest**

The first thing you say has to gain the attention of the listener. It’s important to sound awake and alert and even to smile – you’d be surprised how a smile can be ‘heard’ over the phone. If you don’t sound upbeat and excited (whilst staying professional of course) your potential candidate certainly won’t feel you have anything worth hearing. So, the focus here is on the delivery of this first sentence. Sounding like you have just woken up or had a heavy night, whilst it may be the truth, will not get you the results you want. You also have a maximum of 30 seconds to gain their attention before you have mentally lost them.

How you introduce yourself and your business will also have an impact on the attention you get. Using both first and second names increases your professionalism. Saying what your agency or company’s

specialization is (unless you are a household name like Korn Ferry or Unilever) enables the person to qualify you further as someone they should be talking to.

### Options to gain Attention:

- 'Hi Jo, it's Tom from X Company – we spoke a while back about that fantastic job at Diageo but you were not free...'
- 'Hi Jo, it's Tom Smith from X Company. We specialize in recruiting senior execs for EMEA start-ups. I recruited Sam Jones, whom you know, into her current role and she suggested I speak with you about a new CEO role I am handling. Is now a good time?'
- 'Hi Jo, it's Tom Smith here – we agreed I'd be in touch as soon as I was briefed on something in a start-up situation...'
- 'Hi Jo, it's Tom Smith – we spoke last week and you said you were available for work today – is that still the case?'
- 'Jo, Tom Smith from X Company. We've not spoken before but I know you have dealt with colleagues in the past who have suggested I call you today as they feel your skills match very closely a profile I am recruiting for.'

Notice each introduction, where you have sought to gain their interest by offering a 'carrot' to them, is still sharp and swift and you then confirm the situation and 'close' that part of the conversation. Make sure your candidate speaks at a really early point in the conversation – remember the 30-second rule from above – so you've gained attention and interest.

**D** – Create desire

## Two pitching options:

### Option one: direct pitch

If you know them well, know what they want and have spoken to them recently; pitch the role directly to them:

- 'Let me tell you about the role... It's based in central London, which means it's an easy commute from your house, paying 20 per cent more than you are currently earning and a similar tax compliance role so will be a really straightforward transition for you. How does that sound?'
- 'Great – I thought you were available – it's a lovely job actually – for at least three days from today. It's a great company that I've worked with many times before and the job's covering the MD's PA who is off sick and they don't think she'll be back for a few weeks. The MD's really

nice, busy of course, and will be thrilled to see you. It's Covent Garden that I know you like. What time can you be there for this morning?'

Notice in the first pitch you link the features of the role to the benefits of the role to them; the commute from their house, the difference in their pay packet and a 'straightforward transition for you'. Even if you don't spell these things out, at least make sure you refer back to what you know they want, which of course you will have covered in interview and written down to refer back to when you go back to them. Here it's the little details that count, like having to get home by 5 pm to let the nanny go so your candidate cannot work past 4.30 pm.

### **Option two: match pitch**

If you don't know what is important to the candidate, because you have not spoken to them before, you'll need to find out what they want or what they will 'buy' before you can present the role effectively to them.

So first, find out what they want... then pitch the role to them, assuming you can find a match.

- 'We've not spoken at length before so I'm keen to find out if the role I have might be suitable for you – tell me, what is important to you in your next role?'
- 'We clearly need to evaluate between us whether this might be the right career move for you at this point – tell me what might be the next role for you?'
- 'I need to establish whether this contract is right for you – what sort of commute are you happy with? What rate would you be looking for? And what rate are you currently on? What shifts are you working at present? How open are you to a change?'

Notice how in the above examples you are holding on to control of whether you progress the candidate for the role. You don't want to play games with them but you must retain control over whether they are likely to be a seriously qualified candidate to progress to your client at this point. You need to gain some commitment from them before you progress to the next stage.

### **A – Action**

This could range from confirming that the candidate will send in a CV in response to an advertisement, agreeing for you to put them forward for an interview to following through with a referral. Be clear with the candidate at the end of the call, meeting or e-mail what you have both agreed will take place next. This is an important part of candidate control.

Resourcing the database is often, rightly, the first port of call for any consultant. It should also be first for any internal recruiting function, but it is surprising how little attention is paid to sourcing candidates internally by internal or corporate

Recruiters – in terms of either present employees or previously interviewed candidates – although this is gradually changing. The opportunity cost for employers is twofold: the goodwill and loyalty generated by promoting from within, and the obvious costs of recruiting saved by not using external sources.

In-house recruiters and agencies alike will make use of targeting particular groups of candidates directly, once they have identified them as a segment they draw from for their workforce. Both parties can reach new candidates through job fairs, sponsorship and targeted relationship building.

### **Job Fairs**

Defined as: A heavily advertised event aimed at a discrete candidate base (graduates, retail, IT) where prospective employers pay to take a stand and market themselves directly.

Ideal: If you have volume recruitment needs from a range of people that it might either be hard to process or screen in the same timeframe, or expensive or difficult to reach.

Poor choice: If you are recruiting a scarce skill, senior candidates or small numbers of candidates.

There is now a wide range of job fairs available for different skills and candidates. The more junior the roles or the more regional, the better this works. Candidates can be managed and processed quickly and can come out of the job fair with a range of follow-up interviews. Large employers sometimes run their own: Nottingham City Council for example. Job fairs may be designed to target a particular diverse group, uncovering both a new range of potentially highly qualified but otherwise inaccessible candidates and also developing their diversity. A prospect, the graduate careers website, runs a wide range of fairs for different purposes: work experience fairs, volunteering fairs, graduate and post-graduate fairs, with specialist fairs such as law as well.

### **Targeted Relationship Development And Sponsorship**

Defined as: - A strategy that recognizes the importance of certain university courses, or particular schools or colleges, for its workforce. This can range from recruiting the top graduates from Oxbridge for banks or advertising agencies through to doing talks at local schools and colleges for the local police force or supermarket recruitment. This may be linked with sponsoring certain events at that organization.

**Ideal:** If you have a specialist need for particular graduates who have completed a certain course at a particular group of universities, or when recruiting for a local employer with specific geographic needs and a limited pool to draw from.

**Poor choice:** If you need experienced people and could draw them from a range of places, and they are likely to be already working.

As part of a graduate development program, your business or recruitment agency could develop relationships with specific universities who have courses that would be of interest to the business. Specialist graduate recruiters spend a great deal of time developing these relationships, and many are now doing joint development programs with their chosen course organizers. Agencies specializing in placing candidates into marketing or advertising might target universities and colleges with specific advertising and marketing courses.

## Internal Recruitment Referral Schemes

Defined as- Reward and incentive programs that offer financial (in most cases) incentives for staff in organizations to suggest their friends and old colleagues for jobs in their new company. Some recruitment consultancies also run these schemes for their candidate base.

**Ideal:** A 'must-have' scheme for all recruiters everywhere.

**Poor choice:** If relied on to staff the entire business needs to be blended with other techniques.

When someone new starts, sit them down for a coffee and ask them to draw out their last organization and identify people in their old department. This is a great way to map the market in the competitors you are hiring from and would like to hire more from, and will deliver more of a picture than simply relying on the new recruits to recommend someone or asking them who else they know. There will be people you cannot reach through your own networking, but reducing the overall cost per hire is a continual driver and if you can pick off even 25 per cent of your hires directly this will make a major difference to your business's bottom line in recruitment costs. This strategy will only fill a proportion of your roles however, so you'll need to include others alongside it.

We'll now turn to another useful strategy, for internal and external recruiters alike.

## Networking

Defined as - Establishing one or more mutually advantageous relationships either face to face at a networking type event or over the phone, or even e-mail occasionally.

Ideal: Generating candidates who are not actively looking in the market, ie passive candidates, which means you will not be competing with other agencies or companies for them at an offer stage. Often finds better-quality candidates so long as you are networking with good people to start with – good people tend to know other good people. Cost no ‘real money’ to acquire – although there is a time cost of course. Gets you out in the market being visible, building your own personal brand and developing your business’s brand at the same time.

Poor choice: If you need someone today as it can take a lot longer, both to find candidates who match your specification and to convert them from passive to active – at least for your role. If you don’t handle the networking well as it will adversely affect your brand.

### **Networking well**

The early days of executive search were based on networking skills and ‘whom you know’ (often from ‘the old school tie’) and a developing ‘black book’ of contacts. Successful recruiters who have been operating for many years in the industry will have started placing people at an early stage in their careers and kept in touch with them as they too progressed up the career ladder turning into clients.

### **Developing your own black book**

Developing a ‘black book’ of candidates and clients who themselves are well connected is a great idea to help you when you are searching for a particular candidate who is hard to find. A ‘black book’ can operate at any level: it can be compiled by someone operating at the top end of a search market, a geographically based recruiter who works in one town where everyone knows everyone, or a specialist recruiter in a specific technical field. Your black book will include sources of good candidates, not necessarily good candidates themselves – although they will of course from time to time also be that. So you may have a range of contacts in the top firms in your town or sector – people who are likely to have access to a range of people at those firms perhaps. These candidate sources may also of course be client sources, depending upon their level – they will certainly be able to tell you something about when their firm is hiring as well as who is around in it.

### **Developing client referrals through networking**

You do not only have access to new candidates through networking; you can also develop referrals towards acquiring new clients through the same medium.

Candidates registering with you for a new role may work for organizations you’d like to work with as a supplier. They are perfectly placed to help you learn more about that organization, how it recruits and the key players to talk to. You can find out who is recruiting currently in their organization, and sometimes who is recruiting in the wider market; often this is in the public domain.

Ask, 'What can you tell me about recruitment in your company?' Or deliver a great service so you get referred on anyway.

Great sources of market activity, and of market direction for internal recruiters, will be agency recruiters. Whilst they will not be a source of cost-free direct candidates, they can give you a really good picture of what the market is doing that will help you develop your strategy for specific hires.

### **Six degrees of separation**

The mathematical theory behind networking is that we are all linked to everyone else on the planet through six other links. Check the 'small world phenomenon', The Milgram experiment (not the psychology one!) and Frigyes Karinthy for more (Travers and Milgram, 1969; Karinthy, 1929). This means we are only six steps away from anyone we might want to contact.

The best place to start networking, then, is with the people you already know and whom they know. As a recruitment consultant you also have access to a great range of candidates on your database, and whilst they will not all be people you know directly, they are people you can contact directly legitimately and ask for help in finding the person you need. You might consider running an event where you ask all your candidates to bring someone else.

Many of the networking sites on the internet are based on the six degrees of separation premise. The business networking site LinkedIn, for example, identifies everyone by how many degrees of separation there are between you and the person you have found on there whom you'd like to contact. This is a great source of names for headhunting and networking approaches.

### **Trade events and industry conferences**

There is no substitute for meeting people face to face, and so long as you set some objectives for attending trade events they are a great way to meet candidates and clients in a more relaxed setting. Conferences are expensive. Most people who are sent to a conference or an event by their employers are sent because the employer values them, so it is likely that the best people in your sector will be at the conference.

At a conference people are relaxed and less 'on their guard'. You can make sure you attend the breakout sessions that people with the skills and expertise you are looking for are likely to be attending. The return on investment of attending these conferences and events can be very high. They are not a place for direct selling but are ideal for making an initial contact that can be followed through after the event.

### **How to make an event work well**

Think about who might be at the event, make sure you prepare by having your business cards with you, and with the potential attendees in mind consider what you are going to say to people. Potentially the last thing to talk about is recruiting. Decide on your approach. Most people will be there to learn from the event, to meet some new people and get some different views. If you can see two people standing at an angle to each other it's a great opportunity to go and join them and make the 'group' into a triangle. If you can see someone you know talking to a group of other people, catch their eye and wander over to greet the group and your existing contact. If you know no one, either choose someone standing on their own to join or go and catch a coffee and make conversation with the person standing next to you in the coffee queue. In some ways a successful piece of networking can be viewed as an interview; you'll start by relaxing the person you've approached – ask them a social question, even about their journey or make a remark about the venue, just as you might at an interview. Have a few minutes of social conversation then move the conversation to business:

### **How to describe what you do**

It's important to decide what you are planning to tell people and tell them confidently. Networking gurus refer to a 30-second 'elevator' speech. We said earlier that you have about 30 seconds to lose or gain someone's attention, which is about the time you spend in a lift... You may not want to say that you are a recruiter per se, but saying that you are an international or City or public sector or local head-hunter, or a talent director always sparks an interest, and the phrase 'headhunter' is often an opportunity for a joke that breaks the ice and builds rapport.

In order to craft your own 'elevator' speech decide what you offer, what the benefits to the client or the candidate are (think about whom you have recently hired and what benefit they brought to the recruiting organization, or what difference it made to someone's life) and what results you generate. So, perhaps you say you find candidates the job they have always wanted and clients the ideal candidate they've been searching for. Make sure you put it in context. If you are speaking to someone at your local regional industry conference, talk about how much work you do in the region rather than how much work you do in London. This way you will hold people's interest and make them feel bonded to you. Naturally you'll need to use language you feel comfortable with and that reflects who you are.

### **Online networking**

The development of both social and business networking sites has been meteoric and there is no reason to suppose this will stop, although some of the sites do raise privacy issues and many firms have banned their use in the workplace. The recruiter's role is to stay one step ahead and use the up-

and-coming media. Wikipedia maintains a list of the main worldwide sites for further reference, or you can do your own research among your candidates and clients.

You may not work in an online-rich sector however. There is still a range of other ways of networking to consider.

### **Word-of-mouth networking**

There are plenty of rural or urban areas for which online operating has not arrived yet as there is limited computer usage amongst the candidate base. Recruiting just off Heathrow, for example, for temps to work on the airport and in the distribution companies just outside requires a wholly different approach based very much on word-of-mouth. Candidates will bring friends and neighbours to the depot at five in the morning for a cup of tea, bacon roll and the newspaper, and recruiters will get on the phone and book all the operatives in to their clients. Candidates will then be bussed out, often carrying five or so more 'extra' candidates who will have been placed by the time they have reached the airport perimeter fence. So it goes on until the next shift change, and then it all starts over again. A very fast-paced recruitment environment but still focused on the core delivery of our industry, placing people in jobs. Networking here is working brilliantly, but in an entirely different context.

If you are a recruiter working in a geographic area, as above, but in a different, more office-oriented market space, face-to-face networking in a group situation might work well.

### **Networking groups**

There are a myriad of networking groups available to join in every area. In one area alone over 20 general groups have been identified, including organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, CIPD local branches (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development), ICAEW (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales), CIM (Chartered Institute of Marketing), BNI (Business Network International), BRE (Business Referral Exchange), local networking business groups, alumni groups for schools and universities, as well as many one-off networking groups and business exhibitions.

Many of them offer a speaker on a particular relevant topic and then a chance for networking. Some, like BRE, are formed specifically to help everyone sell for everyone else and actively promote referrals between members; others are much more low-key.

The challenge is not which one to join so much, but how to make best use of it and then not to spend so much time networking that you forget to make placements. Networking is a means to an end.

Everywhere can be networking territory of course, and having a recruiter mentality is helpful wherever you are, whatever you are doing. A recruiter mentality can be seen as an overwhelming interest in who people are and what they do.

## **ADVERTISING**

Defined as - Placing press, online or other media advertising to attract potential candidates to respond.

Ideal for: Large numbers of similar candidates, brand building, recruiting targeted groups of candidates, which a particular media reaches. High-profile roles. Roles where the applicants could come from a wide range of backgrounds. Roles that have to be made publicly available. Difficult location. Range of requirement over different departments. Gaining a broad choice of candidates. Role is urgent.

Poor choice: Scarce-skill specialist, identifiable roles better suited to a search.

Different mediums of advertising:

- Press, local, national and trade.
- Billboards (recruiter, McGregor Boyall uses billboards at Liverpool St station and law firm Halliwells uses boards in Manchester airport).
- Radio.
- Job centre advertising.
- Flyers.
- Job boards.
- Internal advertising – posters, intranet.

## **The 10 top tips for designing an advertisement**

1. Identify quickly and clearly who you are trying to recruit. Different companies have different titles for the same role. Try to avoid internal company jargon and use titles or sub-headings that reflect what your ideal candidate is currently doing or aspires to be doing.
2. Include clear information on salary and location. It's what candidates most want to know. Being coy about it just suggests there is a problem, as well as wasting time with people who are not appropriate. If there are issues then why not confront them upfront and focus on other aspects of the role that make it attractive?

3. Keep it brief. The number of people who apply for jobs for which they are clearly not qualified shows that much of the detail in adverts is ignored. A job advert is only a snapshot, so concentrate on key objectives and essential requirements in the hope that they might actually sink in.
4. Avoid corporate hype. If every employer lived up to its promises, why do people move jobs so frequently? If you're going to make claims, back them up with facts and evidence that illustrate what those claims mean in day-to-day life. And don't be afraid to be honest about what's not perfect.
5. In defining candidate requirements, try to avoid generalizations that are difficult to measure. Most people think they have good 'interpersonal' skills and are 'team players'. These sorts of phrases are unlikely to stop people applying. Concentrate on the hard criteria in terms of education, experience and achievement that prove they have these qualities.
6. Use the second rather than third person, ie 'you' not 'the candidate'. Makes it sound more like you are interested in the reader as an individual.
7. Avoid long complicated sentences. People generally have short attention spans with advertising. Read what you've written out aloud. If it sounds long-winded it probably is.
8. Use a logical structure. There's nothing wrong with the traditional 'company, role, candidate' format.
9. Be clear about how you want people to respond and make sure contact details are prominent.
10. Try to reflect the personality of your company in the language you use and the design of the advert. Are you informal, creative and fun or traditional, serious and business focused? It's all about attracting the right kind of people.

## JOB BOARD MINING

Defined as - Subscribing to the CV sections of the job boards appropriate to your business area, searching for candidates with the right skills and qualifications for your clients and contacting them directly.

Ideal for: Roles you have now.

Poor choice: If you cannot call them quickly.

Your approach may be similar to finding a candidate on your database – except that as the candidate may not recognize your company name you will need to craft an introduction that provides a benefit to them from listening to you or calling you back. This is straightforward if you have a particular brief or requirement you are working on to tempt them with, but if you are generally interested in their skill set and feel that you would like to talk to them because your clients might be interested in them, say that too:

- ‘My name is Joe Smith from XYZ Company – we specialize in recruiting part-qualified accountants into the oil and gas industries. I have a running brief from the top company in the field to recruit at your level to join their career development programme – their office also happens to be just down the road from you... but before I say too much more about it I’d like to find out more about you... Where are you in your search for a new role currently? What sort of role and company are you looking for?’
- ‘My name is Joe Smith – I have your CV in front of me, which I have down-loaded from X job board. I’d like to talk to you about an assignment I am handling at the moment – your skills and experience really caught my eye. Tell me; what you are you looking for?’

Whichever approach you choose, make sure there is a good reason for the person to speak to you or return your call. Bear in mind that at this point they are in control. Whilst you have their CV, clearly you need their agreement to do anything with it and they have not approached you for help, you have approached them.

## **Headhunting**

Definition: Identifying and approaching potential passive candidates for a client’s role or for general roles within a specific client base.

Ideal for: Specialist roles where an identifiable skill or background is needed that may be rare. When a client wants to draw someone from a limited number of competitors. If the job is highly confidential. Senior roles at ‘C’ level. Finding passive candidates who are not in a competitive situation with other roles and consultancies. Roles guaranteed by a retainer. Clients with a poor reputation. No success with advertising or agencies.

Poor choice- For non-retained roles except under certain circumstances (see later). For generalist roles where candidates are hard to identify, especially if non-retained increasingly, retainers are being used to identify generalist candidates who have a scarce skill set and who cannot be reached by other means – often a long, hard process but can be rewarding. High risk with no retainer. For low-level, non-business-critical roles, as cost is too high to justify.

However, there are some skills used by the search industry that general recruiters, whether operating in-house or externally, may find helpful. This section covers the development of some of the skills of a professional search consultant or head-hunter, some of which can be woven into general recruitment consultancy skills. To be clear about the differences, we outline when you might choose to search, look at the process used to deliver it and suggest how a retained search might operate,

## Headhunting skills

### When you might choose to headhunt

While discussing on 'Client strategy' there are clear guidelines about when it would be a good idea to recommend a search strategy to your client and offer a retained proposal. Under certain circumstances it may be worthwhile offering a non-retained headhunting service to your client. This has to be a sound commercial decision on your part. It is not the purpose of this book to suggest that headhunting on a non-retained basis is a 'good idea'. The danger with offering a non-retained service is to devalue the search service. There are always going to be great differences in the quality of service offered by a non-retained search and a retained one. So long as clients are clear about the differences and are not promised one service and delivered another, a non-retained search may be a helpful service on occasion to a client.

### Qualifying the 'searchable' role

#### Ensure that:

- You can identify the people who do the role.
- The role is business-critical (there will be an appreciable loss to the business if the business does not hire this person to time).
- You have an attractive proposition to put to people in their current role that offers some form of advancement.
- It's a permanent, valuable contract or interim role.
- You have an exclusive opportunity to fill the role.

### How a retained search operates

A retained search is when a client pays a retainer fee, usually a proportion of the final projected fee for the placement. This is paid at the beginning of the search process. A further proportion of the fee is then paid when an agreed number of candidates are submitted as part of a short list. The final fee is paid when the chosen candidate accepts an offer or starts. Clearly search firm's terms and modus operandi vary. Some firms now do not charge a short-list fee, but front-load the retainer, others

progress candidates as they find them rather than waiting to submit a short list, but in essence this is a retained search methodology.

## How to conduct a search

### Identifying the right people

Whilst the emergence of internet networking sites had made it easier to identify candidates, firms themselves have made it harder with the emergence of a no-names policy. Successful knowledge management is an increasingly important skill.

The first step is to identify the companies you wish to search for people from – search sites – and the second is to gather the names of people to approach. We do not have the space to go into great detail about ‘name-gathering’.

### But here are some ideas about how to gather names:

Use the networking sites as above.

- Read the trade press.
- Search the internet.
- Ask people you already know at the organizations you want to target.
- Ask your client.
- Ask your colleagues.
- Do a database search for people working in your search sites now or (even better) who used to work there recently and call them.
- Access an exhibition catalogue.
- Attend an event or conference.
- Ring your target companies and ask them – if the role is senior enough it will be in the public domain.
- Look on your target companies’ websites – some firms have a real range of employees on there and some small firms have everyone in the business. Many companies will have directors.
- Join or access trade associations.
- Look in specific publications for your sector – The Personnel Manager’s Yearbook, for example, and the lists of newly-qualified accountants when they are published.
- Access directories.
- Get each of your current candidates to recommend one person qualified for the role.
- And so on...

Once you have your list of target names it is time to plan your approach calls. Even the most experienced search consultants plan their calls before they make them. They also tend to choose first to contact a couple of people they are less sure about, so they don't make their first 'raw and unpractised' call to their top prospective candidate. It makes sense to block off a chunk of time to make the calls, just as it does when calling new clients. You'll get into the swing of it that way and make some progress on a project.

The best plan is to take the phone off the hook and to settle down with your plan and spend at least two hours, maybe a morning, on this particular project. It's more motivating that way as you'll both see some progress and be able to evaluate your calls as you go, making amendments where appropriate.

### **Planning your call**

Many of the 'rules' in networking calls also apply to search. In the 30 seconds that you have to gain someone's attention, you need to deliver enough information to enable them to make a decision about speaking to you further, either now or later.

#### **There are four stages in a search call:**

1. Introduction and headline.
2. Approach.
3. Qualification of the candidate.
4. Close to move forward or gain referrals.

Retaining control in a call is all-important. Ultimately it will be your decision whether this candidate makes your interview short list. However, to get to that point you need to qualify them in or out. This will be harder to do if you lose control of the call.

### **Introduction and headline**

This needs punch great delivery and a compelling reason for the person to listen to you. Developing a headline works on the same principle as a newspaper or feed – you need to want to know more. Your introduction should simply be who you are – and needs to be relevant. Your introduction needs to be drawn from the role itself. Ask yourself – having asked your client – what the selling points of the role are. What is the one thing guaranteed to grab the attention of the person you are speaking to? You may need to alter this slightly depending upon who you are speaking to and how much you know about them.

## Do's and Don'ts of search:

### Do...

- Relax your voice.
- Deliver your introduction and headline in a moderate pace with a low voice.
- Match the pace of your delivery to theirs.
- Use their name, but not to excess.
- Consider standing up when making your first few calls to create energy in your voice.
- Smile when making your calls to transmit warmth.
- Ask lots of open questions.
- Make it clear you are aware they are not 'on the market'.
- Keep your client confidential until you have qualified them in or out.

### Don't...

- Be over-familiar – ask someone how they are when you have never spoken to them before, for example.
- Say you have the perfect role for them – even if you know them.
- Be too controlling. Do let the candidate ask questions when they want – it's a great sign of interest.
- Make calls when you have your mind on other things or you are unprepared.
- Push too hard – it may have the opposite effect. Lead rather than push.
- Miss an opportunity to close a great candidate down for a meeting.
- Forget to find out what they want before you sell back to them.

## Suggest that your prospect might be looking for a role!

### Headline and approach

Deliver your headline followed smartly by your approach. This can be either a direct approach, an indirect approach or a hybrid approach.

### Direct approach

You approach them directly as a potential candidate:

I am retained by my client – a leading software company – to find an exceptional candidate to head up sales in EMEA. I'd like to tell you more about it. Does that sound like the sort of role you'd be interested in finding out more about?

I am working on a search for a UK HR Director for a growing consultancy firm at the top of their field. Is now a good time to tell you more about the role?

**Advantages:**

- saves time;
- establishes attitude of confidence;
- Clear about why you are calling.

**Disadvantages:**

- Candidate can gain upper hand;
- Harder to probe immediately;

Need some basic information to stay completely in control.

**Indirect approach**

This is when you ask for help with a role, rather than approach someone directly. It can be used in two ways: either when you do not know enough about someone to know whether they are right for, or interested in, the role; or when you genuinely want to use them as a source. If you are following the 'black book' principle outlined under the networking section, you should have a range of well-connected people in there who will act as sources for you.

**This approach will sound like this:**

You may remember coming to see my colleague Fred Jones about nine months ago about a senior sales role in a software house... We are now working on an assignment in XXX and wondered if we might ask your advice...

I am handling a search assignment to appoint a Head of Assessment Services. I'm wondering if you might be able to recommend some people qualified for that role that I should be speaking to – is now a good time to tell you a little about it?

**Advantages:**

- gives you a good 'get-out' clause and retains the upper hand;

- Less need to 'sell' at an early stage;
- Leaves it open for you to offer them the opportunity when qualified.

**Disadvantages:**

- can sound false if you are really making a direct approach;
- Takes longer because of softer style.

## Hybrid approach

Combines the best of both potentially – or worst of both if done poorly!

I'm running a search project for a COO for a leading pharmaceutical company – I'd like to have a chat with you to see if it is something that might be of interest to you  
– And if not, perhaps you can point me in a different direction? My understanding is that you are Head of Operations for GlaxoSmithKline currently – is that right?  
Great – how long have you been in that role?

My client is looking for someone who is interested in developing their career with a smaller firm but at a higher level – does that sound like something which may be of interest to you?  
OK good, so tell me something about the headline responsibilities in your current role...

Here you have moved on from 'telling them about the role' into asking questions about their role. It's an assumptive approach but will often work well.  
When to tell the candidate whom you are recruiting for

Sometimes this will come up as a question at an early stage. And there is no right or wrong answer to this one – it depends! Some pointers:

- If the role is confidential – say the current role-holder is still in place, clearly you do not divulge until at least interview stage.
- If the role is in the public domain, so there may also be some advertising taking place and this is a multi-faceted attraction strategy. You can tell the candidates when you feel the time is right.
- Find out what they want before you reveal the company, so you can always position the company in the space that they inhabit.

You'll need to see whether the candidate has potential or not; this will determine whether you want to 'acquire' the candidate this time for the role or whether you want to leave them with a return route at some point in the future.

As part of your preparation you'll have a few key qualification points, which might look like this:

- Matches the essential skills on the person spec.
- Is at the right level in the organization.
- The role has some potential for improvement for them (role, personal circumstances, salary, career progression, company good for CV) or there is some motivation to move.
- Right salary bracket.
- Suits personal circumstances (location, travelling, unusual hours).
- Cultural fit.
- No warning bells.

At this stage you will need to have covered the essential skills and hiring criteria of the role and will have qualified the candidate in or out. Following the flow chart path then, you'll need to ask for a referral or 'turn them off' (reject them).

### **When to send a briefing document**

Be discriminatory when sending a briefing document. If it only goes out to someone who has a genuine interest in the role, it is less likely to be passed around, protecting the client from direct applications or other consultancies.

A great way of being sure about this is only to send the document if a candidate shares his or her CV with you or commits to a meeting. Occasionally the request for a briefing document will be a 'fob-off', a reason to get rid of you, and will need to be handled as any other objection would be.

It may be by now that you have to reject the candidate. Wherever possible it is better to have them self-select themselves out of the process.

### **Turning your prospective candidate off**

It's important here, as ever in recruiting, to maintain your candidate's self-esteem. Particularly as your candidate did not approach you, yet has been courteous enough to listen to you and consider an opportunity, leaving the conversation gracefully is as important as how you start it. If you cannot qualify them in for the role even though they are interested, you need to consider how you can agree between you that this is not the role for them, or the right time for a move. Ideally you will have them come to that conclusion, and there are various ways to help them to do so:

- Ask more questions that will preclude them from the role.
- Tell them where the mismatch occurs, and use the role and your client to take that decision.

- Say you have some concerns about whether this is the right role for them now... and ask them what their thoughts are. Often candidates will take the hint and agree – especially bearing in mind they are not on the market.

### **Handling objections**

It would be optimistic to suggest that you are never going to encounter an objection from your prospective candidates or indeed clients, and this strategy can be applied to any objections you might come across.

#### **The general approach is:**

1. Listen and acknowledge.
2. Discover whether this is a genuine objection.
3. Counter the objection.
4. Confirm you have done so.

### **Closing for the next stage**

At this point you will be closing for:

Their CV. If asking for a CV, ask when they can get it to you. Agree you will give them a call if you have not received it to ensure it has not gone astray.

- A meeting. If you are closing for a meeting, offer two alternatives, or times, or places, or both. (If you are closing for a referral follow the practice below.)
- A referral. If you are closing for another conversation, agree a time rather than a broad-brush day/afternoon and make it clear you are diarising it.
- Another conversation. If you are closing for another conversation agrees a time rather than a broad-brush day/afternoon and make it clear you are diarising to reduce the chances of missing them.
- A future contact. If closing for a future contact, let them know when you might plan to call them and send them an e-mail with your contact details on for future reference.

At the end of the conversation, make sure you end always on a good note. Be sure you have the candidate's home e-mail, personal mobile and home telephone number if possible, but a personal contact for them at least so if they move on your call has not been wasted and you can track them down another time. Remember to check you can go back to them with other roles of interest or for help with additional projects.

**Further Reading:**