



Career Corner

Guidance for Hiring Managers and Candidates: Part One

By Joyce Brocaglia

What a difference a quarter makes! The third quarter of this year marks the beginning of life again in the information security jobs community. For the first time in over two years there has been a dramatic increase in the amount of active hiring in all industry verticals.

The cause of this rebound may be due to the beginning of economic recovery, the influence of legislation and regulations like Sarbanes-Oxley, or the simple fact that companies have reached their limit of doing more with less when it comes to information security. My opinion is that it is a convergence of all three.

So now that the market seems to be finally coming back, the question is how do you best take advantage of it? This two-part series will provide guidance to hiring managers hoping to finally get their head count approved and candidates hoping to land a new job.

If you are a hiring manager who has just had job requisitions approved or will shortly, what steps should you take to ensure that you are able to capitalize on what may be a window of opportunity for hiring?

The first step is to take control of your hiring process. You must be a very active participant in the recruiting process for it to be a success. I know that you may be rusty at this. In days past, you may have left this up to your HR function, but that will no longer work in today's competitive market. Let's dispel two of the common hiring manager myths.

Hiring Manager Myths


Myth #1: Many hiring managers have the mistaken perception that there are numerous qualified workers who have been unemployed for a long time, and they will be easy to attract, possibly even at lower salaries. You may get lucky, but for the most part, this is not the case. The really good people are still hard to find, and yes, you are going to have to pay for them.

Myth #2: My human resource department will do a good job of sourcing and screening candidates to determine if they're good for my openings. In the past few years, a tremendous burden has been put on human resources to develop internal recruiting efforts and cut down the cost of hiring. Although this may be successful in general technology areas or for staff-level positions, it is not going to be effective in hiring experienced information security professionals. I say that for the following reasons. First, the internal recruiter assigned to you is typically responsible for multiple areas of technical recruiting and does not understand either the detailed requirements of the position or the ability to recognize the characteristics necessary in a good candidate. They often screen resumes for buzzwords or eliminate candidates based on their review of a resume alone. This causes many qualified candidates to fall through the cracks. You should limit the number of outside recruiters that you work with and ask that all resumes sent to human resources get sent to you for review.

Take An Active Role In Hiring

You need to personally make a commitment to take an active and leading role in the hiring process. The further out you delegate this responsibility, the less likely you are to be satisfied with the results. Although your human resource department may be able to source a few qualified candidates, you really need to develop a relationship of trust with an external recruiter for you to be successful in staffing over the long run. This may sound self-serving, but the fact is that this trusted relationship will give you a competitive edge and enable you to hire the best-qualified candidates in the most expedient manner.

The dilemma that you face is that although you desperately need to hire someone, your workload is already overbearing and you now need to add to it time to review resumes, interview candidates and speak with recruiters. Recognizing that there are not enough hours in a day to speak with many recruiters regarding every resume that is sent to you, it is imperative that you find a recruiting firm that can provide a select number of candidates who have been carefully screened and interviewed. If you find that you are using a firm that sends a lot of paper and most of it not on the mark, cut them loose. Your time is better spent cultivating a relationship that will make the best use of your limited availability. This requires investing the time in having personal conversations with your recruiter to describe and prioritize the qualifications required for success in the position. This includes general information about the company, its competitors and standing in the market, the structure of the department, the quality and type of work performed, and what I call the "sizzle that sells the steak." You have to provide the recruiter as well as the candidate with valid reasons that someone would really want to leave their current position and come to work for you.

From a recruiter's point of view, we are highly motivated to work with those clients who are willing to give us the type of commitment that we are expected to give them. We will devote the most time and energy to the clients who take the time to personally converse with us, give us detailed feedback, and take an active role in the process. In the end, this is what you really want—the commitment of a recruiting partner who will put your needs first and give you first crack at the most qualified candidates. Ultimately this is what will enable you to build a top-notch team that will ensure your success. So take control and take the time, form the partnership, and reap the rewards and competitive edge a great recruiting firm can give you. 

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