

10 “Success Attributes of World Class Recruiters

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Over the last few years, much has been written about the skills required to be considered (or to become) a world-class recruiter. Some of these skills include:

- The ability to source passive candidates who are not looking for employment
- The ability to attain high customer satisfaction ratings with all clients (hiring managers, candidates, key executive stakeholders)
- The ability to effectively screen candidates and differentiate between those who are qualified and those who are unqualified
- The ability to defuse counteroffers
- The ability to lure top talent to join your organization
- The ability to effectively negotiate equitable compensation packages

The list could go on from there. I don't think anyone would disagree that world-class recruiters possess (or should possess) the skills listed above. I've found, however, that there is actually a separate set of “success attributes” common to world-class recruiters, regardless of:

- The type of recruiting they do (corporate, staffing, direct placement)
- The type of people they recruit for (non-exempt, exempt, executive)
- The industry sector they are in (manufacturing, retail, financial services, etc.)

Unlike a particular recruiting skill (such as Internet sourcing, objection handling, behavioral interviewing), these “success attributes” are often difficult to teach. Not to be cynical, but I've found that frequently these are qualities that people either do or do not possess. Have you ever heard the phrase, “Hire for attitude, train for skill”? These 10 success attributes are the “attitude” piece of the world-class recruiter. **10 “Success Attributes” of World-Class Recruiters** By no means do I think the following is an inclusive list of recruiter success attributes. These are simply 10 attributes I find common in the top-notch recruiters I have met and worked with in my career. I'm sure that I am missing others that I just can't think of right now. Please feel free share your thoughts with me and add to this list!

1. **World-class recruiters respond to ongoing change and rejection well.** Recruiting can be a thankless business. You fill 10 reqs; you get 10 more. You source out five candidates for a position; it goes on hold. You think you have the perfect candidate; they change the specifications. For many recruiters I talk to, these are all catastrophic tragedies. For world-class recruiters, this is just part of the job.
2. **World-class recruiters are resourceful.** World-class recruiters don't need a big budget, expensive sourcing tools, or technology gadgets to get the job done. Many of the best recruiters I know (to this



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day) do not have big budgets for sourcing tools. They don't use a Palm Pilot; they do not have (or use) an ATS. But they still manage to out-produce their peers while maintaining the highest customer satisfaction ratings. They are resourceful and get the job done regardless.

3. **World-class recruiters are savvy investigators.** While technology has provided us with the ability to access millions of applicants quickly, it often leads us into a false sense of security, lulling us into thinking that these are actually quality candidates! Recruiters who have grown up in this new technology age often do not possess the investigative (or networking) skills necessary to generate new candidate leads from unqualified candidates. In the old days (and I am not that old), you viewed every resume (since they were hard to come by) and every phone call as a chance to investigate. The mentality was, "Everybody knows somebody." If the person you were talking to wasn't right, the goal was to extract out names (or at least clues) that would lead you to the right person. World-class recruiters excel at this! They are savvy investigators. They know what questions to ask to generate leads to fill a position, and when to ask them.
4. **World-class recruiters are competitive.** I've found that most people who can handle change and rejection are also very competitive. They play the game to win. And when you play the game to win, you often lose. In recruiting, as we all know, you are either the hero or the goat. You're only as good as your last placement. Competitive people rise to the occasion, don't sweat the small stuff, and play to win!
5. **World-class recruiters have the discipline to try new things.** How many times have you sat in a meeting to brainstorm new ways to find candidates or new ideas to improve the hiring process? World-class recruiters actually leave those meetings with the discipline to *implement* the ideas discussed. Since they are competitive and handle rejection well, they don't consider it a tragedy if the new ideas don't work. They just move on to the next.
6. **World-class recruiters are likable within the circles they recruit for.** This doesn't mean you were voted "most popular" in school, that you were the homecoming queen, or that you are the life of the party. All it means is that you have an excellent rapport with your clients (candidates, hiring managers, employees, etc.). This attribute is tough to explain, but it is easy to spot. A "likable" world-class recruiter gets gifts from candidates and employees, gets a ton of quality referrals without asking, and often gets employee lists from former employers and alumni rosters from candidates without much effort. People like them. This is a key to their success!
7. **World-class recruiters are proud to be recruiters and view recruiting as a profession.** Unfortunately, many recruiters view recruiting as a "stepping stone" to bigger and better things. If you work for a staffing company, your goal is to get into sales or to get your own accounts. If you work within a corporation, your goal is to get your HR certification and become an HR director. While I have worked with many good recruiters who thought this way, the majority of world-class recruiters view recruiting as their chosen profession.
8. **Work and life are seamless for world-class recruiters.** Get in a room full of world-class recruiters and start talking "shop," and you'll see that they have a seamless work/life balance. This doesn't mean they work 14 hours a day, seven days a week. On the contrary, they are efficient, productive, and work the hours necessary to get the job done. They think nothing of doing a phone screen in the evening, contacting a candidate on the weekend before they start their new job, responding to emails when the kids go to bed, or sourcing candidates off the Internet at 6:00 am to beat their competition to the quality candidates. World-class recruiters recognize that recruiting is not a nine-to-five job. They measure themselves by results ó quickly filling positions with quality people ó not hours worked.
9. **World-class recruiters are self-motivated and enjoy the recruiting game.** For some people, recruiting becomes a laborious, repetitive job. To world-class recruiters, it's always about playing and winning the game. They see the challenge in filling an orientation session with 20 new customer services reps (not 18). They see the challenge in coming up with candidates for a senior vice president position. They see the challenge in filling 10 requisitions no one else can fill. Day in and day out, they view this laborious, repetitive job as one big game ó and in a sick, twisted way, they enjoy it! They are self-motivated and need minimal direction because they are focused on winning the game.
10. **World-class recruiters believe they provide people with better opportunities.** Why don't many recruiters cold call passive candidates? Walk up to a group of people to talk about their job opportunities? Recruit at family events? They don't do these things either because they think they are bugging other people or because they fear being rejected ó and they fear they will be rejected because they think they are bugging people. World-class recruiters see things in a whole different light. I've always said that recruiting is the best sales job in the world. Unlike a traditional sales position, recruiters are not selling anything, they are offering something ó potentially a better position than the one a candidate is currently in.

I recently had the pleasure of working with a woman who is approaching her 70th birthday. Each day, she gets up and starts recruiting candidates at 7:00 a.m. She spends well over six hours a day (on the phone, not hiding behind email) sourcing candidates! I am humbled and amazed at her tenacity and stamina! I recently asked her, How do you stay motivated? How do you stay fresh? How come you haven't burned out after all these years? "David, I truly love what I do," she replied. "I get to spend all day talking to interesting people. They become my friends and I often get the opportunity to find them new positions that they are truly grateful for. I enjoy finding that one person for a position that has been open for a long time. It gives me a sense of accomplishment. It is a lot of fun." Now *that* is a world-class recruiter in my book!

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