

How To Speed Up the Search Process

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We are often asked by clients, who want their search filled as quickly as possible, “Isn’t there a way we can speed up the process?” In short, the answer is an emphatic YES, BUT it takes close teamwork with the client and true consideration for the candidate(s). One can never underestimate the need to actively recruit/attract and woo candidates throughout the process.

Starting the search. From our perspective, a search has distinctive stages and a natural timeline. Some of these steps are within our control, but many are not; rather they are directly dependent on the client being responsive. For instance, as we start each search, we request a fair number of materials from the client in order to get the background information we need to adequately represent the opportunity to a candidate. This requires someone on the client’s team to gather this information and send it to us in a timely fashion. Then we can review it before we come on-site to be better prepared and ask more penetrating questions.

Developing candidates. Following our on-site meeting, we incorporate those documents into the position description we write to attract candidates to the role. Then we go out to the market to generate interest in the opportunity. Witt/Kieffer consultants control this particular stage — the longest part of the process that generally takes six to eight weeks. At the end of that time, we present candidates to our client. At this point, Witt/Kieffer

no longer controls the process, but is dependent on the schedules of the hiring executives.

Identifying who needs to be involved — and when. Making yourself available in a timely way for meetings can shorten the timeline of the overall search. As the process advances, we schedule meetings with the client to present the candidates on paper and then the client must find times to bring the candidates on-site to interview, usually for more than one visit. Scheduling these on-site interviews can significantly lengthen the search, depending on the number of people involved in the process.

We find that clients can add significant time to the process if they cannot schedule time with the key hiring executives. This becomes more complicated when a corporate office that is not located in the same community needs to be involved. The timeline can be shortened significantly, shaving off more than a month, if the client can determine who needs to be involved in the interviewing process and reserves dates on calendars well ahead of time.

From our perspective, if we agree to a process at the start of the search that lays out who needs to be involved between the search firm, client, corporate executives, and others as needed, and we commit to meeting and interview dates, we can share those dates with candidates who can then reserve them on their calendars. The result is a much more streamlined process and a faster conclusion to the search.

Using technology. Another way to speed up the timeline is to consider using technology if the primary client or hiring agent wishes to conduct a screening interview before individuals are invited for on-site interviews with the executive team. Most candidates we present to clients are employed and cannot take the time to travel cross country for a one hour screening interview, despite being interested in the position. Having the first interview via videoconference eases the difficulty of scheduling and heightens the interest of the candidate. Those invited to move forward in the process are then willing to take time off to travel to the client location, see the community,

visit the facilities and meet the executive team, medical staff, board and others. From the candidates' perspective, this shows genuine consideration for their time and begins the general wooing process that is required to attract the most qualified candidates.

Courting the candidate. Once the candidate arrives at your organization, roll out the red carpet. Have someone meet and greet the candidate, escort them to a private place where they can wait, provide them with coffee or water, show them where the restrooms are, make sure there are breaks in the schedule to allow for lunch, and arrange for a tour of the facility and the community. In general, show a true interest in them as a person. We would recommend that the spouse be invited as well to determine his/her interest in living in your community.

It's getting more and more difficult to recruit candidates as the economy continues to affect their ability to sell their homes and relocate. Anything the client and Witt/Kieffer can do to help enhance the candidates' interviewing experience — make it easier for them to become familiar with individuals at the hiring organization, show consideration for pressures in their existing jobs that make travel to your facility challenging, will contribute to their interest in the opportunity. It is important to roll out the red carpet to the greatest extent possible as you evaluate the candidates so they have a good feeling about you, your organization and your community.

The Golden Rule. There's nothing worse than having a candidate tell us after their visit that they spent three days of vacation time to visit a client organization

in which no one welcomed them at the site, interviewers were late for their appointments, individuals invited to their meetings did not attend and, consequently, they are no longer interested in pursuing the opportunity.

If you put yourself in the candidates' shoes and treat them as you would want to be treated, with respect and consideration, all will go well. While we are all busy and rushed in our own lives, if you pay attention to these basics, candidates will have a much more positive interaction with your organization. The result is a more robust and successful search process with a shorter timeline.

Locations Nationwide:

Oak Brook, IL
Emeryville, CA
Irvine, CA
Denver, CO

Atlanta, GA
Burlington, MA
Nantucket, MA
Bethesda, MD

Minneapolis, MN
St. Louis, MO
New York, NY
Toledo, OH

Philadelphia, PA
Pittsburgh, PA
Houston, TX
Seattle, WA