

Communicating the Importance of People

Over the years as an executive and subsequently as a consultant, I have come to recognize the importance of communication in the development and maintenance of employee and customer relationships. As a consequence, I am always surprised when I come across organizations that walk away from the opportunity to start building relationships with potential employees and/or customers. Whether it is companies that see no value in hiring summer students, or those that refuse to capitalize on contacts initiated by individuals external to the company. In that regard, one of the human resource business practices that reflects that walking away is embodied in the a phrase frequently found in recruitment advertising – “only those granted an interview will be contacted”. Recently while browsing the career ads in the Calgary Herald I noticed several ads that used variations on the phrase. The ads ranged across a variety of positions, levels and industries, and included a number of senior managerial roles.

For me, the phrase has come to symbolize part of what I believe is currently wrong with our corporate recruitment practices. While we all profess in a variety of different ways the importance of people to our organizations we frequently send mixed messages both to our current employees and those we would like to have become part of our company. And yet, this is not at all necessary.

Given current technology it is very easy to communicate directly and quickly with large numbers of people making direct contact with each applicant for a position quite possible. What it does take is some forethought, the creation of a hierarchy of communications and preparation of standard templates that are easy to customize.

So for example, the first round of communications should simply be a thank you to those who have taken time to send in their application or resume. The second stage of communications follows the initial review of applications where we might move to a long list of candidates for a detailed review of their backgrounds and experience. Candidates who are rejected at this stage can be sent an e-mail thanking them for their interest and advising that they are no longer under consideration. Some appropriate reason for that decision may also be included. Candidates that are being moved to the next stage of the process should also be advised. This process can be continued through to the end of the recruitment process.

Despite a relatively high level of unemployment in Alberta, acquiring the best available talent continues to be a challenge for organizations and those accountable for recruiting. We continue to spend time, energy and money on identifying the factors that contribute to attraction and engagement in order to ensure we have the workforce that we require. Why then do we want to send messages to potential employees that may suggest to them that people are really not our most important asset?

When we established Legacy Executive Search Partners in Calgary, one of the commitments that we made to ourselves, our clients and our candidates was to maintain ongoing communication with each of them. That translates into contacting the candidate whenever a decision is made with respect to their ongoing candidacy for a particular role. Instead of sitting there wondering what is happening with their application, each person who has expressed an interest will know that they are either still under active consideration or that they have been dropped in favor of those who are considered to be better qualified. We believe our process truly demonstrates to our candidates their value as people and potential employees for our clients.

- David Wartman, Managing Partner