



## **Applicants on Recruiting: Job Applicants Tell What They Like and Don't Like in the Recruiting Process**

How many times have you recruited great candidates for your agency only to have them walk away, or even join a competitor? If it's happened more than once, you need to ask yourself why.

Applicants — both those who accepted managers' job offers and those who walked away — have told LIMRA about their experiences. Their candid comments tell us how companies can improve in four major areas of the hiring process: Communication Style, Quality of Information, Interview Techniques, and Employment Testing. Companies staffing their agencies can heed this advice given from the other side of the desk.

### **Communication Style**

*“Have a standard policy of being honest and open with the applicant; don't sugarcoat the job.”*  
*“The recruiter needs to have full command of product knowledge; I want to know what I'm selling or servicing.”*

A recruiter's communication style can affect a candidate's level of interest. Candidates noted the importance of openness in communications and perception of the recruiter as a credible source of information. In general, they express a preference for unvarnished information and dislike any unnecessary dressing up of facts — whatever the topic. In extreme cases, some respondents believed that they were misled by certain information and therefore considered the recruiter, one of the first company contacts, untrustworthy.

Candidates said that recruiters were not always prepared with basic information about company products, policies and procedures, or even about the recruiting process itself. A picture emerged of some recruiters conducting their business on the fly without adequate preparation or background knowledge.

### **Quality of Information**

*“Recruiters should have something in writing that outlines the application process and interviewing steps.”*  
*“Give a realistic picture of what the work and business are like.”*  
*“Give a history of the company's background and place in its industry.”*

Candidates indicated a desire for greater information about the recruiting process and the job itself. They mentioned four areas in particular: the recruiting process, job requirements, compensation, and company information.

Recruiters understand the rationale of their recruiting steps, but candidates may not. A number of candidates were perplexed by the process and said they were not given an orientation on the application process. Candidates wondered about the number of interviews and the types of questions asked.

The remedy is straightforward: to reduce the number of interviews and/or the time interval between interviews. Also, be sure that the initial recruiter explains the interviewing steps and provides the reason for multiple interviews. Many companies do provide some form of orientation. However, if there is no clear understanding of what is expected and why, recruiters run the risk that candidates will be left in the dark and will second-guess the procedure.

Candidates wanted better information about actual job start-up activities, as well as more details about the ongoing nature of the work activities, tasks, and skills necessary for success. Some candidates seemed to have no clear idea of what was expected on the job or what was expected of the agent. Respondents suggested that recruiters clarify and detail the quantity and nature of pre-hire activities and post-hire training required. More information on expected production and service levels would also be helpful.

In addition, candidates suggested that the recruiter convey a realistic picture of the job, including its challenges and potential frustrations.

A number of applicants showed interest in finding out about the company, its products, and its operations. While some applicants believed that they did not receive enough information about company products, others responded favorably to hearing about products that they would be proud to sell, service, and be associated with.

### **Interviewing Techniques**

*“People conducting interviews need to be more organized, make candidates feel more welcome, and listen better instead of talking.”*

*“Include an interview with a working agent who can tell what the job is really about.”*

Applicants observed that when interview questions were not organized by topic or failed to flow smoothly, the interview appeared disorganized and unprofessional and was a poor reflection on both the recruiter and the company.

Other comments addressed the issue of rapport building between recruiters and candidates. Applicants pointed to the negative effects of a recruiter rushing through an interview or behaving impersonally toward the applicant. This type of behavior increased the natural stress and uncertainty of the situation for the applicants who encountered it.

A number of candidates recommended that representatives, especially relatively new ones, be used as interviewers. Applicants indicated that these agents could give them more realistic and complete information about the job. Candidates were eager to hear information from the trenches.

## **Employment Testing**

*“They need to explain more about what kind of test it is.”*

All companies participating in the study used some form of early screening instrument to assess the qualifications of applicants for the job. Candidates wanted a clearer understanding of the test’s relevance to the applicant assessment process. They wanted to know why they were taking the test, the importance of the results, and the length of the test. Also, candidates did not always clearly understand the use of the test as an instrument to predict job success.

## **On Balance**

These applicants’ comments provide another view of what can turn off candidates from the recruiting process or bolster their interest in a job. However, we should keep in mind that the recommendations are entirely from the job applicant’s point of view. This must be balanced against company needs for cost-effectiveness in recruiting, as well as established and carefully developed recruiting procedures. Finally, some of the recommendations should serve as important reminders to strengthen good recruiting practices that are already in place.

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