



9 Things Every Recruiter Wants from You but will never tell you

By Catherine Byers Breet w/ ARBEZ

In a recent survey, we asked recruiters one thing: "What does a candidate need to do to stand out from the herd, and make it to the top of your pile?" Here's what they said:

The 9 Things Every Recruiter Wants From You

1. Be positive and enthusiastic (recruiters respond just as you do to positive people)
2. Know what you want, clearly and concisely
3. Know what you've got to offer, for the job at hand (keep it simple)
4. Be responsive (the early bird really does get the worm!)
5. Be professional (keep negative comments about previous employers quiet)
6. Be honest (do not ever stretch the truth)
7. Be coachable (recruiters can offer excellent advice, so be open to it)
8. Be brief. Oh, boy oh boy oh boy ... please be brief!
9. Know where you have applied for jobs (which companies, which specific jobs & how)

If you follow these suggestions, you will be a pleasure to work with. In return, so will the recruiters!

Even though they get paid to fill positions for hiring managers, that doesn't mean they don't care about helping you get what you want as well. They do! In fact, if they don't pay attention to your side of things, guess what you will do? You'll walk away! They know that. However, if you realize that they are communicating with dozens of candidates on a daily basis, it will serve you well to do something to stand out from the herd.

How to find the right recruiters: be strategic.

1. Research and get a list of the 10 recruiting or search firms in your market, in your industry.
2. Ask your network which recruiters they recommend.
3. Call (don't email) those recruiters and ask them what their specialty is, where the bulk of their placements were in the last six months. "I just want to see if I am the right fit for your business because I do not want to waste your time or mine." If a recruiter does not mention your area of specialty in the first one to three top placements, move on. Be gracious and send your resume if they ask (there is a slim chance they might come across an opportunity for you), but do not go meet with that recruiter. And do not keep calling or emailing that recruiter.

How to give recruiters what they want

Let's take their list of 9 one by one, and walk through proven strategies for success:

1. Be positive

Listen, we've all had a horrible boss or two. We've had some rotten coworkers, too. We've been misled, and lied to, and mistreated. So, on the one hand, recruiters will understand and empathize with you. Unfortunately, they will also jump to some conclusions:

- If you're really negative about that person in an interview situation, chances are really good you will be really negative about people at your new company, too.
- There must be something more to this story. What did this candidate do to bring on such a horrible situation? Unfortunately, if you bad mouth a former employer, the recruiter has a responsibility to dig in deep and see what the other side of the story may have been.
- You're going to be a Negative Nelly at work, and nobody wants to work with a Negative Nelly.

So, no matter how hard it is, keep the negativity to yourself. No matter how awful a previous situation was to you, find the high ground. No matter how nice and casual the recruiter is, don't go there.

2. Know what you want, clearly and concisely

Steve found out about this one the hard way the day a recruiter walked out on him 5 minutes into a conversation at a public coffee shop. He had just been laid off. A day after he updated his resume and LinkedIn profile, a recruiter reached out and said "You are perfect for one of my clients' open positions. Let's meet for coffee." He was very excited that happened so fast, so he simply said yes and showed up for coffee the very next day. 5 minutes into the conversation, he said "You know, I'm not sure I want to do that type of work anymore. I think this might be a great opportunity for me to explore a new kind of work." She stood up and said, "Call me back once you've figured out what you want to do," then walked out.

There is really no excuse for that recruiter leaving him so abruptly, especially because she hadn't done her job properly. If she asked a few simple questions the day before, like "So, what do you want to do next in your career?" she would have avoided that awful situation. That being said. Steve said it was a gift to him because it taught him what recruiters really need: candidates who are a perfect fit for the job they have right now ... and candidates who clearly understand what they want to do.

Why that recruiter walked out on him:

1. She was rude. No way around it. It was her mistake for not asking some basic questions over the phone.
2. She did not have time to waste with candidates who might ultimately back out of a job offer because it isn't what they really wanted to do.
3. She had probably lost a few deals recently because candidates changed their mind at the last minute.

Think about it like this: Let's say you're selling a car with a manual transmission (stick shift). Most people want automatics and you know it. If you had 3 potential buyers call, and two of them said "Wow! I love driving stick!" and one who said "You know, I'm not sure I want to change gears all day long" which buyers would you take out on a test-drive? The ones who absolutely know they want a stick. Otherwise, you would be taking up precious time with someone who will very likely walk away in the end.

What if you don't know what you want?

Listen, the reality is that you still might not know exactly what you want. You're exploring opportunities. That is fine! You can do that. Just keep your proclamations about it to yourself.

Never lie but find something about the job at hand that interests you ... or walk away before you waste your own time, or the time of the recruiter.

3. Know what you've got to offer, for the job at hand (keep it simple)

I can clean a house beautifully, but I do not ever want to get hired as a house cleaner again (I did that for one semester in college and hated it!). it's not relevant. I will never mention it in a conversation about any job. Unless the job involves going in to people's homes. If I were to apply for a sales job, selling things door to door to people, then I would mention that job. I would let them know that I hated cleaning other people's houses, but that I loved meeting new people and understand the responsibility that comes with knocking on people's doors.

When I am speaking with unemployed job seekers, I often say "I helped Ed get a job in just 2 weeks. I helped Jennifer do it in just 2 days. I'd love to show you how to do the same."

Unemployed job seekers need a job, and they need it FAST! I understand that, and that's why I lead with what problem I can help them solve.

When I am speaking with companies about helping them recruit more effectively, I often say "I reduced one company's time to fill by 13% and reduced its turnover by 56%. I'd love to help you do the same."

How to handle this recruiter desire:

Think about what business problem they need you to solve and be ready to talk in really simple terms about how you can help them solve it.

Vince has this down to a science. He is a consultant, so he is out interviewing all the time. He usually works as a quality assurance expert in the medical device industry. When he talks to recruiters, he tells them "I prevent product recalls and lawsuits. I've had a 98.7% quality rating over the past 5 years."

4. Be responsive!

Time is money, especially around hiring. The early bird really does get the worm. Agency recruiters usually have only one or two days to present candidates. Corporate recruiters end up moving on the first candidates who respond. That is simply the way it goes. So, the minute you get a voicemail from a recruiter, call him back! Even if you cannot talk for long, call to say, "Thank you so much for your interest, I am not available today. Can we set a time to talk tomorrow?"

5. Be professional

For some reason, people get comfortable (way too comfortable!) with recruiters. You must remember that recruiters are an extension of the hiring manager. So, if you show up late, wear jeans, share personal information about yourself or others, you may as well be telling the hiring manager. Recruiters are easy to talk to. They are, in fact, in sales. Do not forget where their paycheck comes from, or where their loyalties must lie. If you show up late for your interview with them, they assume you will do the same for their hiring manager now and once you are on the job. The recruiter's responsibility is to submit the best candidate for the job, and "best" is not simply about skills. Never, ever bad-mouth former employers. No matter how poorly you were treated. Only you will look bad when you speak negatively about people or companies.

6. Be honest

Never, ever lie. It will come back to bite you. I really do understand that it can be tempting, especially when they are asking for things that seem completely irrelevant to the job at hand (like a bachelor's degree for a sales position). Here's the thing: no matter how you slice it, if they catch you in a lie (and too often, they will) it will be immediate grounds for rejection (or termination if they have already hired you). You can certainly keep some things to yourself. There is no problem with that. However, when you say something or even worse put it in writing, and it is a lie, that will come back to haunt you. Make sure you don't lie during conversations with recruiters, either ... especially when other people are involved. You will be stunned at how small the world really is. Recruiters are out meeting new people every single day, and they are staying in contact with most of those people, too. It is really easy for them to pick up the phone and "fact check" with friends when something sounds suspicious.

7. Be coachable

If a recruiter gives you advice, smile and say thank you. You can certainly have a conversation about it and ask them to explain and/or elaborate. You can even choose to ignore their advice. But do not argue with them about it. This is especially important if they are giving you advice about what the company or the hiring manager are looking for. Once candidate recently argued with Sarah, a friend of mine who is a recruiter. Her candidate was missing a key skill (it was important to the hiring manager). Sarah knew that Microsoft Excel was important to the hiring manager, so she asked the candidate to go do some research, and perhaps even take a course on Lynda.com to demonstrate that he had a sincere desire to

overcome that skill gap. Rather than saying "That's a great idea. I'll go on that," he started arguing with her and telling her that Microsoft was a stupid skill requirement, and that of course he could learn it but there was no way he was going to do any work before he got paid. He had such a bad attitude about the whole thing, she dropped him from consideration for the position.

Recruiters often coach on things like how to prepare for the next interview, how to update a resume and how to behave during the interview.

They are not always right but acting like you appreciate their advice will go a long way for you.

8. Be brief! Boy, oh boy ... please be brief!

Because recruiters have so many applicants, and/or so many positions on their plate, it is essential that you are clear and concise in describing what you want, in your answers to their questions, etc. If you make it easy for them to understand who you are and what you want, you will either jump to the top of the list or get eliminated sooner. Wouldn't it be nice to know sooner rather than later that you are not a fit for a particular job?

Here's an example of an outline for an email introduction to a recruiter:

Hello, _____. I am on the hunt for a new job and thought I should reach out to you to see if I fit your typical candidate profile.

Next, write one or two sentences that offer a career summary, only as it pertains to the job you want and think the recruiter might have. Keep it to one or two sentences and make sure you highlight what you think the recruiter hires for:

- Brief rundown on your target roles, job titles
- Two to three career highlights – again, as they pertain to your audience
- Best way to reach you if they are interested (cell, email, home phone)

Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to connecting soon.

(Your name)

(Your contact details)

Attach your resume

9. Know where you have applied for jobs

It's going to take a little work for you to keep track of which positions you applied for, with whom, at what companies ... but it is really important! If a recruiter wants to submit you to 3M, but you already applied for a job there, they need to know.

Corporate recruiters: Tell them if you have already applied for any other jobs on their company website, or through a staffing firm. If they know about it, it can be a good thing. If they find out about it after the fact, it can be a bad thing (especially if you have been submitted through an agency). Sometimes contracts prohibit companies from hiring someone directly if they have been submitted through a staffing firm.

Agency (staffing recruiters): If it's with a different division, they might be able to submit you for the job they're working on. Or they might not. It depends on what kind of a contract their vendor has with them. Furthermore, many large companies ask multiple external staffing firms (sometimes as many as ten!) to help them fill the same position. It is very likely that you will get a call from several recruiters about one position. You have got to keep track of who is submitting you where, because if you get submitted twice by two different vendors, the hiring company will usually throw you out as a candidate. Sometimes they will check the time stamp and honor the submittal from the first firm, but they often avoid the battle altogether and say "Who else do you have for me? I don't want to get into a fight with two different vendors."

You've got this! Now that you know the inside scoop on what makes recruiters tick, and what kind of candidates make them very happy, it will be easy to turn a recruiter into your advocate and a possibly even a lifelong career partner.



About the author: Catherine Byers Breet (Chief Stripe Changer | ARBEZ) has been launching consultants since 1997. She has hired, placed & coached top pros in the agriculture, finance, healthcare, high-tech, manufacturing, marketing, med device, professional services and retail industries. She has negotiated salaries ranging from \$20 an hour to \$1M a year and helped over 50,000 people to love what they do for a living. What she teaches works. Oh, and by the way ... she owns a zebra. His name is Joe.