A GUIDE TO

Assessing Development Needs

in

Experienced Recruiters

Recruitment Training Specialists

- When results matter -

Zero Entropy Networks

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Introduction

Whether you are looking to recruit experienced recruiters for your business or you want to improve an existing teams' performance there will come a time when, to do either, you will need to assess their current ability.

The following guide outlines a three step process for assessing the skill level of someone who has worked in recruitment for over 12 months.

+ Stage One - What to assess?

The first step is deciding on the competencies and key skills that are required to succeed as a recruiter in **your** organisation. Each recruitment organisation will differ in what they consider to be the key skills for an experienced recruitment consultant. These skills will also differ within businesses from person to person dependent on their focus and responsibilities. For example, Senior Recruiters will require a very different skill set to a Trainee Recruiter or Resourcer. During this guide we will take the most common role of a Recruitment Consultant who is responsible for both Client and Candidate Acquisition (a 360 degree consultant if you like - only I know some don't like that term).

In our experience the most successful recruitment consultants can demonstrate competency in the following areas:

- Planning and Organisation
- Written Communication
- Influence
- Questioning and Listening
- Emotional Intelligence
- Relationship Building
- Presentation Skills
- Urgency
- Motivation
- Work Ethic
- Strategic Thinking

Some of these areas, such as 'Questioning and Listening' are more vital to the success of a recruiter than others.

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+ Stage Two - What does 'good' look like?

Before you can assess the skills of your current (or future) consultants it is imperative you have a clear vision as to what "good" looks like. For most experienced managers, a sense of good is often developed over time and can sometimes be based around either gut feel or purely on results.

True performance is not measured in terms of results.

What a consultant delivers in terms of revenue is important to all businesses and is one of the most consistently reported KPIs. Yet the acronym KPI tells us so much about what it is designed to do - *to indicate performance.* The KPI and the result are therefore not the performance itself.

By creating a scoring method for the core skills you expect consultants to be able to demonstrate helps to develop new and existing recruits to a set standard.

When developing a scoring matrix it is important to ensure that there is a grading system rather than a simple yes/no measure of capability.

Decide what you expect the minimum level of performance to be based upon behaviours and attitude.

Then define what excellence would look like - how would someone who demonstrates leadership qualities in that specific skill category behave? What would they do as they approached the task? What would their attitude and mind set be?

Based upon this it is therefore possible for the following to be true:

Just because someone billed £20k last month (a good result in many businesses) doesn't automatically mean there was a good performance to deliver it. (It could be that someone else could have produced £24k, £28k, £30k)

Just because someone delivered £4k in a month (a poor performance in most businesses) does not automatically mean that there was a poor performance.

We can all recollect instances where a Premier League manager can claim that despite losing the game the performance demonstrates that the team is heading in the right direction. Perhaps it is remembering Andy Murray after a match he has won, being disappointed in his performance - with little of his performance review being about the score itself. I also doubt that Alex Ferguson coached his best players based around personal results - "Wayne, I expect you to score twice in this match - once with your head from inside the penalty box and then in the second half with your left foot on the outside of the boot". Instead I am sure that Sir Alex focused more on the performance that would lead to goal scoring opportunities.

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So to really assess the development needs of those we are managing or considering recruiting into our business, we need to focus more on the individuals abilities to deliver a good performance in the core areas that are important for their job. Be that approaching passive candidates, winning new business, marketing and placing high value candidates, closing or the nuances of the placement process.

To help consolidate the scoring process further we have developed an example skill matrix for the skill “Approaching Passive Candidates” (see page 6).

You will see that the five levels build from someone who makes no real attempt to engage with passive candidates to someone who has an in depth strategy not only to present the opportunity credibly to the prospect in mind but also looks for ways to build a network of other possible candidates to contact in the future.

For the purpose of clarity we would expect that the definition of good is scoring a 3 on this matrix. There is also opportunity to develop these consultants to become level 5s through consistent performance appraisal and effective coaching.

[The scoring matrix is very subjective - it is relative to the business in question and clearly the importance of that skill based upon market place, candidate scarcity and type of jobs being worked].

DEFINE ‘GOOD’

WATCH & QUESTION WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

ASSESS LEVEL

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Skill: Approaching Passive Candidates **Consultant** Sarah Smith

Level 1	– Elects to use email as default approach.	
	– Constructs message with information on the vacancy.	
	– Message has limited benefits or description of an opportunity.	
	– No follow up strategy for those who do not reply.	
	– Relinquishes control to the recipient with “If you would like to find out more ...” calls to action.	
	– Volume of messages is used as a performance measure.	
	– Heavy reliance on Linkedin and no awareness as to how to use other platforms to find more prospects.	
Level 2	– Looks to establish if there is a number available for the individual concerned - old CVs on job boards, in-house database, jigsaw, zoominfo.	
	– Researches each candidate as needed.	
	– Calls where a number is found and uses email for others.	
	– Calls begin with establishing if the recipient is looking.	
	– Presents position to candidate based upon content rather than USPs	
	– Limited qualification of individuals’ drivers and motivations.	
	– Struggles to deal with responses such as “I’m happy where I am” or “I’m not looking”.	
	– Sends follow up email to all approached.	
	– Asks for referrals, often with closed questions such as “Do you know who would be suitable?”	
	– Again, has no follow up strategy for referral generation.	
Level 3	– Preference to use telephone as an approach tool.	
	– Plans calls in advance to provide maximum opportunity to speak to people.	
	– Recognises the difference between a job and an opportunity.	
	– Identifies the key selling points about the employer and the role in question to prepare a mini presentation.	
	– Acknowledges that not all candidates are actively looking and that does not mean that they would not be willing to discuss opportunities.	
	– Focuses on understanding the individual before presenting the position to them.	
	– Embraces “not looking” and “happy” statements as indicators that the person is good.	
	– Asks for referrals using open questions like “Who do you know ...?”	
Level 4	– Plans passive candidate approach calls - identifying prospects, gathering contact numbers (including switchboards).	
	– Looks for potential links to create name dropping opportunities.	
	– Approaches individuals with a 2-call strategy:	
	– - First call to position the call and close the individual on listening and discussing personal career goals.	
	– - Second call to qualify drivers and motivations and identify fit.	
	– Records approaches and sets schedule of further calls to follow up with those who are not interested to re-approach.	
	– Listens to understand the other person and creates rapport through empathy.	
	– Deals with objections as a challenger - uses questions to create reflection for the prospect.	
	– Email used to create conversations on the phone rather than to present opportunities and vacancies.	
Level 5	– Makes credible approaches - ensures that they are approaching the right individual through verifying full name and responsibility/title.	
	– Flexible to change approach to the individual concerned using direct and indirect approaches.	
	– Gains co-operation quickly from prospect to talk - either now or in the near future (same day).	
	– Qualifies the individuals background to ensure suitability and to limit the time wasted speaking to unsuitable candidates.	
	– Profiles the prospects employer as a donor company to identify additional prospects.	
	– Gathers names through the conversation.	
	– Asks for referrals to good skilled, achieving people rather than for those who would be interested/suitable for the position in question.	

+ Stage Three - Reviewing Capability

+ During the Recruitment Process:

If you were to ask a prospective recruiter during an interview:

“How do you approach passive candidates on behalf of your clients?”

It is fair to say that the majority of experienced recruitment consultants would be able to describe at least Level 3. However, you are not looking to hire someone who can *describe* how to approach passive candidates. You are looking to hire those who can *demonstrate* that they consistently do it at work. There are lots of knowledgeable recruiters out there who know how they should be working. There are far less who live their working life that way.

This demonstrates the importance of using roleplay, situational questions and Competency Based Interviews during your recruitment process.

So instead of asking:

“How do you approach passive candidates on behalf of your clients?”

Ask:

“Give me an example of when you have needed to approach passive candidates on behalf of your clients in the last 3 months”

Once you have a scenario scoped probe a little further:

“What made it necessary to approach the passive community?”

“What made this position stand out as an opportunity?”

At this point you have enough info to step into an impromptu role play. Play it straight - not overly challenging but also not a push over. How they behave and perform will give you more insight than the interview questions alone. Poor performance can come from a lack of practice, nerves (fear of failure or discomfort), lack of real life application. Those who claim “I wouldn’t normally ask that” or “That’s not how I am at work” are, more often than not, smoke screening. Good practitioners relish the opportunity to showcase their ability.

Business Health Tip:

Just because someone has 5 years experience does not mean that they are better at this, or more natural than someone with 6 months experience. There are a great many “experienced” recruiters out there whose 5 years in the industry is merely a single years worth of experience replicated 5 times.

It isn’t what they **know** they should be doing it’s what they **practice** and do each day that creates their performance and ultimately drives their results.

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+ Existing members of the team

For assessing the development needs of existing members of staff, observation at their desk can be used to truly identify *development* needs. Note the deliberate use of the word development rather than training. After all, if they can describe Level 3 of Approaching Passive Candidates they don't need training - even if they don't deliver against it!

In this instance there is not a knowledge requirement - they need to be coached to develop their knowledge into a behaviour. Don't assume that simply because they know then they will do.

If however, you want to raise their ability from a Level 3 to a Level 4 then further training may be required to increase their knowledge and then again followed by coaching to ensure that these new skills are being implemented.

To assess someone through live work:

Schedule a time to work with them at their desk. In this instance, explain that you would like to understand how they approach their passive candidate work. Without feeding them a road map of what you expect for example:

AVOID ASKING:

"I would like to spend some time with you tomorrow to see how you plan your passive candidate work, approach them on the phone and present opportunities" as this will give them a route map to follow rather than demonstrate how they would behave normally.

INSTEAD WE RECOMMEND:

"I am going to spend some time with you tomorrow whilst you are contacting passive candidates about your current live roles. What live roles are you working on where passive candidate strategies will need to be considered?

When will you be doing that tomorrow? OK, I will join you at 3pm"

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On the following pages is the outline of an assessment form to use while you sit with your consultants.

You can use this as you begin your observations. This assessment form will help you take into consideration the consultants ability in:

- Planning
- Sourcing
- Approach
- Presentation
- Objection handling

By observing a minimum of 6 approaches you will also have the opportunity to identify patterns of behaviour. Make sure that you also ask questions to qualify and fully understand why certain decisions are made - **do not make assumptions based on past experiences.**

Using the scoring matrices you have developed will help you to measure their performance rather than focusing on KPIs such as the number of approaches made Vs candidates generated.

By reviewing their performance in this way you will also be able to see evidence of some of the core competencies such as:

- Work Ethic
- Influence
- Questioning and Listening
- Motivation

Once finished, collate the information gathered and transfer it to the skills matrix (like the one on page 6). Now you have an accurate measure of a consultants true ability is a very specific area.

From this you can create a learning and development plan specific to the needs of each consultant ensuring you get the most from your training budget and a higher return on your investment.

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Example Assessment Form:

Skill: Approaching Passive Candidates Consultant Sarah Smith

+ Planning:

How many candidate have they planned to approach?

What have they got around them to help deliver effective EVPs (Employer Value Propositions) to their prospect candidates?

What have they prepared as a mini presentation about the opportunity?

Have they found phone numbers for those they are approaching?

What are their objectives for the calls as primary and secondary objectives?

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+ Sourcing:

Where did they find the people they are approaching?

What searches did they run?

Have they targeted donor companies agreed with the client?

Have they looked at multiple sources for their prospect list?

What format is their approach list in? Will it be something they could revisit again in the future?

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+ Approach:

How do they introduce themselves?

How would you feel if you were the candidate?

Is the reason for the call clear?

How comfortable are they with the conversation that lies ahead?

How do they deal with initial objections?

How many people are they approaching through a switchboard?

What is their strategy to convert as many prospects as possible to potential candidates?

How well do they focus on understanding the prospect and their career and associated goals?

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+ Presentation and Matching

How well did they question the prospect to really ensure a quality matching of opportunity to expectations?

Have they qualified the prospects capability to do the job itself as well as their level of interest?

When do they reveal more about the client and the position?

How well do they match the opportunity to the candidates drivers and motivations?

What do they close the candidate on in terms of action after the call?

How interested does the candidate appear?

How does the consultant measure the candidates' commitment to moving forward?

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+ Objection Handling

What objections did they receive?

How well did they deal with the objections? Did they delay? Swerve around? Steamroller or actually alleviate the concern at the heart of the objection?

How well did they demonstrate empathy with the prospects situation?

Which influence weapons did they use?

- Reciprocation
- Scarcity
- Commitment & Consistency
- Authority
- Social Proof
- Liking

Did they identify and manage potential roadblocks and deal breakers?

Have they explored the inevitable final crunch - would they actually leave and how do we know?

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+ Not enough time?

Although it may appear to be a lot of work it is part of the role of a manager to develop those within their charge. Generation Y are a large part of the recruitment agency landscape and their expectations revolve around personal development and growth.

Training is a small but integral part of this.

At Zero Entropy Networks we pride ourselves on being a learning and development business rather than merely a training provider. Not only do we understand the importance of performance development to improving results, we incorporate it into the heart of the programmes we develop for our clients.

We can help you develop:

Competency Based Frameworks

By allowing us to develop a series of competency based frameworks especially for your business you can ensure that at all times consultants are being measured and working towards your businesses vision of 'good'.

Scoring Matrices

A time consuming project but once completed a powerful tool to use again and again to help identify the true development needs of experienced consultants. By allowing us to create these for you saves you time and ensures your efforts, *and your training budgets*, are focused in the right areas.

Full Training Needs Analysis

By allowing us to perform a full Training Needs Analysis for your team you can ensure that each consultant receives their own personal development plan tailored to their specific needs. Upon completion you will receive a written report for each consultant outlining their strengths, weaknesses and areas of focus for the future. No more wasting your valuable training budget!

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+ Top 5 Tips for Development Success

1. Train to provide the required levels of knowledge, understanding and confidence

Training is integral to ensuring people work to the best of their ability. In reality the training itself is not the solution. It is everything that happens because of the training. Good training provides tools, ideas, skills and helps focus work ethic in the right places. Good trainers recognise the importance of supporting the learning after the training event. How the training migrates from the training environment to the desk is a combination of commitments made by the trainee, the support of the manager to create an environment to practice with purpose and good quality training material.

2. Provide practice and learning opportunities to develop contextual understanding

The sooner someone has the opportunity to put things into practice the better! Whilst it is fresh and motivation is at its highest post training. Give people time to embed knowledge through practicing key routines and create periods of time for people to deliberately practice their new skills. Are there opportunities for enhanced practice - beyond their own desk? We learn a lot when we take a theory and apply it in the real world. We can also start to identify exceptions to the rules.

Be close enough to deal with context related questions that if not dealt with may result in broad generalisations creating a rule of normality. For example, the consultant who starts to believe that candidates won't provide referrals or share leads because of a pattern of failure linked to poor application of skills.

3. Coach to develop the right behaviours and habits

Coaching is an in time event for most recruitment skills. Coaching away from the desk in a private room will not up skill someone rapidly as being with them whilst they make live calls.

Invest in a dual headset and recording capability so good calls can be analysed and showcased. Reflect on those that don't go as well. Ask good questions and avoid the mistake of telling someone what they should do differently. Real change takes place when the individual recognises the need to change and is uncomfortable with their present performance.

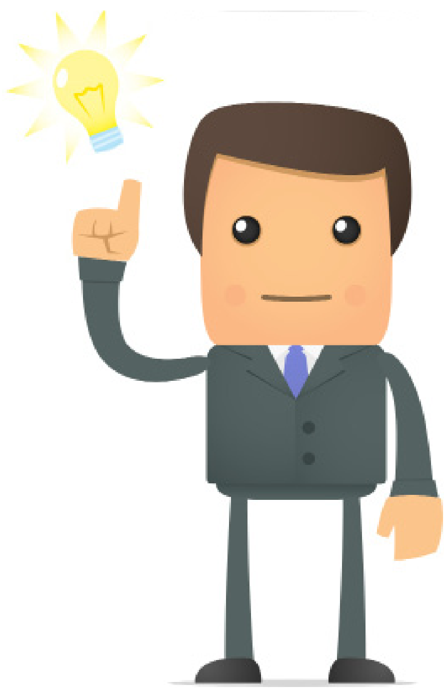
4. Coach to continue to embed the learning

When someone has attended a training workshop it is important you know what the training covered and the key learning points. What are the behaviours that you should be seeing based upon the training. Be present enough to hear training turning into action and praise the consultants you hear practicing the right things. Ask questions to understand what is stopping someone from putting a certain aspect of training to good use.

For example:

"How do you decide when to ask for a referral and when not to?"

"How did you stop yourself asking that candidate questions about their job search?"



5. Review performance regularly

Be clear on what performance looks like in your business, for your team. Regularly review how individuals are progressing. Spend less time crunching the numbers and reporting statistics. Use an intelligent KPI suite that focuses on what it takes to succeed and then review the how element.

For example:

What is the percentage conversion of passive individuals approached that convert into new candidates?

This gives you an indication of performance - an insight into how they source passives, plan their approach, handle objections and present and math opportunities. The more experience at the task the better the conversion one might expect.

What is the percentage of new candidates generated through headhunting convert into interviews?

This again is an indication of performance.

How well are they selecting the right individuals?

How well are they closing them on moving forward?

How well are they matching their proactive candidate generation to their client based demand forecasting?