

Business & Careers

How firms can make the most of a near-hire



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The Headhunter

I was recently speaking with the managing partner of one of the top boutique firms in the market about a candidate they had interviewed who, in late stages of their interview process, concluded wasn't quite the right fit for them. He liked the candidate, but the skill set wasn't quite at the standard the firm needed for the level of hire they were contemplating.

The managing partner wanted to let the candidate know it wasn't a fit without being too critical, while also providing authentic feedback so the candidate could build upon the experience for future interviews. This led to an interesting discussion on how can one accomplish these potentially conflicting goals at the end of an unsuccessful interview process?

Here are three things you can do.

Manage expectations up front

One of the challenges interviewers often face when they ultimately decide not to pursue a finalist candidate is when their pitch for the role was so effective, they leave no room to exit gracefully from the interview process should they opt not to hire the candidate. Far too often, interviewers don't fully consider



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how they will exit the process if the candidate doesn't work out.

While you always want to paint a compelling picture for a candidate on the opportunity with your organization, it can nonetheless be helpful to articulate a few areas where gaps may lie in a candidate's profile relative to the team's existing need — while these gaps may ultimately be overcome on the strength of the candidate's overall profile, identifying these gaps can give you a reasonable window to

explain to the candidate why the firm ultimately decided against proceeding to an offer.

What would it take in the future?

If you've interviewed with a candidate who isn't quite a fit today, but you otherwise like their profile, consider offering feedback that sets out what they could do in the coming months (or years) that, if achieved, would make them a great hire for your team down the road.

I've routinely been surprised by lawyers I've worked with who return years later, having accomplished a series of goals we set out at the conclusion of their last interview cycle. Not only does it show commitment, but it can create a talent pool for you to tap into down the road.

Offer to follow up

Telling a candidate you won't be proceeding to offer often meets with immediate disappointment. There can frequently be dismay and frustration in the moment, so an offer to provide feedback on the interview may not be well received at that time.

One option is to offer to follow-up on the interview process a month later — after some of the sting has been taken out of the news. While this may not be something you offer to every candidate you decline to pursue, for those that were near-hires, it can create goodwill in the market, while potentially leaving the door open to candidates who may later become ideal hires for your organization, depending on how both the candidate and your team develop.

These meetings can also potentially provide insight into your own recruitment process from the candidates' perspective, which may improve your recruitment efforts for other positions in the future.

Ultimately, it is important to remember interviews are another window for the market into your organization's brand. Often, how you manage a candidate you don't move forward with can be more important than those you do, as their memory of your organization will be heavily influenced by how you dealt with them after you decided not to proceed.

Creating a consistent, positive experience for candidates irrespective of hire decision can go a long way toward ensuring you create goodwill in the market, which may positively impact other recruitment opportunities down the road.

Warren Smith is the managing partner of The Counsel Network, Canada's oldest lawyer recruitment and career consulting firms. He is also the first Canadian to be elected president of the National Association of Legal Search Consultants (NALSC). Follow him on twitter @lawheadhunter.



General Counsel Hamilton Health Sciences Corporation

Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) is a family of seven unique hospitals, a cancer centre and an urgent care centre, serving more than 2.3 million residents of Hamilton and south central Ontario, Canada. Hamilton Health Sciences is the second largest hospital group in Ontario, and serves as a regional referral centre for cardiac, stroke, burns, trauma, neurosurgery, pediatrics, digestive diseases, high-risk obstetrics, cancer, orthopedics and rehabilitation services.

The organization is seeking a new General Counsel. In this influential executive role, you will report to the Executive VP Corporate Affairs & Chief Financial Officer and, on matters of governance and Board support, to the President and CEO. You will provide advice to senior management on legal issues, privacy, regulatory compliance and the effective governance of the organization. You will proactively identify, manage and mitigate organizational risk. You will support the Board on governance and regulatory compliance issues, and undertake a review and refresh of bi-laws and policies. You will effectively manage and develop the in-house legal team; creating an appropriate structure and reducing outside spend.

As the ideal candidate for this role, you will have senior level experience (15+ years) serving as in-house General Counsel, with management responsibility within a large and complex organization. You have the experience, maturity and seasoning to handle a significant volume of highly complex legal work. Experience within the broader public sector would be an asset. As a legal generalist with a broad understanding in a variety of disciplines and practice areas, you possess outstanding interpersonal and team management skills. Your clarity and ability to engage others will stand you in good stead when communicating complex legal and governance issues with a wide variety of audiences.

To learn more about this exciting opportunity, please contact Penny Mirams, Partner or Margaret Vanwyck, Director at 416-366-1990 or submit your cover letter and resume, in confidence, to www.odgersberndtson.com/en/careers/13914

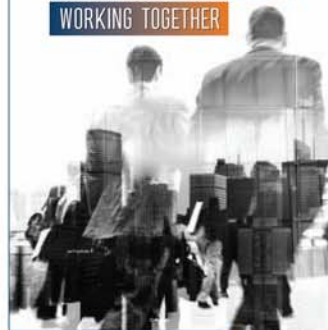


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Ogletree Deakins is pleased to announce that Stephen Shore has joined the firm as a partner in the Toronto office where he will be leading the firm's traditional labour relations practice group in Canada.

Stephen's focus is on delivering exceptional client service. He does this by understanding his clients' businesses and objectives so he can anticipate their needs.

And though he is one of many lawyers in our bar who assists management in the areas of certification applications, collective bargaining, grievance arbitration, and employment litigation, with him, it's more fun.

We're ecstatic to have Stephen join our exceptional team of lawyers in Toronto.

Register at www.ogletree.com/faq-insights to receive updates on recent developments in labour and employment law.



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