Benchmarking for the Best Hire in 7 Simple Steps

It's hiring season, so recruiters are hunting for new talent. For years Pacific Crest Group has relied on the best hiring practices of John Younger, who, after 23 years of recruiting success, founded the cloud services recruiting company Accolo. John guarantees that recruiters can improve their rate of great hires from 50% to 80% with his hiring tactics.

Younger defines a great hire as an employee who can outperform three average employees. Recruiters must focus on the objective when sifting through candidates: attracting the perfect candidate and no one else. Recruiters can identify the perfect candidate by looking for signs of benchmarking, or setting the expectation at the best in the industry, then meeting it. Hiring managers are encouraged to utilize benchmarking while also following Younger's 7 steps to finding the perfect candidate explained below.

- **Write the job description as a love letter** – Avoid including the aspects of the job that an ideal candidate will assume and focus on emotional triggers when producing the job description. The perfect candidate won't be interested in a boring opportunity. In the job description, answer questions such as, why would a top performer want this job? Is the candidate able to provide examples of setting goals and reaching them? Measure quality with benchmarking. Do they prioritize, plan ahead, and carry out plans? Appeal to emotions more than qualifications. Why would you fit into our culture?

- **Present a simple and compelling recruiting message** – Be professional and clear on the available position, but put out a call for a special candidate. Ask for "not just any accountant." Make the message jump off the page the way a great candidate jumps off a resume. Include keywords at the bottom of online descriptions for SEO. Ask challenging, open-ended questions to build rapport between the recruiter and the best applicant.

- **Regardless of price, consider all referrals** – The best candidates are worth paying for and can potentially come from an outlet you don't expect. Consider all outlets but be methodical. Start with the cheaper sources such as Craigslist, Indeed, and other job boards, then consider retained recruiters and other, more expensive options.

- **Don’t rush the decision, but move quickly on the right candidate** – The best candidates will get the most offers. To avoid missing out on a strong candidate, focus only on asking the right questions on the job description and during the interview process. Ask benchmarking questions. How many times did you achieve a specific goal or task? How did you reach it? Prioritize skills over experience. Don’t wait to have a large field of applicants to choose from; remember that you are looking for one stellar employee.

- **Utilize a team of experts** – Interviewing is a skill, so be mindful of who is chosen to interview candidates. Do the interviewers ask probing, open-ended questions? Do they know the company? Utilizing employees who have a strong sense of what your organization does can be a great way to determine if the applicant will fit into the company culture. Cultural fit is just as important as qualifications.

- **Give closure to all applicants** – Only 6% of job applicants receive a response to their applications. Treat applicants like customers. Even if they don’t get the job, applicants with a bad impression and a negative experience from your hiring process can push away the ideal candidate with a negative review of your company. In some form or another, give all applicants closure, whether it’s a courtesy email or an offer.

- **Study the candidate 360 degrees** – What was their first job? Why did the take it? Why did they leave it? What about for their second job? Is there a pattern? What do their referrals say? Give the candidate the airport test: how would the candidate be if they sat next to you on a long layover? Know as much as you can about the person you are hiring.

Taking the time and utilizing all resources to make the best hire can minimize lost productivity. Small business owners must adopt best hiring practices from the beginning of the hiring process or pay the price in the long run.