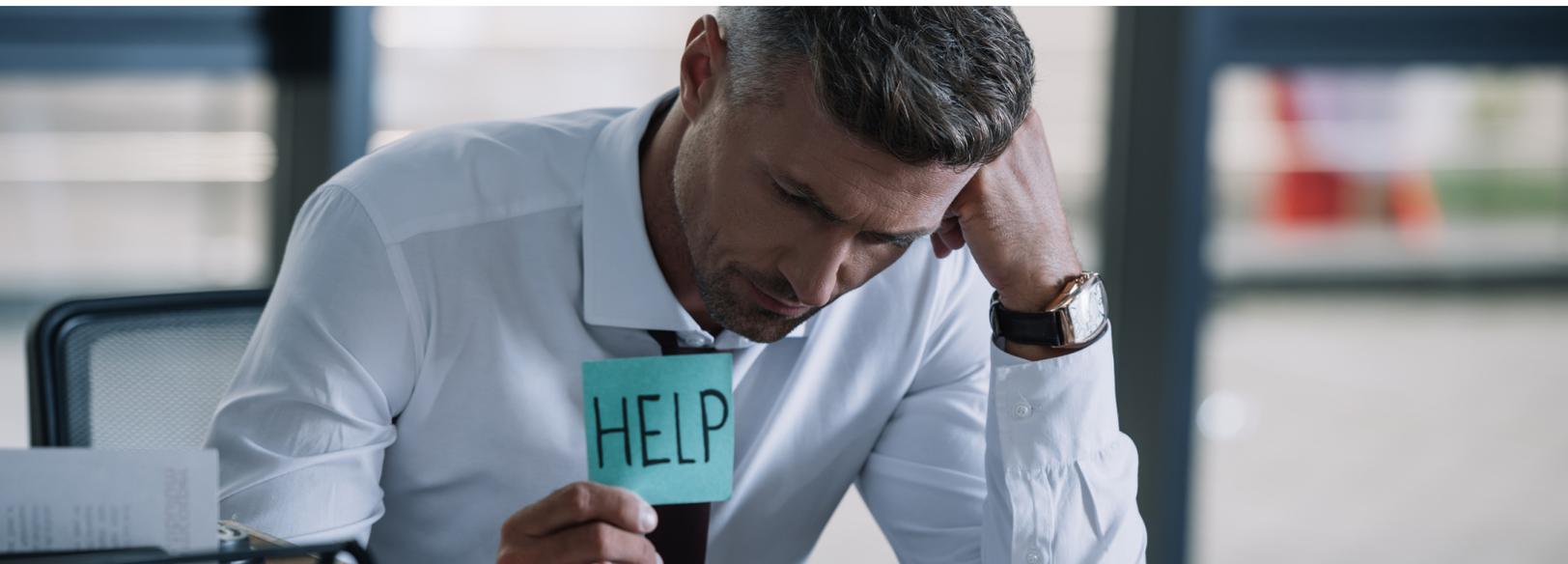




CHOOSING THE RIGHT SALES RECRUITER



CORNERSTONE SEARCH
RECRUITING EXCELLENCE



My name is Rich Rosen, founder of Cornerstone Search, and I've been a software sales recruiter for longer than I care to admit.

...let's just say I'm approaching 3-decades.

Over the years I've placed 947 sales professionals (as of this writing) that have added roughly \$1 billion to the US economy.

Let's just say that placing hard-charging sales talent with high-growth software companies and VC firms isn't just by job. It's my passion, and we're not half-bad at it - if you listen to Forbes Magazine naming us a [top-20 search firm for the third year in a row](#).

In my younger years, I cut my teeth as a stock broker and equity analyst, where I learned how to analyze companies and get to the root of what makes a company tick. Adding to the mix the skills of pounding the phone and driving cold outreach, made it the perfect proving ground for my recruiting career.

In short: I understand salespeople, sales organizations, sales cultures, and everything software sales-related. I understand how difficult it can be to field a sales team that can compete in today's hyper competitive marketplace.

And of course I understand the frustration with so-called "sales recruiters" who promise you the moon, only to never be heard from again.

That's why, just like every prospect has to be qualified before entering your sales process, the same is true for every recruiter that you allow into your recruitment process.

That's why I've written this guide: if you want to ~~make your recruiter sweat~~ qualify your recruiter, this is your step-by-step roadmap.



Unfortunately, for every superstar sales recruiter out there, there are ninety-nine wannabes running around blasting you with daily voicemail and email messages, and all of them are saying the exact same thing:

"We are Sales Specialists!"

You: "Sure, so is every other 'specialist' recruiter calling me today..."

"We have 30-years of combined experience!"

You: "Does that mean you have two 15-year recruiters, or fifteen 2-year recruiters working there? Sure, you know your timetables, but that doesn't tell me anything."

"We have a proprietary process!"

You: "The same one I see on every other recruiting site?"

On the whole, those recruiters who should be able to sell your unique opportunity to hard-to-convince candidates, have an especially hard time describing what sets them apart from other recruiters.

It's a "monkey see monkey do" situation. Recruiters see other recruiters saying the exact same things, and they think they need to do the same.

That leaves you in a tough spot, because what do you do when you have a critical opening? If you're lucky enough to personally know a recruiter you've had years of success with, then great!

But what if you don't?

CHOOSING THE RIGHT RECRUITING PARTNER



If you do what some leaders do, you choose a few recruiters that have been contacting you steadily over the last couple of years, that you saved in that little inbox folder titled “recruiters”. Then you email 5 or so of them the job specs along with some salary information, sign their contingency fee agreements and let them all compete for your position.

Makes sense, right?

...until you learn that most recruiters just take your job description, redact your company name, and post it on the same job boards that you're on anyway.

To most, you're just a KPI. They put up ten jobs up on the board knowing they'll fill one, and quite frankly they don't care if it's your job or somebody else's. They just need to fill that one to hit their quota for the month.

“That’s why that sneaking suspicion of yours - that the recruiter always seems to represent the candidate, even though YOU are the one footing the bill - is 100% right!”

It doesn't have to be this way, my friend. You just need the tools to properly vet a real Rockstar Recruiter who will go to the ends of the earth to find you the talent that you desperately need to succeed.

...and you're in luck! I've got those tools for you right here. The next time you're vetting a search firm, before you blindly give out job description and sign a contingency fee agreement with a handful of bodyshop recruiters, ask them these questions that will cut right to their core.

...and make them sweat.

Are you ready? Read on to the next page to find out what they are.



1) "What are your metrics?"

Meaning, what percentage of the time do they successfully complete a search? The vast majority of contingency search firms average between 10%-20%, although when you point-blank ask a contingency recruiter this question you'll probably hear something in the range of 30%-50%. If you hear this number, it's likely the rest of these numbers will be fudged.

If working with an engaged firm (meaning you put some money down to initiate the search), you want to look for a firm in the 80% - 90% range (no one is ever 100%).

Other metrics to assess would be:

- How many potential candidates do they call on every search?
- How many candidates do they move through their selection process and show to clients (ie: a short list).
- How many of those get selected for client interviews?
- What is their interview to placement ratio is (this can vary widely across industries, but when comparing firms it's a great metric to use).
- What is their passive candidate to active candidate placed ratio (you want skewed towards passive).
- What is their stick rate (percentage of placed candidates still employed after 2 years).

Of course, this isn't an all-inclusive list, but it will give you a good start.



2) *"What does your search process look like?" (describe it in detail)*

When I first got into this business, my first recruiting trainer gave me some bad advice. I was told to never show our clients what our process really looked like; to keep what we did a mystery. That advice never sat well with me. I've always been of the mind that we should "open up the hood" and show our clients exactly what we do and how we do it.

Otherwise, you (my client) wouldn't see the value in what we do if all we do is show up with a stack of resumes.

So ask to see their recruitment process in detail:

- How will they map out the entire market?
 - ...and once every potential candidate is mapped, how will they determine who the top-performers are?
- What will be their search criteria?
- How will they engage those candidates (digital engagement, or analog, or both)?
- How will they assess interested candidates?
- What technical questions will they ask?
- What's their selection process and what will be their knock-out criteria?
- Do they employ video interviewing? If so, at what point?
- Do they know what a test drive interview is? How will they help you set that up?
- How will they present short-listed candidates to you?
- How will they ensure the candidate is onboarded correctly or retained even after the guarantee period?



3) "What are the metrics of the software sales candidate market in [METRO AREA]?"

The best way to assess if a recruiter who says they're a specialist in your industry is an actual, real-deal specialist is to simply ask them detailed questions about the local market.

For example, let's say you're looking for ERP BDM in Atlanta. Ask the recruiter how many people would approximately fit the bill in the metro area? Have them send you a screenshot from their database showing that number. Obviously they won't have the exact number, but they should at least have the market mapped out and data readily available.

4) "What timelines do they expect to see based on your search criteria?"

Every search is different and can vary wildly depending upon the specific parameters of your search. A Rockstar Recruiter should be able to backwards plan the entire search for you, from the date you need somebody to start right down to the day they take the search assignment.

AND...they also won't be afraid to push back and tell you if your timelines are unrealistic.



5) "Who will be working the search?"

In order to be successful, a Rockstar Recruiter should have the right team assisting them with your search.

- Are there proven professionals from the software sales ecosystem?
- Who will be doing the research and who will be doing the screening?
- Is there technical competency on the team?
 - **NOTE: Do not play 'GOTCHA!'** and ask a recruiter to describe technical concepts only a deep sales engineer would know. It's ok to ask some specific questions, but asking obscure configuration questions – for instance - is not how you determine the effectiveness of a recruiter, at all.
- Is there a marketing assistant to drive the digital outreach and advertising campaign?
- Can we get the people working on the search in a meeting to make sure they are selling my opportunity correctly?

6) "Do they have an off-limits list? If so, what companies are on that list?"

NOTE: Recruiters aren't allowed to recruit from their client companies (usually a year or two after their last placement with them). The longer the off-limits list, the less options you have available to find the Rockstar that you need.

That's another reason why the larger firms are not necessarily the best firms to work with, since they have an off-limits list a mile long. However, if they say they don't have an off-limits list, that means you would not be on it either, even if you are a client. Be careful!



7) "How will they report on your search? What processes are in place to provide visibility on their activity?"

They should be able to provide you with at least a bi-weekly report of their entire pipeline: who they're talking to, who said yes, who said no, why they said no, and as much market data as possible.

This is also a great way to make sure they don't just "post and pray" - meaning, posting your position on a job board and 'praying' the right candidate happens to apply.

8) "How will they sell you, your company and your opportunity?"

More to the point, how will they sell your Employer Value Proposition? There's a lot of white noise out there and you need a compelling invitation to attract the best IT Rockstars. How will they differentiate you (because they have to sell you as a strong leader), your company, and the opportunity?

More than anything else, imagine you were a candidate on the fence, and ask them to sell you on the opportunity. A recruiter running around with a bad message about your company is one of the fastest ways to lose your reputation in the marketplace.

I call it "poisoning the well" and it happens when you don't pay attention to the entire candidate experience, from the First Look to the First Day. Not paying attention to the message only makes it harder to recruit top talent down the road.



9) "Do they offer a guarantee?"

If things go south with your hired candidate, will they replace that candidate free of charge? Most recruiters will offer guarantees of 90 days, but the best firms offer longer guarantees, as a lot can go wrong after the first few months (ours las.

Think of a guarantee like an extended warranty when buying a new car. You always get the extended warranty, don't you?

There are two types of guarantees usually offered: **refund and replacement**. If a recruiter offers you a refund guarantee (which may sound great), remember that you will run into incentive problems. Monetarily keeping a recruiter on the hook for an extended period of time is a huge disincentive, and most reputable firms wouldn't agree to risking having to work for free, since there are many factors out of the recruiter's control after a candidate starts that can affect the placement.

Speaking of extended warranties...



10) "What preventative maintenance will the recruiter provide to ensure that you won't need to activate the extended warranty / guarantee?"

Will they provide you and your newly hired Sales Rockstar onboarding and retention training - because let's face it, even the best candidates oftentimes need training in this area. Will they assist with timely performance reviews to benchmark your new hire against the performance profile you set up with the recruiter at the beginning of the search, all the way through the guarantee period?

We provide 30-day, 90-day, 180-day, and 1-year check-in and reviews with both the hiring executive and new-hire, so make sure you are getting at least that at a minimum.

"Whew! That seems like a lot of work Rich..."

Your recruiter has a direct impact on the quality of candidate you hire and even though the US unemployment rate is at record highs, the best IT candidates (A-Players, Rockstars, etc.) are still getting multiple offers. We've even seen a rise in counter offers as employers realize that they need to keep their very best people if they are to compete in an economy that no longer allows any room for error. On top of that, job boards are still showing less and less effectiveness every year (I've completely stopped posting on job boards myself).

The number one determinant for success or failure of a leader is their ability to field a high performing team consistently. And that means you need a Rockstar Recruiter in your corner.

THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE WITHOUT THE RIGHT RECRUITMENT PARTNER:



Sales Talent Acquisition is getting too expensive

Not only are salary levels increasing faster than the national average, but it's so easy to waste money on poor advertising or recruitment fees for non-performers.



The caliber of candidates isn't up to par

For example, sales candidates can have robust resumes outlining their experience, but when you dig in further they don't have the depth of experience their resume portrays, or they don't have a verified record of success.



It takes too long to fill critical sales openings

By the time you're ready to hire a sales professional, your candidate of choice is either choosing between multiple offers or has already gone off the market. Top candidates stay available for an average of 10 days only before getting hired, even in this market.



Revenue growth targets are impacted, leading to missed forecasts

A shortage of skilled sales talent is impacting your ability to hit revenue goals. You won't hit your revenue targets if you can't grow your client base, and you won't grow your client base if you continue to miss your sales hiring goals.



Mis-hire risk within your organization is on the rise

You've had new Sales Leaders stay with the organization only briefly, but their negative impact is felt long after they leave. Decreased moral, increased turnover risk, missed sales projections, and more stress are all consequences felt.



Your process for recruiting top sales talent lacks continuity

You don't have a passive candidate pipeline or a system in place that can give you predictable results every time. Therefore, every search has to start from scratch and it quickly feels like a game of chance (reactive vs proactive).

WRAPPING UP



One of my favorite business leaders (Larry Bossidy, Jack Welch's most well-known protégé, and CEO of AlliedSignal) famously said:

“Nothing our company does is more important than hiring and developing superior talent.”

Your key to the C-Suite, or to greater shareholder value, or just to feel like you're a top-performer yourself, is directly related to the talent you hire. Full stop.

While this is certainly is not an exhaustive look at how to effectively work with a search firm, I'm a big believer in sharing best practices and insights with the clients and candidates our industry serves.

I truly believe that it's important to give you an inside glimpse into what we do, why we do it, and how it effects your success as a leader, and to give you the tools necessary to navigate what can sometimes be a hiring minefield.

Focus on this, above all else, because without a Rockstar team behind you, you'll never have the opportunity to show the world how great of a leader you truly are.

Here's to your hiring success... Rich



IT'S TIME TO RETHINK YOUR TALENT STRATEGY

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." ~ Albert Einstein

BOOK YOUR CALL..

TALENT NEEDS CALL

This call is for busy Sales Executives who want to hire the very best talent in the market.

On our call, we will both determine if it makes sense to work together, and if so, I can be your direct conduit to the top-performers that I have been networking with for years, but that are next-to-impossible to find.

STRATEGY CALL

This call is for forward-thinking Executives who want to position themselves as the economy starts shifting to a new reality. You may be a leader looking for elite sales talent, or perhaps you are a rising star looking for a company who won't hold you back, or you may just looking to pick up some actionable tactics you can use to set yourself up for success.

LEADERSHIP CALL

This call is for top-performing sales leaders who want to take their careers to the NEXT LEVEL. We'll make sure that you're positioned correctly and in the driver's seat next time you interview for a next-level "stretch" position, we'll talk about what that next level role would look like for you, and how I might be able to be your eyes and ears out there in the marketplace.

BOOK YOUR CALL WITH RICH