



MODULE 3 **Creating an Effective Interview Strategy**

Mike: Back to module 1 and 2, module 1, Building Your Vision, we are going to talk about how you integrate that today, getting your story down, understanding why you are hiring. All of that comes through in the way you present yourself. Module number 2, basically writing your story, know what your selling points are, knowing how you are different, why you are different.

One of the best things I ever did when we went along this route when we started getting serious was I had a focus group, I think I was telling you guys in the call last module. Having a focus group of your office, why they joined, why they stay, what it is that is attractive about your firm, getting a third party perspective, removing yourself from it for a little bit.

And again, the story's got to be a lot more than you can make a lot of money here because if they are interviewing with you and you are in an area that is any kind of metropolitan area, my experience is they have also gone down that sales column or the marketing column, wherever your ad is, whether it is job posted newspaper – this is for the active candidates, not the passive ones – they are probably already interviewing with another firm. So, realize that is one of your competitors.

And the big thing is remember that they are buying you, as a human being, as a potential mentor and leader. And do not discount the importance of that. So, as many successes as you have had, both yourselves, whether as a billing manager, also your success is in building an office. So, those play very heavily into why people in an interview process are going to be attractive and why, ultimately, they may choose you over somebody else, or why they might choose recruiting as a career over something else that they are interviewing for.

So with that, if you go to the first page, first we are going to talk about kind of quickly going over, go through the interview process, developing a consistent interview process. These are just kind of a couple quick fill in the blanks. And before I go to this, I really looked at, in retrospect, what my goals for the entire interview process were and what all the things that I did that worked and did not work. And it boils down to these five points, and this is what we are really going to extrapolate on.

Get to know the candidate as a person, as a human being, not an interviewee. How many times has the person we interviewed been a different person than the one that showed up for work?

Two, I do a big job of reverse selling them on the opportunity, not selling them on the opportunity, reverse selling. We are going to talk about that today.

You qualify them/disqualify them and they do not even know it is happening. And we are going to talk about what things I did in that area.

And the biggest advantage of having a good interview process is this is where you begin to set and manage expectations. And once you have set and managed expectations, you do it again. I do it subtly and even directly in all parts of my interview process.

And then lastly, gain their full commitment.

And just one more thing on managing expectations, a lot of people in the questions we did on the preview call and the questions we had is how do I find and identify somebody who gets it, who understands? And frankly, you do not. Those people are probably one in 20, one in 30, one in 40, the ones that just naturally get it. Great recruiters are made, not born. And a lot of it is accountability structures and expectations. A lot of that we are going to get into fully on accountability structures and execution and things like that in module 4, which is on boarding. But, the process really starts in the interviewing process because you are basically setting the tone for what it takes to be successful as a recruiter.

And here is the mistakes I see many people make when they are interviewing. One, they interview too long and they talk too much, themselves. Two sins I was very guilty of, and what I mean by talking, interviewing too long, they have too many steps in the process. And I use assessments as training tools and assessments I use to get insight into candidates. The mistake I think people make is they use assessments as a screen in, screen out. I have known some offices that mail an assessment or e-mail an assessment, a link or whatever prior to the first interview, and if they do not pass the assessment, the person doesn't get interviewed.

Well, I have got a bunch of people that are billing a half a million dollars a year here that would have failed, would have never been interviewed by the people that do it that way. Those assessments can help you when you are on the fence, and those assessments can help you ask better questions, but as an in or out tool, at least for me, I have not seen them that predictive. And when I talk to people that I know in the industry, we are always in search of that assessment that is going to make it black and white. And at least to this day, there is no tool that is been that predictive.

The other mistake is just the opposite end of the spectrum, I have seen owners make rash decisions, hire too quickly after a very brief interview. There is a rhythm and a pace to an interviewing process. I think most people at a professional level expect to go through at least two interviews separated by at least a few days, if not a week in time, one for them to gather their thoughts, to gather their questions, to be able to make a rational, sound decision versus get caught up in the moment. And I am aware of firms that if they find the right person, they will make the offer in that first interview. And I think it is kind of like meeting somebody at a bar and having a great conversation with them and proposing marriage all at the same time. While there could have been a great connection there, you might have destroyed it.

An example I gave in the preview call and I just want to reiterate from a real life experience in my own life, when I was looking to leave Motorola, I interviewed with a company

that sold telephones. This was 20 something years ago. And very professional office building, very professional guy shows up, interviews me. He is the founder of the company. They are on this phenomenal growth track. He asks me a few questions and literally, 20 minutes into the interview, offers me the job.

And for the first 19 minutes, I was really kind of into it. I was kind of visualizing myself there. But, I am thinking, wait a minute, this is way too easy. This guy will hire anybody. I asked some more questions, I gathered some more information, I went home. I never felt comfortable from that moment on, and I turned the job down.

So, you want to have a defined process in place, where you have kind of spaced this out. Before I get to that, they do not manage the hiring process or the expectations. I have seen firms where every interview process, like snowflakes, they are all different, based on the whim, the moment, how much time the person has. We have a three-interview process with the potential to have even a fourth interview with somebody that is not really an interview, and I am going to get into that, with somebody we are kind of on the fence about.

And then, we have goals for each interview and each kind of assessment, and when I say three interviews, the first one is really when we get in contact with somebody. It is an interview they have no idea that is occurring. So, from a standpoint of look at what you want and need from your standpoint to be able to make a good decision on bringing somebody on board. And I will get into some of the things that I have learned candidates need to see, prospects, recruiting prospects need to see for them to make a great decision on joining you. And that process should be defined in writing.

An objection I get with well, what if we want to change it? Especially with things like word, you change them. For whatever reason, there is this belief system that once it is in writing, it is kind of like the Old Testament, it is not changeable. This is stuff that is fluid, but it gives you guideposts. And it also, from a standpoint – this is all part of systematizing your business – if you ever want an exit strategy, this is just one of the things that people are going to want to see, OK, when XYZ search firm brings somebody on and on boards, what's their process, what's their goal?

So, from a standpoint of managing process from beginning to end, there is two different kind of approaches I use. One, if I am dealing with somebody that is an employee referral or if I am dealing with somebody that responded to an advertisement. Most of the responses we are getting now are not faxed resumes or anything like that. They are e-mail responses to an ad.

And I type one simple line, “Your background looks very interesting. Please call me to discuss the opportunity in greater detail.” And I put my name and I put my title, Managing Director. I want them to know they are talking to somebody who's in charge, not HR, because these people are responding to a lot of different types of positions. I do not give them a time frame. I want to see what their reactions are.

So, probably 25 or 30 percent of the people I send that e-mail to never call me. And if they want to get into an e-mail dialogue, I do not. I just say, “That is a great question.

Call me to discuss the opportunity in greater detail.” I want to get them on the phone.

If somebody had a great resume and they did not reply to that e-mail, I do not chase them. I have never done it. I just think a lot of people when they go through replying to ads, some of them are just replying to everything. They have not really thought it through. My goal for this step are, one, when they call, are they prepared? I want to determine how they play, and I use that term, “play,” how they interact with me on the phone because I am kind of imagining myself as somebody that they might try to recruit or market to down the road.

And then, my goal is if I like them, to either set up an interview or disqualify. My goal for that first little phone interaction is that simple, those three points. One, are they prepared. Two, how did they interact? And three, set an interview or disqualify? So when they call, I will take the call and if not, if they leave a voice mail, I do call them back. I am not getting into the game of making them call me again. And the first question I will ask them is, “You know, I know there is only so much a posting can say.” Or, if it is an employee referral, “I know you probably had a conversation with so and so in our office. What was it about the posting that made you respond to the ad?”

Now, by the way, when I reply to their e-mail, their e-mail usually comes from one of the job boards, so the posting number and everything’s in there. It is very easy for them to go back and look. I appreciate they may have responded to 20 things. And that is why I put the onus on them to call me. If they do, did they even look at my website? That is not a requirement. Did they reread the posting? Or at least do they have a good enough memory to remember why they were posting? If they say something to the effect of, “What was that job about?” I politely get them off the phone and move on.

Remember, these people called me. I gave them an e-mail. They called me when it was convenient for them. All they had to do was either go back and reread the posting. Some of them, where they get bonus points is, did they go to our website? Did they say, “Well, in addition to the posting, what I saw on your website was this, this and this. Those things seem very intriguing.” That is kind of the first hurdle.

Again, these people do not think they are in an interview mode because I told them to call me to discuss the opportunity in greater detail. So one, now they have gotten into a conversation with me about what they liked about the position. I usually ask a few questions, based on what I am hearing them say. Hopefully, they are asking me questions. That is what I want to see, are they naturally curious? And I go there with them. And what’s the interaction like? Am I comfortable on the phone with these people? Is it forced on their part? Are they prepared?

And a lot of people, one, if they are not prepared, they just appear very uncomfortable on the phone, if I am not on the fence about them, I say, “Look, I have sent the note that I sent to you to about 10 people. My goal is to interview about four to five people. I am going to have this list finalized in the next 48 hours. You will be notified if we want to set up an interview or if we are going to disqualify you.” So, if they are on the fence, I politely send them an e-mail if I disqualify them later if they weren’t one of the top five. If I am really excited about them in the moment, the really good ones will say, “I want to

come in and learn more.” That is extra bonus points if they come to me for an interview I set up.

If I am really excited about them, I say, “The next logical step is to bring you in to discuss the opportunity and your background in a little bit more detail.” But, that is the first clue. They are not in interview mode. And really, in this situation, you want to avoid asking, in all these areas, you want to avoid asking as many of the traditional interview questions as possible.

One of my favorite questions to ask on this first phone call when the timing’s right is to ask them, “If you could wave a realistic magic wand, what would your career look like a year or two down the road?” Now keep in mind, I am asking them this before I have described recruiting to them because I want to see what aspects of a career role they are playing. Is it a sales type of role? Are they in a role where they are interacting with people? Are they very process-oriented? Or is this somebody who thinks we are in a role where we are e-mailing and matching resumes and making placements that way?

So, a lot of times, this interview just really does a great job of setting the table for your first face to face interview with them, which hopefully, you have set up. Again, this conversation generally takes about ten minutes that I have with them. If not, based on the background, if you thought it was attractive, if somebody really bombs, you have saved yourself probably a half hour, 45 minutes politely getting them out of your office, anyway. And it is a real efficient way to get through people and again, a great way to set the table.

Now, if I am replying to a recruit, if somebody in my office, one of my research associates recruited somebody in one of those ways I gave you in the last module through direct recruiting, I start at the point of the phone interview because, again, this is a passive candidate, not an active candidate. So, my approach is a little different. I thank them for their interest, I ask them what questions they have. And in your conversation with so and so, what really intrigued you about the potential role of executive recruiter? What questions do you have for me that came to your head pretty quickly?

And then, I follow through basically the other steps, if you could wave a realistic magic wand, getting them into kind of that dialogue and testing their play. But with a passive candidate, I realize “they are not applying,” they were recruited, so put your executive recruiter hat on. You have got to massage that a little differently. That is the only really nuance difference.

With all these candidates, too, one other question is what’s going on in your career right now that makes the timing of this appropriate for you? What’s going on that makes you want to make a move? I want to know that even prior to them coming into the office.

So, the first interview, I have what we call our Wall of Fame. Every little certificate we have won for anything, I have framed for 10 bucks and put up on a wall, and it is in our reception area. And when somebody comes into our offices, there is a couple chairs you can face and we have all those up. One, they give you huge credibility. We have got awards we have won, through the Hartford Business Journal applied, and we are the second largest recruiting firm in the Hartford area.

If you have got a local business journal, they probably rank recruiting firms, but you do not have to be second. Even if you are the 21st in your metropolitan area, most recruiting firms do not even know about this. It is a huge way to gain credibility. You can just take that article once it is published and you frame it because, again, people walking in your office, we want to do as much as possible to reduce risk, do as much as possible to create certainty. And this is one of the strategies. So generally, most people, when they come in for an interview, they are five to ten minutes early anyway, so I let them sit there for five minutes and they have got nothing better to do than stare at that wall. So, I have begun building credibility that way.

We even have a couple trips we have taken as an office to the Caribbean. I have those group pictures up there. Anything else that you can think of, articles you may have had published that it is going to give you as the owner and your office credibility.

Once you invite them in, you want to break the tension. They have come in to interview, so they are in interview mode. One of the first things I say is, "I have been doing this a long time. I have had to interview people for my clients all day long. There is certain things I need to know because with our clients, we are taking a square peg and we are putting it into a square hole, a round peg to a round hole. And since most of the people I hire, 99 percent of the people I hire do not have recruiting experience, it is an education process. What I tell people is I am not going to be able to interview you as a former recruiter, so I'd just like to open up and have a conversation. I want you to tell me about what you want to do for a living. I will tell you our story.

And I get very relaxed purposely, body language, I lean back in my chair. And you will notice them relax. They will probably, without even knowing it, they will mimic your body language, they will relax in their chair. They are not prepared for this kind of interview. And that is what I want. I do not want them prepared for the type of interview where they are ready to tell me about what their strengths and weaknesses are, what their three to five-year goals are, if they were a tree, what kind would they be?

So, I immediately get them into conversation mode. And the quicker you can do that, the more that goal I talked about having, getting to know them as a real human being. My goal is two-fold in this as a real human being. One, do I think they can do the job? And two, do I like him or her? I do not hire people I do not like. I do not care how good they are. It is a recipe for a lot of tension and aggravation that I do not need. If you have ever hired somebody that you are really not thrilled with in the interview, that person really becomes an albatross as you go through the training process.

But anyway, I get them comfortable and I will say, "Is that OK with you?" And they will say, "Oh, yeah, that is great, I have been on so many interviews and they are all the same, they ask the same stupid questions." And if they start saying things like that, "same stupid questions," I have got them very comfortable. I am going to re-ask them the same questions from the first interview in slightly different ways. If they could wave a realistic magic wand, I might say, "I know we talked about it, but if you could hand carve the next seven-year career, what would that look like?"

I want to see if there is consistency or if they were making it up as they went along because, remember, when I was on the phone, by the way, if I did not say this, I wrote all

their responses down. So, I got ready. If they were in two or three days later, I am kind of reviewing what those responses to those questions were. So, all the questions I have asked, most of them I will ask again to kind of get the person wound up. That is probably a very short part of that first interview, five, seven minutes. Then, it is after that, I give a brief vision, not the whole thing, because if they are coming into a business they know nothing about, they need to understand a little bit about it.

So, I give them a little bit of our story and a little bit about our vision. I tell them what we do – very important here – I do not tell them how we do it because if you tell them how you do it, they are going to frame their answers to plug into the how. But if you tell them what they do, a lot of times, I want to see how they might respond. After I have told them that part of the vision and the story and again, a little bit of the what and not the how, I begin a short interview, a little bit of an in-depth interview with them, I should say, not a short interview with them. Down at the bottom, you can see I have sample questions, ones I have picked up. I ask a lot more under initiative. These are the things I really want to test for. These are the things, for me, that are the most predictive, their initiative, their perception and their work ethic.

If you are hiring somebody, which most of us do that doesn't have experience, these are some of the things that are predictive and you have to be a little less than obvious with them. The other one I have up here, too, is a huge one for me, especially if they are recently out of college, if they are in their mid to late 20's, early 30's. I ask them what they learned in college and what they did outside of class. Did they do anything outside of class? Now, some people might say, "I did not get to play sports and I did not get to be active in college because I had to work 40 hours a week to pay off my tuition." Well, that is a great response. They went to college full-time and they worked full-time.

But it is, "I went to college with a bunch of people and just kind of coasted," they had 12 hours of classes a week and they slept the other 20 hours a day and they really had nothing on their resume. I remember when I was in school, some people, a big chunk of their resume was "relevant courses," that was their college experience. Again, that is something to initiative, especially with somebody if you are interviewing them and they are younger and have less of a career track record that you can probe into.

Under initiative, for me, I do not like micromanaging. I do not micromanage. I set expectations, I manage expectations, I train and I develop, but I am not on somebody's desk three times a day. I want to know what their other work environments looked like and what their interaction was with their immediate supervisor. So, if I hear, "Well, you know, it was not that much, he only checked upon me four times a day," well that is a lot. I am not going to check on somebody four times a day. And if they checked on him four times a day, the person might have needed to be checked up on four times a day. Now let me be clear, none of these questions on their own are deal breakers, but it is the combination of the whole story you get from these people.

"When you took assignments, how did you learn the material?" I want to hear things beyond the basic training program. I want to hear that they took a manual home or that they bought a peer lunch that had been around the company for a couple years, and they picked their brain. I want to hear real specific stuff. If they start getting vague – I am talking recruiters here, but I do not want to leave anything uncovered – if they are vague, you have got to get them to be specific. "Give me a specific example of that," is an obvious question.

“What was a unique idea to a problem or situation that you had at work and how did you present it; what were the results?” A lot of people have great ideas at work and do not do anything with them. I want to see if they were capable of selling their own ideas internally. That is initiative, and that is what it is going to take, as you guys know. Being on a desk, you have to be very proactive and especially if the economy softens, creative in ways on getting new clients and great candidates to make a move.

Perception, now keep in mind, remember I just told you, I gave them maybe a five, seven minute story of our story and our vision, where we were going to go. I told them what we did as recruiters, but not how we did it. I want to see one, were they really paying attention? And what do they think the role of a recruiter is? I know I have told you a little bit about what recruiters do, but what is it you think that recruiters do? And what type of role do you think a recruiter plays? And I am sure you have all heard this, they want to help people. When I hear people say, “I want to help people,” I wait till they are done talking.

But I will say, “This is not a monastery. People we are working with tend to make \$75,000 to \$300,000 a year and they tend to be happily employed. And we take them from one opportunity that they are in, where they might be less than satisfied, and we put them in an opportunity where hopefully, they are wildly satisfied. And we serve them, we serve the economy, we serve our client by doing that. But, we are not going to the Unemployment office.

I have had people think that we go to the Unemployment office, pull out all these unemployed people and act as more of an agency, a Federal agency of placing people. And my experience with those people, the ones that really, really want to help is they do not do well in this job. This is not meeting the higher cause, from a standpoint of their career. Or they think this is an HR role, where you probably go onto Monster or Career Builder, Hot Jobs and all those other sites, pull off resumes when your clients have openings and place those people. I want to hear some at least minor perception of some kind of sales role that this is.

Work ethic, a great question for work ethic is, “Describe a typical day in your last job, from the time you got in to the time you left, what happened, what were you responsible for?” Now, I am not purposely asking about work ethic, but you will be surprised. I remember with one person who worked virtually, he was in his mid to late 30’s. He said, “Well, you know, I put my kid on the bus at 8:00. I go back, I have a home gym, I do a personal workout. By 9:30, quarter to 10:00, I am checking my e-mails and I am on my way and I am on the road or I am into my job.” What he is basically telling me that his day started around 10:00 A.M., his workday, anyway.

You will be surprised when they talk about different things they do, projects. And I tell them to really get down to a level of detail, take me even through half hour blocks. They can, but they tend not to when you get that specific, and make things up. If you make it too vague, they will talk about overall things they are responsible for. But, I really want to know what a typical day is like. You will uncover a lot of work ethic things in there that come out.

“If I called somebody at your last job, how would they describe you?” And this is an old market research question, basically you will get how they really think of themselves. Most people are too vain to describe that. But, you will also tend to get more of the flaws, as well as the things that are really well. And if I called somebody else at the company before that, again, I am testing for consistency. Those are the three areas that I find anyway the most predictive on future success of an account executive. None of them are 100 percent.

I think we keep maybe one out of two and again, we start a lot of the people in the marketing coordinator and project coordinator role. When I say one out of two, it is probably eight, nine months or longer. And I do not think it is the weeding out process because that is still a crapshoot. I think it is in the expectation process, in the interview process and in the process of bringing them on board where the greatest success with any one of you will lie.

Now after I go through all those questions, I am going to reveal more detail about our opportunity and the position. Now I get into a little bit more of the how because now, they can not cheat. I have gotten a pretty good picture of who they are. The big one is our approach versus other recruiters. And I talk about – I am not going to go over it again – but what we talked about in the first module, different roles recruiters can play as part of your vision, the marketing coordinator role, recruiting coordinator role, development to account executive. And I talk about that as a differentiator, in that most search firms bring on business development people and teach them the whole business. I say, “We have got a defined career path and here is where it starts, here is where it evolves, here is where it goes.”

And even if you bring people on and you still want to bring people on in the traditional business development role, really go out and define how they are going to start and how their role’s going to change as they develop, as recruiters, because we all know, you are not doing the same thing month one through month three that you are doing year three through year five. So, even if you plan on having them be kind of a sole unit business developer that you are not going to add people onto, describe the evolution of the role as a career path. Here is how you are going to evolve in your career.

Most professionals are not looking for jobs. They are looking for a career. And I think the weakness a lot of us have, as owners, is we do not make recruiting as much of a career as we just talked about, is a way to make a ton of money and a way that you do not have to travel a lot and can be home every night.

Once I talk about our approach and the career path – oh, and actually, one other thing, I talk about how we approach the marketplace differently. And one thing I always tell people is there is good news and bad news about the executive recruiting industry. The bad news is, in my opinion, 75 percent or more of the people in our industry are really ill-equipped, ill-trained or really do not care. They are just in a mode of kind of, “Want to buy a pig?” They are not consultative. That doesn’t apply to the people on this call because people that invest in training tend not to be this way. But, a lot of the people working out of their basement have not made an investment in themselves. They are just working a pure get on the phone, make placements type of role.

But, I also balance it out with, “The 25 percent of the people in the industry that are pretty good, it doesn’t take you long, as a new recruiter, to cross that bridge in their mind if you have a good approach from when you start.” And we will get into that in module 4, is kind of what that approach can look like, so they do not sound like they are brand new. So, I tell people, “It doesn’t take a lot to distinguish yourself as being a better recruiter than the average recruiter.

Then, I get into the misery of the ramp up. And I think if you do not do this, this is one of the reasons you kind of have higher turnover. We paint a picture of this panacea of earnings and 72-degree work environment with this endless pot of coffee that they can drink from all day. They are home at 5:30 and at their kids’ dance and baseball games. But, I go into probably 10 minutes or so of really what to expect if you were here, if this is something that we come to terms on.

I will say, “Here is what happens. For whatever reason, in our office, your first deal is going to look like it is ready to close. You are going to have a client who wants your candidate, a candidate who really wants the opportunity. And it is going to blow up.” And this is going to be after a month, two months of endless minutiae-based phone calls, where you are leaving a ton of voice mails. And you are going to be wildly frustrated. And that first deal’s going to blow up and you are going to doubt your decision to have joined the firm, and chosen this career.”

When you start, typical new recruiters making 75 to 120 calls a day, again, they are leaving a lot of voice mails, they are getting one in eight, one in nine call back. You guys know what it is, so I am not going to keep going into it, but I go into that level of detail really in explaining here is what’s going to happen. “And then, you are going to tend, Mr. or Ms. Prospect to prejudge this opportunity somewhere between week four and week 12, even to week 20.”

I know, myself, I opened in 1990. We went into recession almost immediately after. And I remember with a few friends of mine that we were newer offices. We did get together, we were in business less than a year, six months, we got together for a dinner in New York, kind of a little mini mastermind group, and somebody telling me, “Well, I had a guy quit for these reasons or whatever.” And they look at me straight in the eye, he goes, “If it was not ours, wouldn’t we quit, too?” Very few people have a thrilling ride those first few months. And I think if you are really intellectually honest with people and they join and then, they start experiencing that, what they are saying to themselves and some have even said to me, “This is exactly where I am supposed to be right now.”

To get these rewards, there is a price to be paid. And for those that do not want to pay the price, I am very comfortable with them disqualifying themselves and not pursuing a second interview. But, when they are struggling, you can kind of either put your arm around them physically or virtually and you can say, “Look, remember during the interview, we talked about that first deal blowing up. It just happened. Remember I told you that kind of happens? Remember we talked about all the frustrations? This is just par for the course. Once you are through this, the price has been paid.”

Now, right here is the beginning of really where you begin to manage expectations, and

notice how I combined, I went into the vision, I interviewed them a little bit. And then, I combined it with the price to be paid. So, you have two counterweights. Hopefully, the vision is stronger than the price to be paid, but you do not get this opportunity without a cost. And I think most people are smart enough that if it is too good to be true, it probably is, so I make it not too good to be true.

Setting this definition of success, what a day looks like begins the groundwork of your successful on boarding program because you are going to be able to bring up the interviews, the conversations you had in the interview. Now, I go from this raw, horrible, wretched career that nobody should consider and I flip it, and this is where I begin to create certainty because in this business, I fully believe, and ever since I have done it this way, it has been that this business is 100 percent predictable.

Now, when things get economically soft, it is predictable that our business and most industries also go soft. It means the numbers go up a little bit. You can measure that. There is always been openings, you can always make placements. There is been people that have thrived in recessions. There is been people that have gone out of business. My experience with anyone that is truly executed, really knew what their numbers were and what they need it to be, never failed, not only in this business, but with people I know from other offices. Revenues might go down a bit, but they have never gone down to failure rates. I shouldn't say never, rarely.

So, I am creating certainty here, success is predictable. And I talk to them about placements are a function of first time interviews and job orders. These things are functions of how many presentations you make, which are a function of how many times you pick up the phone and make an outbound call.

I also explain the concept that a placement is an emotional nightmare, and that you can not make placements. I take away the one thing most owners want to get their people focused on, which is making placements. We can influence placements, we can increase the likelihood of placements, but we do not make placements. Placement is ultimately the decision of two people that are not you because your clients do not say, "OK, your short list before, you pick the one I should hire," and your candidates do not say, "OK, you send me the four opportunities, you pick the place I want to go." We do not make placements. We enhance the likelihood of making placements.

And I explain this in the interview process because here is what I see new hires. They get married to this wonderful new search that they have got or this wonderful new candidate and they assume placement. And we all know all the reasons that can blow up. I am not going to get into that. This is again going back to setting expectations and creating certainty, the only thing I know is if I can get them arranging interviews consistently every week that they are going to make placements. I do not know which ones. And with a new hire, depending on the desk, it can be anywhere from one and seven and one and 15. And I will know that, based on the industry that they work here in.

But, again, I am going to walk them through all the steps and tell them that this business is mathematically simple. I am going to teach them the art, you, Mr. Candidate, if we come to an agreement to work together, you need to execute on the math part, which is

simple addition, numbers on top of numbers. And they are defined daily and they are defined weekly. And Mr. Candidate, I know exactly what they are. And I tell people the story. It is not even a story, I tell people it is fact, in the 19 or so years I have been in the business, I have hired over 100 people. I have only hired one that failed that did exactly what I told him to do on the numbers. He wouldn't modify his technique. He was pure want to buy a pig mode. Was not inquisitive, did not develop stories, did not develop questions, did not really probe well.

But, everyone I have had to get rid of for weak performance was because of weak execution on what I knew they needed to do to be successful. And just even a couple weeks ago, we got rid of somebody, walked them through this whole thing I am going to take you through on the interview process, gaining their commitment. And passively aggressive on not executing on the daily numbers.

In my mind, I know that person was testing me. Our goal for them was 15 marketing presentations a day. We brought them on as kind of a marketing coordinator role. They were doing nine to 12, leaving at 5:15. We had a couple of conversations with the fact that that was not acceptable. She gave me all the reasons, which I could predict what they are, as why she could not do it. So, I finally let her go.

Once you accept below – and the numbers you give should be highly achievable, by the way. Mine are not stretch numbers. If they are not going to hit that, they do not belong there because it crumbles your whole culture if you want to build a scalable enterprise. And especially in a softer economy, it is more imperative. You can not get away anymore with weak execution and high billings. In a softer economy, we could get into an intellectual argument why you could. I think over the next 12 to 18 months when you are bringing people on and I still plan on bringing people on board, I recommend you do, but do it with a model where you have defined expectations, based on the metrics in your industry.

I kind of close this section with if you come on board, what I expect from a new hire is I expect you to shave your head and hand out flowers at the airport. I have no time or energy to renegotiate something that I have been working with and really refined over the last 20 years, to the point that I know it works. And I do not care that you need to research, I do not care that you want to do more homework. You can do that anywhere outside of the hours. I do not care when you do it, actually, as long as you get your 15 a day. So, if you are going to come on board, I just need to know that I am not open to excuses, that you are coming on here because we are experts, we are going to mentor you in a role, where you can have a phenomenal lifestyle, phenomenal earnings.

And part of our story, by the way, which is absolutely true, anyone that is come on and executed within [tape cuts out] few months, had a new car and a new house as a result of this job. And I can have them walk up and I have them talk to those people. And those are all people that shave their head and handed out flowers at the airport. And the nice thing that they say is, "Look, Mike knows what he is doing; we know what we are doing here. If you want to be successful, just do what we tell you to do." And the key is if you are not exactly sure what that is metrics-wise, at least start making educated guesses.

This is the point where I also bring up compensation. And you can not be ashamed of it. Again, since most people I am hiring have never been recruiters, I have described this position as an apprenticeship to a six-figure career. And it is highly leveraged to the up

side. And it is got a base salary of \$25,000. And I go through what our comp plan is. And then, I also gave you some options in our last module on how I can tack on a draw, based on execution of activity if I am really comfortable with the person and they really need a little bit more than 25 grand. I never give away more than 25 grand without their execution on the other side.

And again, one more commentary, I do not offer a draw. In effect, my salary is a draw. But just my experience, when I changed the term from draw to salary, my acceptance rate went up, my objections went down, my life got a lot easier, and the amount out of my pocket did not change at all.

I also explain to them kind of one on one, I am sure a lot of you guys do this, too, is it will be three to five months before they see commissions and are they prepared for that? And a lot of people are going to whine, bitch and moan that that is not a lot of money, and it is not. I say, "No one's ever been attracted by wow, what a great \$25,000 salary." But there is too much risk. And I tell people, I am very honest with them, I will say, "One out of two make it. I can not afford to pay 50, 60, 70 grand, as sincere as you say you are and then, you come in and you do not execute because I do not care how bright, how intelligent, how sales-oriented you are, if I tell you you need 15 presentations a day and you are doing seven, I am going to lose a ton of money on you."

So, that is why I have the extra draw in place if someone needs it, based on execution because I know if they are getting interviews every week at the rate I prescribed and I put that draw program up on the site, you can pull it off, that is going to lead to placements. So, it is only a small risk.

That kind of brings me to the end of the first interview. My first interview close. Ask them if they have any questions. What I do is I tell them there is only so much you and I could have chatted about over this hour, 75 minutes, and that is how long my first interview typically goes. It used to go a lot longer. Huge mistake. I used to over explain the job. Huge mistake. Actually, when I over explained the job, I exceeded their answers. They kind of fed back to me what I wanted to hear.

But, I tell them, "It is very natural, you are going to walk out of this office and you are going to get in your car and drive home. You are going to talk to your significant other, family members, whatever, and you are going to think, oh, I forgot to ask about . . . Write all those things down. If you choose to go forward with this, I will answer all those questions in our next meeting. What I want you to do Bob, Mary, whoever, is I want you to go home, I want you to digest what you have heard because you have heard a lot of things. You have heard a lot of great reasons this is an opportunity. You have also heard about the price to be paid. And I want you to think about that. If this is something you are interested in, I want you to call me before 4:00 tomorrow to set up the next step, and we will go from there."

I make it 24 hours. And do they call me by 4:00? I have never had anyone not call by 4:00 that did not just never call. You will think you have had this person that there was great chemistry, you both hit it off, whatever, they never call. You know what? Congratulate yourself. In another scenario, you may have brought them on and you

would have had two or three months of a headache.

But my experience is most people will call by noon. I like that. They do not want to call right at 9:00. They do not want to seem over-eager, but they call like 10:00, 10:30, and they say they thought about it, they talked to their significant other, whoever they wanted to talk about, and they want to move forward to the next step, schedule that interview.

Again, in the interview process, do not get hung up on screening out for all these predictive behaviors that would lead somebody out of role. In those areas that we talked about, initiative and work ethic, one thing I also look for when they walk me through their career a little bit is do they have – which actually, I am jumping ahead because that is part of the second interview, I really take them to their career a little bit. There are a lot of excuses why they change jobs and it was always somebody else's fault. That is kind of a knock out factor for me. Other than that, I am not too concerned about screening people out because I know if I properly set expectations and get someone to commit to executing, my chances of them being successful are pretty good.

The last thing, on their way out, I have an information package. We talked about this in the last couple modules. A couple articles on the recruiting industry, some of the articles on demographics of the workforce, kind of a one-page little history background on our firm and who we are and some of our successes. And I give them that on the way out in a folder.

When I bring them back for the second interview, first thing I ask them is I go into their questions. If they do not have any prepared questions, they are dead, that is it. I make it a 15-minute courtesy interview and I excuse them. There is no way in heck you can go through in 20, 25 minutes, enough information to talk about an opportunity, executive search to answer all of somebody's questions. I really like it if they open up a leather portfolio or they have a notebook and they go, "Yeah, I have written down a few," and they have got a page full of them.

What that tells me is somebody's taken this process real, real seriously because a lot of people, especially if they are unemployed, will try recruiting. Hey, it is worth a shot. I can always quit. If it doesn't work out, I can always quit. And they enter the profession with kind of a back door unlocked. I like the people that they have demonstrated that they are prepared because again, all of these activities are predictive in the future, too. If they are prepared for this, will they be prepared to present a candidate, will they get prepared for a good close? So, if they have no questions, that tells me next to no intellectual curiosity about what they are going to do for a living. And that is a huge knock out factor.

The other one is I will ask them how they found the information in the package. "Out of all the articles that were in that information package, which one did you find most interesting and why?" That is my test, did they read anything? And again, what is the quality of the questions they are asking. And by the way, when I give them the information package, do not say, "I am going to ask you about this." Again, we are talking about six or seven pages of printed information and three days to read it.

I do not know, if I am that person, I am going to devour that. Not only that, I am probably going to go on the Internet, I am going to start researching. If it is something I have never done, I am going to be all over it. If they did not take time to just read one of those articles and if they say, “I really did not have time, I did not get to it,” knock out factor number two. Again, how serious can they be? These are areas where you are probably seeing the tip of the iceberg.

Then, the questions I get into the second interview, I get a little bit deeper. I ask them about where they failed in their career or where they have regrets. Now, a lot of people, they are going to say things like, “Well, I have learned from every failure, so none of them are really regrets.” “I understand, but looking back, hindsight being 20/20, what would you have done differently?” The more intellectually honest people will have a few good stories here. And that is the other thing, when they are talking, are they engaging? Are their stories interesting? Is the way they talk interesting? This is how your candidates and clients are going to also perceive them.

So, as much as I am looking for what they are going to say, I am also looking for how they say it. I also then, flip into what successes they are most proud of. And what exactly – the key word here, exactly – did they do to get those successes? And I am going to dig there because I want to avoid theoretical, well, you know, if they were in sales, it is a numbers game and they made a bunch of calls. Well, how many calls did it take you to get a proposal? How many proposals did it take you to make a sale? What was your average? Do they know this stuff? Because all failures as salespeople know what it takes to be a successful salesperson. They know what the formula is. They just choose not to execute on it.

So, I want specific examples. If they talk about developing an account or accounts, I will ask them what level they worked at. I might even make up, “Oh, I know some people over there. Who was the guy you talked to?” Do they have a name in that company that they are particularly proud of? Does that come out or they can not remember it? So, if that was a key account, they can not remember who they were selling to? Again, another little test and are they being sincere with you?

Then I ask them based on what they heard in the first interview, what could prevent them from being successful here? That is a huge question. Again, you get a degree of intellectual honesty, “Hey, based on what I heard, I was stubborn and I did not execute the way I was told.” That is what I want to hear. Basically the only thing that could happen that could prevent me from being successful is my own lack of execution, which I do not plan on doing. I do not want them to point to outside factors, the economy or things like that because even in a soft economy, it is a matter of execution. It is a matter of more execution, but it is a matter of execution.

And are all these answers and successes and failures and opportunities that they are seeing, are these in alignment with what you heard in the first interview and what you heard on that first phone conversation? And one question I also like to ask, “What brought you back?” I want to hear what that motivation was, what specific aspects of the career brought them back. And then, based on that, “What would that do for you if you were able to achieve it?” Do they have a vision for themselves? Does this tie in with a

higher purpose for them or is it just about the money and they really do not know that much? Are there other elements of how this progressed as a career that ties in?

These types of things are not knock out factors, but the more of this you have, the more likely it is you have got somebody that is going to be manageable, that is going to execute when you get to the point of setting expectations. And then, I say, "Bob, Mary, I understand there is only so much I have told you in the last couple conversations, but what do you think it is going to take to be successful?" Here is what I want to see. Again, this is the second interview because I did not go over this again in the second interview. This is what I went over in the first interview. But, I am asking about it a few days later. And I want to see how well they paid attention. How much detail do they come back with? And is it in alignment with what I told them?

Now here is where I kind of go through their career. I do through this real quick. It is probably the least important part of my interview. A lot of the things are not as relevant into what we do. It is mostly initiative, work ethic and things like that and their ability to talk. But again, that is where I go back to describe. I will go through each of those positions, I will go back, maybe describe a typical day, what was your interface with your manager? I like when someone says, "My manager was two states away. Sometimes, there would be a couple days, I might not even talk to him, but I was pretty clear on my role. The more I got along, the more he trusted me, and I was able to execute without it."

The more distance, not geographically, but number of touches, number of interactions with somebody that managed them and they had a successful career, the more likely they are going to take it upon themselves to be successful with you. And again, that other thing when I go through their career, is there job after job after job, an excuse why it did not work out? They were terminated because of this or their manager did not get it or they did not get a lot of support? Because I have got to tell you right now, three or four months from right now, that is when they are interviewing somewhere else while they are still working for you. That is what they are going to be telling the next person.

Then, a big part of our second interview is we have them meet with a senior team member. I tell them this in the first interview, too. I say, "One of the things when you come back, I am going to give you the opportunity to talk to somebody who's been here for a while, who's seen people that have made it and seen people, quite frankly, that did not make it. And it is purely for your benefit, so prepare some questions for them. I won't be in the room. This is, again, purely for your benefit."

So, it is not positioned as an interview. And that is very important. This goes along that line of getting to know them as a human being. And is the person that was in your office also the person that goes into the conference room with one of your people? I do have that senior person kind of talk a little bit about what their history is, what they have done, but they quickly go to, "What questions do you have for me?"

And I like the ones that test me, meaning, is what I told them true? I am kind of that old trust but verify, so I do not mind them at all. They do not know me, they have only had two meetings with me. Are they challenging what I told them? Are they challenging what I told them about what it took to be successful? Are they challenging what I told them about the misery of the ramp?

I have had people that would sit there in front of me and they have actually said this in front of my senior team members, they will say, “OK, I know Mike said it takes 15 presentations or like 100 calls, whatever, when you are new. You really do not have to make that many calls, do you?” I have had a handful of people in the last few years say that. You know what? Phenomenally revealing. I have never hired any of them. They are the people that are going to try to negotiate everything with you. So, they will kind of sit there, smile and nod in your face and then, do something different behind your back.

I do not have these meetings to knock out a lot of people. One, they are highly beneficial. They increase the level of certainty within the candidate. They are mostly for the candidate’s benefit. We do, from time to time, find candidates that are out of alignment in what they told us and what they told my recruiter. And if they are out of alignment, I can not really trust anything they have told me, especially if they are greatly out of alignment. I do not mind minorly. If they were really prepared for that meeting, though, and they were going to have it again, huge pluses for moving them forward.

Right at the end of that – and again, my recruiters are programmed to also paint, “Here is what I had to do to be successful.” And they get down to their level. “Here is what I had to do to be successful.” I tell them all to tell them in bloody detail. After that, after they are in, they walk back to my office, do they try to close me, even though I want to have one more step? I always tell them I need to huddle up with my team, but I ask them on the way out of that second interview, “What are your instincts? What’s your gut telling you right now?” after I have answered any of their questions. I am very curious as to what they are leaning to.

Some at that point, this is the point where some are, “I really want to work here, what do I have to do? I can give two weeks’ notice tomorrow and start two weeks from now.” That is happened a bunch of times. That is why if you do this right, the more unattractive you make this job, combined with the attractiveness of it, those two things in combination make this a wildly sexy position to have.

However, if we are on the fence with somebody, maybe there was a little disconnect between some of those meetings, whatever, one thing we have done, we probably do this with one in four, one in five people, if we are still on the fence, we have a one day phone test. We basically tell them, I call them back and I say, “I want to bring you back for one more step. We want to give you a feel for the business. We want to give you kind of a mini assignment to work here for one day. And if it doesn’t work out, we will pay you at the \$25,000 prorated rate for one day to come in and do this. And if you do come on board, we will just add it to your first paycheck.”

We give them kind of a mini training. If we are having them calling potential clients or potential candidates, we give them kind of some research questions, some mild things to get them engaged, some basic one on one questions. All we want to see is do they get people engaged? And when they hang up the phone, do they pick up and call them again? We give them a list of people to call. One time, I mistakenly printed out 300 and I did not have time to correct it. I had a guy do 300 calls in the day.

I was on the fence with this guy, and this kind of blew him into the place because I could

see him from my office, and he just called a bunch of people. We had him do a recruit assignment, a generic recruit assignment in a city we had openings. And he came in at 4:00 and said he had nobody left to call. I said, "I gave you 300 people." He goes, "Well, these are all the pages, right, Mike?" I go, "Yeah." He'd gone through them all. I go, "Well, I am not going to ask you do make any more." He came on board, he did not do 300 a day, but I never had a challenge keeping that guy over 120.

On the flip side, you will have people that'll sit there, and they will hyper analyze every call even though we do not turn on the computer. We give them a printed list. There is nothing to distract him. There is no research. They have questions in writing, and they have forms to fill out the answer. This is a good test for phone reluctance. And we tell them, "We understand you do not know a lot about what you are doing. That is why we are giving you these basic questions." Great test when you are on the fence. For us in the situations, in the one in five situations, we had to use it to push the person to either side of the fence, to the point where our suspicions were really highlighted, or they really rang the bell and we brought them on board.

So the goal here is not to qualify them, it is to see if they execute. And then, at the end of the day, we debrief them. And I kind of read what their expressions are. They can be tired, that is fine, but are they still genuinely enthusiastic and do they still want the position? Are they still asking for the job? Or are they asking for the job that they did not ask for in the previous one? If they are there for that third time and I am comfortable with them, I won't bring them back a fourth time. I will make them the offer there.

If I was comfortable with them after the second interview, again, I do tell them, I say, "Look, I need to huddle up with my team." I will tell them to call me back the next day between 10:00 and 5:00. So, I do it within 24 hours. I do not want them to lose that level of interest if they are very, very interested. And I tell them to call me tomorrow if they have any questions. If they call, I am going to be looking for a commitment and a decision, so I kind of begin setting the table for that.

But again, did they ask me for the job at that second interview? If they did, I say, "You know what? I want you to go home, and I want you to think about this some more." And it is another test, do they call you back the next day? Because in this business, there is so much follow-up, there is so much chasing we have to do with clients and candidates that this basic little hoop that I am making them jump through is chasing me for something for themselves. If they are not going to chase me for something for themselves, they are going to be less likely to be chasing things for somebody else, even it means a fee to them.

When I get them into the offer interview for the third and final interview, if they are still interested, I give them every opportunity to turn the offer down. I ask them if they realize what it is going to take to be successful. Basically, without boring you guys here, everything we just talked about. "You want this job, you understand what it is going to take?" "Yes." "Tell me what it is going to take. I want to hear that." "Mike, you said anywhere from 90 to 120 calls a day. I have to make 15 presentations. I can not argue with you. I am going to have to do it. You tell me when to do it."

Based on that, I say, “OK, so you want this job?” “Yes, I want it.” We will pick a start date. I want you to realize, and this is just closing like we close a candidate. It is one of the things I talked about in the preview call that we, as owners, do not tie this up as neatly as we can. After I give them every opportunity to turn it down, I say, “Well, OK, a lot of times in these situations, I do have a back-up person that I might want to hire.” And I say, “Well, if I call the back-up person and release them and you renege on your opportunity, you are going to set us way back. So, I need to know, I need your word of honor . . .” and that is the term I use, “. . . I need your word of honor if you accept this that you are here at 8:00 A.M. on whatever date we pick. Do I have your word?”

I do not want them to say, “Yes.” I want them to say, “Yes, you have my word.” There is something, I think, incredibly powerful, I think most of us were raised by our parents that your word is your bond. It doesn’t mean a lot with some people, but 90 percent of the population, in my opinion, when people say they give their word, it is the one thing they are going to cling to. Because I say, “OK, here is what’s going to happen, you are going to go, you are probably interviewing other places. I want you to call those places tonight and tell them you are off the market, tell them you have made a decision, your decision is final and irrevocable.”

I coach them on counter offers. You guys know that drill, so I am not going to take you through that drill. I train them, I take them through a counter offer drill just like I do with a candidate for one of our client assignments. And I nail them down. And again, it is kind of the speak now or forever hold your peace type of deal.

And then, lastly, you do not want to have zero communication with them between that point of time and the time they start, unless it is a couple days. If the person has to give notice, I always find reasons to call them at least once a week, not anything to bother them, but with an assignment we may have gotten in the office they are going to work on or with a couple websites I might want them to look at, a couple articles that I can e-mail them to read. I will call them and say, “I am sending you these articles. I want you to read these articles.” Sometimes, I have made photocopies of things I have seen out of the Fordyce letter, which are great technique articles, really appropriate for a new person.

I want to keep them engaged because the offer date to the start date is a bridge that sometimes collapses, especially if they get weak-kneed at work. I remember one of my first jobs, I resigned from a family-owned company. They treated me real well. It just was not the direction I wanted to go in. The day I resigned, I felt horrible, I felt guilty. I wondered if I made the right decision. And my immediate manager at my new company was away on vacation when I was made the offer by the person above her.

And when she came back, she called me, and it just happened to be within three or four hours of me resigning, feeling horrible, telling me how she had booked me in training, she was organizing my files, could I stop by to pick up some information she had for me that she wanted me to get a head start on on my first day? And at that point, I remember in my head, I left my old opportunity and joined that company mentally and finally.

So, my coaching to you on this is if you have somebody, especially if they are highly attractive, come up with a reason to have a five, ten-minute phone conversation with them,

have some reasons you can e-mail them a couple things and do not give it to them at that offer interview. Purposely hold it back and send it to them later. Keep them engaged. It is going to lessen the likelihood that they check out, “be a fall off.”

So, those are kind of the basic strategies of the interviewing process that we use that we have refined, and each one of those steps, I have refined a lot over the last 10 years. I am sure they are not perfect, but we have learned so much more implementing the stuff about what the real motives of our prospects are. I think we have given a lot of people in integrity, a lot of the reasons not to join our firm, saving us a lot of time, saving us a lot of aggravation and frankly, saving them from making the wrong decision.

I think also, people want a lot of things that they can not have and by talking about the downside as much as we do in this position and what it is going to take for the person that this job is going to be attracted to, we make it that much more attractive. I do not think that is a negative at all.

So, in summary, one, have a goal for each step of the process. I went through kind of the goal for each step. Goal of the first step was to get them to come to the second step. It was not to get an offer. And again, the goal of that first step, allow them to disqualify themselves after they hear it and allow themselves to qualify themselves. And, one, do you like this person? Are they verbal? So, have a goal for each step of the process.

Write out your interview process, number two.

Three, try to conduct as non-traditional interviews as possible, so you get them relaxed and really get to know them.

Fourth, sell your vision story, combined with a price to be paid and what the realistic expectations are.

And lastly, fifth, gain commitment and offer to stay in touch.

So, with that, that is the end of today’s call. E-mail me with any questions, info@therecruiteru.com, Module 3 question in the subject line. And that call’s going to take place at 10:00 A.M. on the 4th, 10:00 A.M. on the 4th, Eastern time, 9:00 A.M. Central time.

Thanks, guys, I appreciate you showing up again, and I will talk to you on Thursday.