

What makes a top recruiter? Simon Kent asks our Award winners from last year.

FROM GOOD TO GREAT

New Year is traditionally a time to look to make resolutions – generally aimed at making your life better and becoming a better person.

So given this, what can recruiters do to deliver an outstanding performance rather than just a good one? To provide some inspiration and offer some practical steps we asked some of the winners from last year's Global Recruiter Industry Awards – the individuals who caught our judge's attention for their personal performance – and some of the organisations who delivered over and above business as usual within the sector.

Recognised as Best Medium Recruitment Business in 2013, Amoria Bond's Abi Agyeman, Senior Internal Recruiter for UK and Munich, comments:

"Good recruiters are static whereas great ones are always moving on."

Naturally this doesn't mean great recruiters don't stay in one organisation, but that they're always finding new ideas, developing new skills and deploying new techniques.

"They have great internal focus and control," continues Agyeman, "they own their actions and have self belief. They confidently believe their actions have an effect on a situation rather than it simply being a result of the current economy or sector performance."

Motivation is obviously an important part of being a recruiter – being able to continue and push forward even in the tough times – and Agyeman also rates emotional intelligence: "the ability to walk in other people's shoes" – as a key factor in achieving great performance.

Training from the top

Naturally Amoria Bond play their part in generating and supporting excellence among their workers with a significant level of investment being made in training and development, but, argues Agyeman, the right raw materials need to be in place to start with: "Our CEO and Directors will train trainees in one on one situations and there are performance coaches throughout the business who are dedicated to developing people in the organisation, but it has to be your personality and attitude that leads you to pick up that training to start off."

The winner of Best Small Recruitment Business last year were IT Talent Solutions. Diarmaid Williams, London Manager, notes that while talent can be demonstrated through contribution to the bottom line it is not the only thing that makes a great recruiter: "Billing is important but being able to build – and retain – long term relationships with clients and candidates is what differentiates a great recruiter from a good one," he says. "Due to the nature of the industry, an unrelenting focus and high levels of work urgency are essential to contend with a market saturated with recruitment agencies."

"There are many elements of the role that can be taught but you can't teach determination, motivation and resilience," agrees Kevin Howes, IT Talent's Managing Director. "These are the fundamental traits of a great recruiter." However, while these traits may not be things that can be taught, they can



at least be encouraged, rewarded and incentivised. Diarmaid Williams lists incentives alongside good management and financial rewards as the means by which an employer can create the right environment in which a great recruiter can thrive. This is part of giving recruiters the 'resources' they need to be successful – the opportunity to build their own recruitment business: "they work to build their own market or patch and take full ownership over it," says Williams.

Not just the money

Chris Bell, General Manager for SkyBlue Canada also qualifies the importance of financial incentives with the need for recruiters to be motivated by something other than money. "Some of the best people come in with no ego, no preconception or big salary and commission demands," he says. "They're just someone with fire in their belly and they want to do it well." SkyBlue took The Global Recruiter's Best Large Recruitment Business Award last year and with 23 years experience of the industry under his belt, Bell notes that it can sometimes be a challenge to identify which individual will work out simply because recruiters know how to sell themselves at interviews. Cutting through the personal 'marketing' means demonstrating the will to deliver: "I think if a recruiter wants the opportunity they need to convince me that they can do it," he says. "If I was in front of a client I →

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would want to convince them that I'm the one who will deliver a contract for them – that's what our work is about. We can all go out and talk a good game to the client but the difference is actually delivering on that." Like Williams, Chris Bell emphasises the need for recruitment businesses to give their employees the necessary tools to be able to deliver the service required. This means offering the right environment for working, the right training and so on – basically ensuring the workplace culture supports what is required.

"You need good management," says Bell, "who work very closely with the team. We make sure everyone has regular focus meetings and ensure everyone stays on track.

"Whilst our recruiters work to set KPI's, we don't bash them over the head with them or set ridiculous targets," he continues "There is no point driving your team to speak to clients just to tick a box or achieve a stat. We prefer them to spend quality time talking to clients about their business, their market and actually get to know them, clients respect this and therefore don't see us as just sales people. I've always encouraged my team to run their desks as if it was their own business."

This means that wherever a recruiter sits within the organisation they take ownership and can identify their own motivations for success.

"Recruiters need to feel that they're in charge of their business," says Bell.

"They take full responsibility. However not everyone can work like this and some still need pushing in the right direction and a gentle reminder of why they're here. If they say that their clients are not recruiting or the market is dead then essentially they're talking themselves out of a job because that is what we do. Therefore you need to go out there and keep the business coming in."

Tony Vickers and Stephen Perkins came out top in The Global Recruiter Awards Best Permanent and Best Temporary Consultant respectively. Vickers is Director of Balance Recruitment while Stephen Perkins at the time was working for Orgtel. Both demonstrate the desire to do more in the industry – to succeed at the task in hand but also to move themselves forwards in terms of skills and reach.

Having been working at Matchtech in Portsmouth, Perkins made a conscious decision to move to London and try his skills in the capital. He was also keen to expand his recruiting talents to a 360 role, taking on client development as well as finding candidates. Not only did he take on this part of the job but he also rose to



management level, taking on responsibility for encouraging the work of other recruiters in the business.

The need for care

When finding candidates for clients he says: "The first thing I look for is if someone cares," he says. "If you do care about the job then you'll move heaven and earth to do it. If I send someone to do a job and they don't care about it that reflects badly on me."

Perkins describes SThree as one of the industry leaders in delivering training and it's clear he feels they supported him as his career progressed: "They're always there if I need help," he notes. Equally, Perkins is ready to learn from the fresh talent that comes into the business: "I learn more with every new person who arrives," he says. "Sometimes they're better sales people than me so I can learn new techniques."

"The overriding factor is really simple," argues Tony Vickers. "It's having an authentic compassion with the people you're in touch with, genuinely having an interest in helping people with their careers multiple times and making sure you take an interest in the people you're recruiting for." While Vickers believes there are some people who follow 'text book' approaches in what they do and essentially see the work as a business transaction, going further – becoming great – means being authentic in what you say and do.

"We're very clear with our consultants that they should take the time to get to know the people they're dealing with," he continues. "Remembering a candidate's birthday means something to them – you're not just meeting with clients and getting their business, there are small touches you can add to show you're genuine. It's nothing new or clever but it means being a little bit more personable rather than purely transactional."

As Vickers points out, recruitment is an overlooked skill – getting it right requires intuition and a personal approach. It can be done straight forwardly and according to rules but going further will always deliver better results.

"When we're hiring we're not looking to see who's billed the most or looking for a classic recruitment background," he explains. "The last two hires we've made have been from people who were working in accounting. We spoke to them about jobs in recruitment and as a business we are different in that we are quite laid back and have less of a sales emphasis. They were just right for us."

At the end of the day, recruiters are dealing with people's careers and as Vickers concludes: "People's careers are easily in the top five things in their lives. Therefore you need to handle them with care, due attention and empathy." ■

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