



## A scene from a movie?

OFFICE IN A LARGE COMPANY IN THE NORTHERN SUBURBS OF JOHANNESBURG  
LATE AFTERNOON

(TOM, a LINE MANAGER in the company, picks up the phone and hastily dials the number of NOSIPHO, the HR MANAGER of the company.)

TOM: Hi Nosipho! Can you perhaps help me? I need a business analyst for my team.

NOSIPHO: Certainly, Tom, no problem! Could we set up a meeting to discuss your requirements for the role?

TOM: I'd love to, Nosipho, if only I had some spare time on my hands. Isn't there a quicker way to do this? Surely by now you know what I'm looking for?

NOSIPHO: Well, I do have a BA role on the system. It may be a little outdated but I'm sure we can make it work.

TOM: You're a star, Nosipho! You always come through for me. Find me someone great, hey. Oh, yes, and the project is starting next month, so please set up interviews ASAP. Try not to use agencies 'cos I don't want to blow my budget.

TEN WORKING DAYS LATER

NOSIPHO'S OFFICE

MID MORNING

(NOSIPHO is holding her telephone handset to her ear.)

NOSIPHO: Morning, Tom ... I've got some feedback for you on that BA role ... I've been through the internal applications. Sho! There were over 200, but I have narrowed them down to five. I've sent you an email and attached the CVs. Please look through them and get back to me so I can set up interviews.

TOM: Fantastic work, Nosipho! I'll get back to you ASAP.

TWO WEEKS LATER

NOSIPHO'S OFFICE

MORNING

NOSIPHO: Hi Tom! Just checking that I'm on the right track with your vacant position. I don't mean to pressure you but I'm concerned that we may not deliver the resource you require on time.

TOM: So sorry ... Don't know where to turn. Got so many things on the go. I'll get back to you as soon as I have a moment.

ONE WEEK LATER

(TOM is on the phone to NOSIPHO.)

TOM: Nosipho, please come and see me when you have a moment. You've missed the spec totally! I am really puzzled as to how you think these people are IT BAs when they have done nothing but process mapping! None of the candidates you submitted for review possess any technical know-how, let alone any SDLC knowledge which you should know by now is a non-negotiable for me. I cannot believe how much time you have taken and we are nowhere. Why did you not tell me you were unsure of what I was looking for? This is a real set back! Now I'll have to find someone myself.

(TOM puts down the phone and looks at VUSI across the desk.)

TOM: I might as well do the recruitment myself around here. HR is useless. How are we supposed to deliver when our recruiters don't even know what a damn BA does? I'm screwed on this project, I need a resource urgently, bud. Don't you know someone for me? Please, man ...

Screenplay: Elvira Riccardi

Where did it all go wrong? At the very beginning. "Back to basics" recruitment is a process like anything else. The foundation phase is crucial!

# Get back to basics

Never forget that recruitment is about human beings.

By Elvira Riccardi

While technology and forward thinking are indeed key, recruitment is ultimately about human beings. This massive differentiator from any other process or product in our business makes what we offer unpredictable – regardless of how exceptionally skilled we are at sourcing and interviewing, or how many cutting-edge online tools we have mastered. Mitigating the risk that comes with dealing with such an unpredictable commodity requires experience, know-how, following a very simple set of rules and – the key factor – human interaction. At the end of the day, recruiting is a practice, a profession, and the only way to do it is by following the basic processes or, as I call it, the Recipe, because if it's done correctly it never flops!

Here, then, are my top 10 fail-safe recruiting tips:

- 1 Do not use standardised job specs.** You are setting yourself up to fail if you do. Consult with your client/line manager – ask in-depth and relevant questions to ascertain his/her non-negotiables, and draft an accurate job spec.
- 2 Know your line manager.** Include the line manager's name in the job spec with a write-up on his/her prowess – specifically where he/she requires highly specialised skill. Candidates like to know who will be mentoring them.
- 3 What's it worth?** Establish elasticity around money upfront, both from the company and the candidate.
- 4 Strategise effectively around advertising.** Set time aside to do this and take into consideration population demographics, accessibility of candidates in terms of technology, influx of advert response, the chances of success in placing from your internal talent pool and whether you will need a specialist recruiter for the role.
- 5 Be brand responsible.** Acknowledge all applications. This will make your life as a recruiter so much easier in the long term and should form part of a holistic view to position your organisation as an employer of choice.
- 6 Telephonic screening is still the most effective way of shortlisting.** Even if you are using an agency, telephonically screen candidates prior to interviewing them. You will find that you can clear up many essential questions with a short telephone call and you will be amazed at how your shortlist shrinks.
- 7 Too busy to prepare = busy to fail.** Interview preparation? You laugh ... like, who doesn't prepare for interviews? Most of your line managers, that's who! While qualifying your spec, ask the busy line manager for five CV-specific questions that he/she would like to ask in the interview, "so that we are on the same page and so that I don't prepare the same questions". This will ensure that your line manager has given some thought to the interview prior to its taking place.
- 8 Lock down the candidate.** Make sure you understand the candidate's HOT BUTTON, that is, what is his key motivator for joining your company? Can you satisfy that now and in the future? If your answer is, "No," walk away at this point – you WILL be making a bad hire – even if you succeed in closing the initial deal, you will not retain the candidate.
- 9 Perform two telephonic references.** Always check employment dates and direct reports with HR when conducting references. Ask specific CV related questions – the same targeted selection questions you asked the candidate in the interview so that you can compare answers.
- 10 Skill is essential, but never forget soft skills.** The right attitude coupled with skill is a winning combination! In today's skill-short economy, one feels one should make exceptions for highly skilled candidates with impressive CVs. Beware though. I have seen clients bend over backwards for candidates, rescheduling interviews or assessments. A candidate's failure to return phone calls is an indication of attitude and a value system that should not be ignored because of skill. A review of your analytics will likely prove that such compromises resulted in expensive bad hires in the past.

Get back to basics and get interview training for yourself and your line managers. ■

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