



‘Simon Says’

Issue 4 – April 2013



Edward George

Did you know...

Almost three out of four organisations report difficulties attracting critically-skilled employees, and more than half report difficulties retaining them. In 2013, with increasing global competition and unprecedented access to potential candidates, the stakes for ‘winning’ key executive talent have never been higher. Interestingly, employers often pass up on opportunities to attract and retain high-value employees simply because they don’t take the time to identify and offer the rewards most important to them.

Want to attract quality executive candidates? Here’s the Ugly Truth... Don’t tell them how good the company is; tell them how bad it is!

“High calibre executive candidates want to make a difference...make sure that the Ugly Truths you disclose are in areas that play to their strengths and over which they can have direct impact and influence.”

High calibre executive candidates want to make a difference. They are high achievers who are looking for a challenge in which they can use their strengths to make a big impact. Candidates who are ambitious, take pride in their work and see themselves as making a difference are not nearly as interested as you might think in hearing how swimmingly things are going in your company. They want to hear that operationally the company is underperforming, that systems are breaking down, morale is low and strategically there needs to be a big rethink.

The key is to make sure that the Ugly Truths you disclose are in areas that play to their strengths and over which they can have direct impact and influence. For example; the shortlist of candidates interested in your CFO role would be very pleased to hear that your company is fast outgrowing its finance system, which has meant the accounts team is stressed and consistently struggles to meet reporting deadlines. This gets a big tick as it points to where things can be improved and is directly within the sphere of influence of the candidate’s future role. Don’t make the mistake of bringing up issues that they cannot affect.

Ugly Truth avoidance

Historically companies have been reluctant to be candid and transparent with candidates about aspects of the business which are not operating to their fullest potential. Ugly Truth avoidance is often perpetuated by the HR Department whose role is to produce copious amounts of material relating to being an employer of choice and brochures on employee benefits. I am not denying that these activities are necessary and noble pursuits worthy of HR’s attention, however there is no doubting that they are counterintuitive in relation to what elite candidates actually find motivating and attractive.

Principles for success

So based on these slightly offbeat revelations, here are my four principles for handling the Ugly Truth in an interview and presenting a career opportunity that will attract your ideal candidate:

1. A ‘broken’ company attracts candidates who want to make an impact. Don’t be frightened to point them out.
2. Make sure your Ugly Truths are aligned directly with the candidate’s strengths.
3. Your Ugly Truths need to sit squarely in the candidate’s sphere of influence.
4. When describing your Ugly Truths, be frank and hard on the business issues. Don’t attack individuals, just the problems.

Perhaps of most importance is that executive candidates are given an absolutely authentic picture as to why the company or department is positioned where it is and how the key stakeholders are 100% behind the change program that is required.

Honour your weaknesses

It’s time to give an airing to the setbacks and honour those weak points we usually leave hidden in our corporate closets. Start discussing them frankly and honestly with the quality candidates you are trying to attract and watch how their interest and enthusiasm grows for the role. The ‘turn off’ is the new ‘turn on’ in the recruitment game for elite Executives.

Edward George provides comprehensive Human Resource Solutions specialising in recruitment and retention strategies, exit interviews and outplacement services. If you would like further information about any of our services, email us at perth@edwardgeorge.com.au or phone us on **9457 4566**.

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