

7 STEPS TO SUCCESS

Recruiting Great Accounting Talent

1 GREETINGS & INTRODUCTION

This is self-explanatory, say hello, introduce everyone and make yourselves comfortable. However, don't be late, be organised, be prepared and have your information and questions ready to go. With accounting talent thin on the ground, they (the applicants) are interviewing you as much as you are interviewing them, don't mess up their first impression of you by being late and/or disorganised, it does not bode well.



2 IT'S ALL ABOUT THEM (THE APPLICANT)

Applicants are generally a little nervous so help them settle into the flow of the interview by asking them to talk about something they are an expert in, themselves! Once the introductions are out of the way I always say *"Thank you for taking the time to speak to us today, of course, we'd love to hear all about you, then we'll tell you all about us and the role and finish up with any questions either of us might have, does that sound okay to you? Okay great, over to you, tell us the [applicant's name] story."*



Some applicants launch into reiterating their resume so ask them about their family, where they grew up, what mum & dad did, what they like to do in their spare time, what personal hobbies and interests they have to get a better understanding of who they are. When talking about their previous roles ask them what they loved or hated about them.

3 WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO THEM (THE APPLICANT)

This is where you find out what they want, you'll never know if you don't ask. Ask them what their dream job would be, what's important to them in an employer, professionally what do they want to achieve, what type of work do they enjoy, how they learn best, what does accomplishment feel like to them and most importantly what are they looking for in a role.



Take very careful note to the answers of these questions; if you ever did debating in school here's where you get the information from to bring it home when the time comes. Generally, there will be themes in the answers and the applicant will give you "a sneak peek" into what is important to them, recognition, client contact, support, professional development opportunities, more than compliance work, communication, feeling part of the team, having a say in the overall direction of client work etc. Note down what the applicant says, particularly if they repeat something or there's a prominent theme. In fact, before you even get into the interview, prepare what benefits you have to offer a potential employee. Align these benefits with these common themes so that you're all prepared to deliver them easily in Steps 4 & 5.

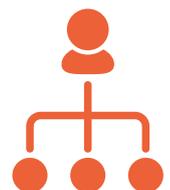
4 IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU (THE EMPLOYER AND THE ROLE)

The Employer

Now, accountants love information and the more detailed the better, so tell them about the firm, it's history, the profile of your clients, your vision, mission and values, why you do what you do, if you have it. And guess what you'll infuse your explanation with, yep you got it, any of things they said were important to them in an employer.

The Role

Same goes with the information and detail, keep it coming, be prepared to tell you applicant in depth what the role entails, who they will be working with both from a team perspective and a client perspective, what they will be doing and what's expected of them as an employee.



5 DELIVER WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO THEM (THE APPLICANT)

Step 4 & 5 go hand in hand, they're almost one step rather than two. As you're telling the applicant all about you and the role you want to be delivering what's important to them within this context.



Warning Will Robinson this is not a sell your own grandmother to get what you want type exercise accounting talent is scarce but not that scarce. I'm sure none of you would ever promise something that you don't already do or could not deliver. Don't ever confuse wanting to do something or knowing you should be doing something with actually doing it, take for example the promise of flexibility, I've not experienced many accounting firms that truly have flexible employment options, plenty say they are flexible, meaning they are nice people and will consider any reasonable employee request but flexible in the true sense of a modern day workplace, I'm not so sure, be very careful with this one.

6 QUESTIONS

Asking if your applicant has any questions is an important stage in the process, it will let you know if you've delivered enough information, bored them tears or completely won them over. And if you have more than one person sitting in on the interview you want to make sure everyone has had a chance to ask all the questions they want to as well. In this step you will also talk about the \$\$/salary if you haven't already.



I make a point of wrapping up this step with one of two questions, regardless of the applicant and what my initial thoughts of them are:

- » **Does this sound like an opportunity you'd like to take up?**
- » **What would it take to get you across the line and come work with us?**

7 NEXT STEPS

It's important to be clear and concise about what will happen from here on in once the applicant leaves interview and when they can expect to hear from you. Set these expectations up from the get-go, to avoid any confusion or embarrassment later, you might be conducting more interviews, following up on references etc.



One of the biggest issues I've found with accountants and recruitment is it takes way to long to make a decision and get back to an applicant. With great accounting talent being as limited as it is, don't waste time, plan interviews so they happen within 2-3 days of each other, be prepared have your systems and processes in place and forewarn any other decision makers that you will require a decision within 24-48hrs of your last interview.

I was given a great piece of advice very early on in my accountant recruiting career, a managing director of a large accounting firm I was working for at the time, said to me, "Lynda, you want them (the applicant) to leave the interview just bursting to work for you, so find out what they want and then give it to them!" I've never forgotten it and it's the best piece of recruitment advice ever.



Over the years of recruiting accountants I've taken this piece of advice, blended it with my knowledge of how to bring out the best in accountants, I've inspired and supported them to be the best they can be and mixed it with the experience of having conducted 100's of recruitment interviews to create my 7 Step to Success – Recruiting Great Accounting Talent. It's worked successfully for me over the years and I'm very happy to be sharing it with you.