

A Recruiter's Bucket List

You may have seen the movie. *The Bucket List* starred Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman as two aging men who meet in a hospital while each is dealing with the shock of learning they are terminally ill. They decide to devote their remaining time before they “kick the bucket” to experiencing a list of dreams—some modest, some not—that they had never found the time or the opportunity to realize while they were raising families and earning a living.

The movie is a poignant treatise on friendship in unlikely places, and perhaps more importantly, a powerful lesson about how best to live our lives (and our careers). It offers an admittedly old truism, but one worth remembering: we should never put our dreams off because we don't know how long we will have to see them come true.

With that thought in mind, I offer my bucket list for recruiters—the things we should strive to get to while we can. It's an abbreviated list, so is not meant to identify everything that we might hope to accomplish in the course of our careers. In addition, some of the goals may be beyond our reach—at least without some outside cooperation—while others are much more susceptible to our own efforts. However, all of the goals—be they large or small—are worthy aspirations. By reaching for them, we improve our experience as recruiters.

How should you read the list? Simply insert the following phrase in front of each item: “*At some point in my career—and the sooner, the better—I would like .to ...*”

1. Work for a CEO who gets it. We know they can say it—“Our employees are our most important asset” is the siren song of every CEO worth his or her salt in corporate America—what we seldom experience is one who does it. Indeed, the limit of what many executives seem willing to invest in their workforce (and the recruiting team that brings it in the door) is just that—verbal capital or what you and I call “hot air.” If they really believe they can't get by without great talent, they will have to open their wallets in a much bigger way. And those that do are the organizations for which we should seek to work.

2. Work with hiring managers who get it. Too many of today's managers think that it's still 1952 and there's an unlimited supply of top talent just salivating at the chance to work for them. They are too busy to write a decent requisition, get involved with sourcing candidates or learn how to prepare for and conduct an effective interview, but they always have enough time to wail about what they perceive to be inadequate recruiting support. If they want to see more high caliber applicants for their openings, however, they will have to get more involved in filling them. And those that do are the business partners to whom we should devote our best efforts.

3. Work with coworkers who get it. While recruiters are formally charged with acquiring talent for the organization, it is clearly in everybody's best interest to ensure that their coworkers are as capable as possible. Especially in these days and times, there's no better form of security than an organization brimming with high caliber workers. Which begs the question: why is it so difficult to get people involved in their organization's employee referral program? If our coworkers want to get more satisfaction and security out of their work, they will have to work

harder at searching out and selling top talent. And those who do are the employees we should celebrate and support.

4. Work with an applicant tracking system that gets it. Recruiters may be responsible for processing a lot of information, but that is by no means their most important accountability. In addition to acquiring top talent, they also have a fiduciary responsibility—they must ensure that they invest their employer’s money wisely. To do that, they need accurate data on the source of their applicants, and they rely on their ATS to get it. Unfortunately, however, the rudimentary technology offered by many ATS vendors is simply not up to the task. If these vendors want to help recruiters get smarter about where to spend their recruitment budget, they will have to upgrade their source identification capability. And those that do should be the vendors from which we buy our systems.

5. Work with applicants who get it. Unfortunately, a lot of applicants today think that the question we want them to answer is “What have they done?” And, of course, the insight for which we’re really looking is “What can they do?” For us? Right now and in the future? The fact that they’ve been in the workforce for twenty or thirty years doesn’t mean a thing if their skills and knowledge are that old, as well. If they want to get considered by us, therefore, they will have to bring themselves up-to-date. And those who do are the prospects we should pursue most aggressively.

The notion of a bucket list, I suppose, can be off-putting at first. It can seem ... well, a bit pessimistic. On the other hand, if we see it as our horizon, as the future toward which we would like to journey, then it is as hopeful an outlook as one can have. It affirms our ability to better our condition, to reach for the richest and fullest experience we can have in the one-third of our lives that we spend at work.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

Visit my blog at Weddles.com/WorkStrong

Peter Weddle is the author of over two dozen employment-related books, including *Recognizing Richard Rabbit*, a fable of self-discovery for working adults, and *Work Strong, Your Personal Career Fitness System*.

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