

## The Best Recruiters Use All of Their Brains

I've just finished writing a book called *Recognizing Richard Rabbit*. It's a fable for adults, a tale of forest animals who help a friend discover ... well, that's the secret of the book (which you can buy even before it arrives in bookstores by calling WEDDLE's at 317.598.9768).

Unlike traditional fables--*Who Moved My Cheese?*, for example—my story immerses the reader in two spheres of exploration. One, of course, is the fictional account of the fable, itself; the other is a self-interview that probes the same territory, but with nonfiction. In other words, *Recognizing Richard Rabbit* enables you to use both hemispheres of your brain—the analytical or reasoning capability that resides on the left side and the imagination or creative talent that lives on the right.

While the book is not about recruiting, I think its premise—that we are at our best when we tap both our reasoning and creative energies—is an important lesson for those of us in the field of talent acquisition. Given the current fascination with online sourcing techniques, I worry that we are in danger of losing that balance. Said another way, our success depends upon our ability to guard against being too left-sided in our work. We must be careful not to rely exclusively or even primarily on the analytical side of our brain in our efforts to meet our recruiting requirements.

What does that mean? Left-brain recruiting activity encompasses the logic of search strings and the efficiency of online contact management. It involves:

- Data mining within specific Web-sites as well as on the Web at large;
- Searching resume databases whether they are provided by research sites or job boards;
- Developing ever larger address books of names and contact information; and
- Compiling ever-larger databases of resumes from previous job applicants.

Such activity is important, to be sure, for it enables us to source prospects for our openings efficiently. However, there's nothing creative or intuitive about it. In Maslovian terms, left-brain activity is essential but insufficient for successful recruiting. We can be the best data miner on our team or have the biggest address book of contacts on the Web or build the largest database of resumes on the planet, and still be an also-ran in the War for the Best Talent.

What's missing? The right side of our brain, of course. The creative hemisphere that taps our imagination, inspiration and our ability to empathize with others. Only the right side of our brain enables us to take all of those names we uncover by data mining, all of those resumes we find by searching databases, all of those references to prospects we uncover on social and business networking sites and transform them into relationships. If the left side of our brain permits us to leverage the power of our computer for efficient sourcing, the right side of our brain gives us back our humanity so we can be effective recruiters. It puts people back in the center of our profession where they must be for us to be truly successful.

How does the right side of our brain do that? It provides our native ability:

- to build familiarity and trust with others, even those we would describe as passive;
- to identify and assess individual personalities as well as competencies, thereby ensuring a good fit as well as a filled requisition;
- to extend single connections into vibrant communities that serve as reliable pipelines of talent for our organizations; and
- to be effective while being efficient, moving beyond a simplistic supply chain perspective to a deeper, richer appreciation of the men and women with whom we interact.

Exercising those abilities transfers the focus of what we do from the medium to the message. It moves us from the mechanics of computerized sourcing to the people-centricity of computer-assisted recruiting. The right-side of our brain extends our reach beyond online databases and documents and virtual “introductions” to true engagement with candidates, for only that kind of interaction reveals the fine-grained distinctions among people. It enables us to see the people we source not as cogs at the end of a clever Boolean search string but as cognitive beings with whom we are intimately connected by the humanity we share.

Now, I realize that some will say that such high-minded phrases are way too esoteric for the daily routine of recruiters. They are, these critics will charge, much too ephemeral for the real world demands with which we are confronted in our work. And certainly my words are high-minded. In my view, however, that’s entirely appropriate. We recruiters work in a high-minded profession. We may not get the priority we deserve in the enterprise, but what we do draws on the noblest level of human endeavor. Day-in, day-out, we create the human capital which powers the organizations that employ us and we do so without any expectation that we will be advanced in our careers or even in our paycheck. Because that’s the other unique gift we draw from the right side of our brain ... it inspires us to reach for the best we can be. There’s not a technology on earth that can do that.

Does that mean we should ignore the left side of our brain? Absolutely not. Focusing exclusively on the creative side of what we do is just as potentially harmful to our recruiting success as focusing exclusively on the analytical side. Just as you can’t recruit top talent without building relationships with people, you can’t source strong prospects without conducting rigorous searches of databases and documents archived online. For that reason, the best in our profession tap every bit of their capacity—the logic and reasoning and the creativity and imagination—with which they were endowed. They use all of their brain.

Thanks for reading,  
Peter

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