

How to provide the employer with a good experience of talent acquisition

Case study with the Institute of Customer Service and the Institution of Civil Engineers



Susie Schofield

Susie Schofield writes: Our experience at FJWilson Talent Services (FJWTS) teaches us that talent companies need to retain a balance: they need to meet the needs of both candidates and customers (that is, the hiring managers).

Here we illustrate our approach for achieving this, using our work for the [Institute of Customer Service](#) (ICS) and the [Institution of Civil Engineers](#) (ICE) as case studies.

Earlier this year, we placed a candidate at ICS. Jo Causon, their CEO, kindly provided these comments on their experience of the process: ‘From start to finish the customer experience has been a good one. FJWTS took time to understand our brief and personalised the search to match The Institute’s needs, providing a timely service and one which ensured we achieved a positive result’.

We find the secret to providing a positive experience for customers is to build in quality at each stage of the process including, for example:

- the account management model
- the initial steps in a project
- the search method
- the role of the talent company as an intermediary between employer and candidates

The model

For each hiring manager or candidate we execute a two-person-contact approach. This means that candidates and clients can always speak to someone fully conversed with their case to speak to from the FJWTS team – regardless of holidays, meetings or unplanned absences.

We’re sensitive to the needs of our candidates: much of our contact time with them is held in out-of-office hours to fit in around their professional circumstances.



We respect our client confidentiality when we carry out search assignments. In highly sensitive searches, only our senior managers approach and interact with candidates to ensure the highest levels of discretion.

First steps with the search

Once FJWTS has been commissioned to carry out a search assignment, we quiz the hiring manager for what they are seeking – and, just as importantly, what they’re *not* seeking. We aim to get underneath the skin of an organisation to understand its culture, its teams, and its direction.

We ask hiring managers to think about the personality traits that they’re looking for to help ensure a good, long-term cultural fit with the organisation.

As Jo Causon advises, hiring managers ‘need to spend real time thinking about who they want to employ – it’s not just skills. We need to identify the attitudes, behaviour and desire and balance them against the skills set’.

Our clients typically enrich the recruitment process by selecting relevant psychometric assessment tools from FJWTS as part of the Search package. We’re able to map these assessment tools back into our client’s values and competency frameworks.

Our aim is to act as critical friends to our hiring managers: where we see a misalignment between skills being required for the purpose of the job, or a salary misalignment, we will say. We make sure that hiring organisations are clear about their purpose and relevance and what they’re trying to do in their recruitment.

Our approach to finding committed candidates

According to Emma Antrobus (North West Director at ICE), ‘At the first interview with Fiona, Fiona used her understanding of ICE to make sure that whoever she put forward would be a good fit – not just capable of doing the job.’



Emma Antrobus

Recruiting members of staff is one of the most important aspects of a business and it’s a process that can’t be rushed. Hiring a specialist recruitment consultancy to find these people is an investment well spent.



Ultimately, employers are seeking ‘someone committed to purpose and direction of their organisation – rather than someone to “do just a job”’: if you find that combination’, says

Jo, ‘you hit the perfect sweet spot. You need employees who go the extra mile because they intrinsically believe in what the organisation is doing...they feel the purpose and wish to deliver to it, they are not just self-orientated’.

At FJWTS we have a team of researchers who seek suitable candidates. We use our own candidate database, research on employers, individuals, publications, events, conferences, job boards, networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, as well as word-of-mouth recommendations.

At ICE we found Emma, the ultimately successful candidate for the North West Director post, by identifying her former line manager as a possible candidate in our initial search who then, because they had just accepted a new job, recommended and endorsed Emma’s candidacy for the role at the ICE.

How it works: an example

ICE engaged us on a retained basis where we searched the marketplace on their behalf for candidates for the Regional Director for the North West.

For this assignment, we chose not to advertise, but purely search. In three weeks, we approached 48 candidates (a typical number of approaches for such an assignment), submitted five candidates for consideration and ICE short-listed four.

All candidates were regarded as being high quality professionals, suitable for the post, and ICE were spoilt for choice.

Promoting clients and candidates to each other

‘Fiona told me a large amount about ICE. Everything she told me was spot-on. It saves a lot of time and effort. She cut straight to the chase giving me background information, what the key performance indicators were. Fiona knew ICE massively. She gives you confidence.’ Rob

Jo says that recruitment consultants ‘really need to sell the organisation to the candidate effectively – as well as being able to sell the candidate to the organisation.’



Our candidates interrogate us about hiring organisations and we answer all their questions. Fiona Wilson (MD of FJWTS) says, 'we consult effectively with our clients, are long-term specialists in the sector, and always do our homework for each and every assignment to make sure no one's time is wasted pursuing a non-starter'.

In addition to aiming to know our clients' businesses inside out, at FJWTS we champion the candidates we have shortlisted for our assignments. The corollary here is that we never put forward a candidate who we do not believe to be a good fit with your organisation; nor do we ever put pressure on a candidate accept a role because they have been selected.