

## **Why empathy is key in closing**

The search is finally over, and your organization's next star has been found. The interviews are done, HQ has given the green light and you are ready to make an offer. But then, out of the blue, your potential champion says one word, which ruins everything.

The candidate says no.

It is an interesting fact that in the executive search business, the product (the person being introduced and hopefully hired) can say “no”. In most sales transactions the product cannot refused to be purchased.

I hear many reasons why one candidate or another cannot join a given company. At times, it's like the boy who tells his teacher, “the dog ate my homework”. At the end of the day, people are ingenious at coming up with excuses but the real reason are always the same: The candidate, in those final stages of the deal, does not feel right about the company, position, the package, or his future co-workers.

Some clients do a fantastic job at putting their companies in the best possible position to securing top talent. While others are sloppy, arrogant and could not close a barn door.

The key is empathy, which is the number one characteristic of a great closer.

Whether it is a board member, head of a department or the 35-year-old product manager here are 14 points to remember:

1. People join companies for the people first, and product second. The salary also needs to be fair.
2. Show the candidate some love! We all want to join companies, which truly value us as people. Tell them: “We really like you and really want to hire you”.
3. Go the extra mile take them to dinner to close the deal. Make that personal call and show you are interested. Understand that this is a seller's market. If you are interested in this candidate, your competitors probably are too.
4. Be involved and don't simply leave in up to HR.  
(A few years ago, one my top candidates received an offer from Abbott; he also had an offer from Medtronic. The Abbott executive called the candidate directly on decision day and spent more than 30 minutes showing the love. This extra effort of this executive was enough to convince the candidate that Abbott was the best choice. Today he is a shining star at the company.
5. Act decisively and strike while the iron is hot. There is a limited window of excitement and peak interest during the interviewing process. Don't let it drag on for months.
6. Be creative! One client suggested we fax the offer directly to his house so the candidate's wife could see her husband's significant pay rise. This was the motivation needed for the candidate to face his fears and speak to his demanding boss. He joined the new company.
7. Do your own reference checks. There is a huge conflict of interest when only the search firm is doing the checking.

8. Do consider the family and the candidates living situation. Provide the necessary financial and emotional support.
9. Be culturally aware. Understand that if the candidate is company from a Japanese company, he/she may have certain fears and objections to joining an multi-national company. Spend time and energy to explain the differences, especially the benefits, such as performance bonuses, and retirement.
10. Be honest and open. If there are challenges in your organization be upfront.
11. Don't ask why the candidate is looking to move or make a change. If they are a strong candidate they are only looking to move to a superior company and product pipeline. We had one client nearly blow the candidate out of the water last year when he asked the 50-year-old executive "Why do you want to join XYZ Pharma?" He was treated like a college graduate in his first meeting. We had headhunted the candidate, he was not applying for a job per se.
12. Don't be arrogant. It is a seller's market, the candidate may not be aware that your company is the most wonderful on the planet. Sell the sizzle!
13. Don't low ball on the candidate's salary. Offer them at least the same or a 5% to 10% and in some cases 20% increase of their current base.
14. HR should keep track of the offer to acceptance ratio. The best companies close more than 80%.