

# Why Recruiters Love and Hate HR

by Liz Ryan

Let's be clear about one thing: I'm an HR person, and I've been one since Cyndi Lauper ruled the airwaves. I believe that hiring managers, candidates, HR people, and third-party recruiters have enormous gifts to offer one another.

Please stop that loud guffawing for just a moment and let me explain.

When I was an HR person, I could see that the hiring manager-recruiter tag-team dynamic was very important to both parties. Hiring managers joined the organizations I worked for, and they brought their Rolodexes with them—including trusted recruiter contacts from their previous employers. And they'd never wait more than two weeks before announcing "When I have a job opening, I always call Charlie Smith." That's usually when the trouble started.

Perhaps you can see how this sort of declaration would make an HR person nervous.

The HR person thinks, "Who the heck is Charlie Smith?" HR people tend to be control-oriented (not all are, but lots of them). They don't want to have to deal with the mysterious Charlie Smith just because the newest hiring manager on the team has a longstanding relationship with the guy.

HR people like to vet the recruiters their organizations partner with. They like to supervise the partnering process. They have a diabolical mechanism for doing this. They call it the *Approved Vendor list*. HR people love to make it difficult for their hiring managers' favorite search partners to end up on that list. What—you haven't been in business since LBJ occupied the White House? Off the list! You don't have several women, all known minorities, Vietnam veterans, and Capricorn left-handed Filipino dyslexics on your management team? What a shame. No commitment to diversity. Off the list!

HR people reject their hiring managers' favorite recruiters, and this makes the managers mad. It doesn't make the recruiters very happy, either. Those two confederates conspire to keep the HR person out of the loop. They get the recruiter onto the Approved list by calling the recruiter a stringer for another firm. They cook up all kinds of creative schemes. After all, they're only trying to do the right thing for the employer and the recruiter's impressive talent pool. Right?

It's a cliché, but it's true: people work best together when they set aside the political games and figure out where their bread is jointly buttered. I've gotten the hands-down, best-ever recruiting advice from the search folks I've worked with in my HR capacity, and learned from them that saying to my CFO, "Heck yes, this \$22k search fee is a good investment. Do you want the head of HR for the organization sourcing candidates all day long?" can be a very empowering thing to do.

When HR leaders and skilled third-party recruiters decide to work together, they pack a one-two punch that gives hiring managers and marketable candidates exactly what each group needs. The managers get top talent and a smooth process for getting that talent in the door. The candidates get trustworthy advocates on both sides of

the hiring equation. It takes a little faith and self-confidence to drop the time-honored tug-of-war over candidate contact, access to managers, and inclusion on the dreaded Vendor List. It takes mutual trust.

But hey, isn't that what recruiters and HR people are supposed to be champions for?

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