

FIRST FRIDAY PREVIEW

FRONTLINE ANALYSIS BY THE MRINETWORK TEAM OF TALENT ADVISORS

Here's what you can learn when a top candidate rejects your offer

You think you've found the perfect candidate to fill an open role at your organization. After reviewing their resume, conducting rounds of interviews with your recruiter, hiring manager and company leadership, you've made an offer. You've even checked the candidate's references and completed salary negotiations. Everything looks like it's going well and that the candidate is about to accept the offer ... That is, until they don't.

You're surprised and disappointed by the rejection.

While the candidate gives a valid reason as to why he/she can't accept the role at your company, you're still upset. But instead of letting it get to you and your human resources organization, you must bounce back and learn from the experience so that you can grow as a business.

"Making an offer to a candidate, only to have it rejected, is always difficult," says Simone Mazzeo, program manager of talent attraction for MRINetwork. "This is especially the case if you don't have a second applicant who can fill the role. Instead of placing all the blame on the candidate that rejected your offer, use the experience as a powerful learning tool. You and your firm need to carefully analyze what happened so you can avoid a similar situation in the future."

Here are some tips to help you move forward after a top candidate rejects your offer:

Revisit your interviewing process as a firm. If a candidate rejects your offer, it might be because they did not have a good experience during the interview process. Maybe one or more of the interviewers failed to impress or didn't adequately answer the candidate's

concerns. Or it could be that the interview process was extremely drawn-out and grueling and left a bad taste in the person's mouth. Then, when it came time to think through the offer, they simply didn't feel comfortable with their perception of your firm's culture reflected in that process.



To help, you and your organization should look carefully at how the entire interview process is structured and implemented. That way you, recruiters and hiring managers are on the same page when it comes to language you use when meeting candidates, the types of questions you ask, and, maybe most importantly, the way you describe the

company in order to accurately (and enticingly) market the position and the opportunity.

"Get together with key stakeholders during your interview process," says Mazzeo. "This is absolutely critical if you want to make offers to top talent in a competitive job market and have them accept. You need to come across as a united front and inspire people to want to join your firm. That means you must hold their interest. Are you asking them what their interest level is in each step of the process? Otherwise, you'll lose out on people who will help your business succeed."

Determine if you have an employer branding issue. A lack of compelling employer branding or a sense of the brand experience is another reason a top candidate might reject your offer. For instance, a candidate may not feel excited about what your organization has to offer them. Maybe during the interview process, they didn't see the potential for career growth. Or the company felt antiquated and not a good fit for their personality. If your organization feels stale, unappealing or otherwise not exciting, then it's likely a candidate will simply reject your offer without a second thought.

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To address this, you need to ensure the company has a solid social media presence, a consistent media voice, and the company website and marketing materials are updated. This will provide the “wow factor” for prospective candidates from the very beginning, enabling the organization to inspire interviewees with specific examples of a strong company culture, growth opportunities, and a highly professional interview process.

Here are some topics to cover in the interview to help prevent rejected offers:

1. **Company History.** Know your company’s history and be able to articulate your value proposition during the first call or meeting.
2. **Company Culture.** Find out what type of culture the candidate wants and go into depth on your culture. What did they like about their current company culture? What didn’t they like? Is that why they are leaving?
3. **Compensation.** Be prepared to discuss the compensation range and benefits. While you may have already screened candidates around desired salary, it’s important to talk about other benefits and perks that are available to applicants. This is another opportunity to promote the advantages of working at the company.

In sum, while a rejected job offer can throw a damper on a critical position you need to fill, there are several actions you and other on the hiring team can take to lessen the chances of this happening. By partnering with a recruiter, bolstering your interviewing process and employer branding initiatives, as well as simply looking out for red flags, you’ll make offers to stronger candidates who won’t leave you scrambling to fill open roles at your organization.

“You want to make the right offer to the best candidate,” says Mazzeo. “To ensure you’re interviewing top talent that will be engaged in the process, strongly consider partnering with a recruiter to find A players that will move your organization forward. He or she can represent your brand effectively and present candidates to you that are thoroughly screened and informed. Not only will this weed out weaker candidates, it’ll also help you experience fewer rejections from seemingly strong contenders.”