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HIRE

Patrick Ropella

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **28**

Chapter 8 | Questions to Help You
Prepare to Extend a Hiring Offer

Questions to Help You Prepare to Extend a Hiring Offer

After you have gone through the whole hiring process, spent thousands of dollars for transportation and hotels, and selected the one candidate that you thought was the perfect fit – sometimes you find that they are not quite ready to make a decision. You have spent a lot of time getting the signatures needed from executive levels, and now you find out that the candidate wants at least a week to think about it.

You wait the first week. Now the candidate starts saying things like: “Well, I’m not jumping up and down over the salary, what more can you do? And, I completely forgot about my upcoming two weeks of vacation that I already have planned for next month? And can you also guarantee me the first year bonus? Besides I’m going to lose \$25,000 on my current bonus if I leave my company at this point in the year – how about a sign-on bonus to cover that too. And, I need you to cover the full cost of all my benefits – like my current employer does. And my wife can’t relocate till this summer until the kids finish the school year, so I’m going to need an apartment for roughly 8 months – which is 5 months longer than your temporary living provision allows. Oh, and by the way, I have a brand new sailboat, and I am going to need you to cover the cost of relocating it as well.” Etc. . . Etc. . .

This kind of situation actually does happen pretty often. What the candidate is saying is, “Surprise! Now that I know you really want me – what more can I get.” They are also saying, “Besides, I have this benefit at my current job and/or have been offered this by another organization. . . so why shouldn’t I get it from you too?”



Some Candidates Will Try to Get All They Can

Knowing how to handle this kind of finalist scenario in advance can help prevent you from losing your whole investment into the candidate. Here are some things you need to know about handling this scenario when it confronts you.

Setting the Stage for an Offer

The best kind of offer that you can make to a candidate needs to address all of the issues, including problems and the company’s ability to meet them – before asking the candidate for a final decision. This way it will be a win-win situation for all. When offers have delays, multiple rounds of negotiation, a lack of attention to detail – they typically prove to be deal killers.

When you are ready to make the final written offer, you should have already obtained enough information through verbal discussions with the candidate to know whether or not the final offer is going to be accepted. Remember by this time you’ve invested a lot of money into the process – so it’s time for a successful closing. There should be no other option!

This executive summary will cover how you can get all the information you need about total compensation, a broad array of benefits, incentives, relocation, and any other issues that the candidate must know and understand before you ever make a written offer. Without having this information in advance, it is possible that you will see your candidate list simply dry up – one after the other, as you make offers.

Getting Candidate’s Compensation, Motivation, and Relocation Needs

It is hopeful that by the time you reach the end of the selection process you’ll have three or four excellent candidates to choose from. If that’s the case, you could hang the finalists’ resumes on the wall and just throw darts at their resumes: whichever is

the one you hit is the one you select. If only it really were that easy. It's simply not – so at this point, it's extremely important that you realize that a candidate's motivation to negotiate, accept your offer, show up on the agreed-upon start date, and perform as well as expected in the first 90 days are just as important as all their other qualifications.



If Only It Really Were That Easy!

Although everything else about the candidate may appear to be ideal, things can really start to get complicated and even personal when you begin talking about compensation, benefits, and relocation details. Learning their motivation for accepting the job is also very important and can change the way you view the candidate. So, here is how you can get all the information you need before you make an offer.

In the first step(right before the first interview), you want to profile the candidate. This has nothing to do with racial or criminal profiling – so get that idea out of your mind. This has to do with compensation and motivational profiling. It will enable you to learn:

- Why the candidate thinks he really wants this job
- How his influencers will affect the final decision to take the job
- How flexible the candidate is about total compensation
- What factors of the total compensation package are most important to the candidate and their families

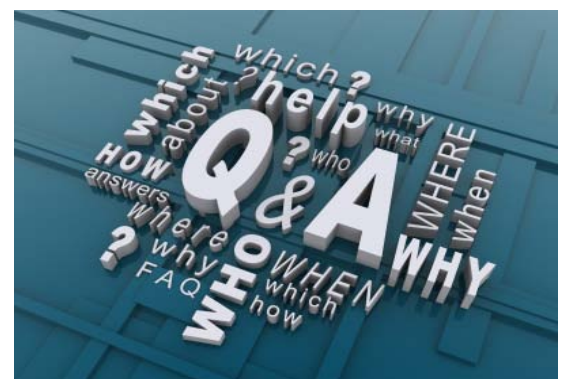
Getting these kinds of answers is not difficult. All you need to do is to ask the candidate a series of questions and explain that getting the answers to these questions is in their best interest. Remind them that their candidness in their answers will be

greatly appreciated and it will help you formulate a win-win offer, should you choose them. As they provide the answers, it will help you see their motivation and aid you in making your final selection.

The ideal individual to ask the profiling questions to the candidates is the human resources representative (unless you are using an Executive Search Consultant). Since the HR representative has been working closer to the candidates than anyone else from the start of the process, they probably will have the closest relationship with them (if you are using an Executive Search Consultant, then they are apt to be the one asking the questions and serving as the closer as well).

These questions require someone who is deemed as safe, or at least as someone thinking in their best interest, because the questions can be rather personal. The more comfortable the candidate feels with the person selected to ask the questions, the better the answers you will receive. It will also seem more natural to the candidate, and it is the HR representative who will be continuing the conversation through the interviews to offer stage – so the logical choice is a well-trained HR representative.

Here is how this works. After the candidate states that he is interested in the job opportunity, the HR representative then asks the first profiling question: “Just to get a benchmark for comparison purposes, can you please give me an idea of what you’re used to now, from a base salary and an annual bonus point of view?”



*To Make A Tempting Compensation Package,
You Need Solid Answers*

It's that simple. Just ask the question and listen for the answer. Do not start talking again, because this can lead to an unanswered question. By asking the question in a no-nonsense

and professional way, you will usually find that the candidate will take the same approach and open up.

If you come across a candidate who will not answer the question, you will need to ask the question in a different way. You may need to provide a little more information. Some candidates may say something like: "I'm just not comfortable answering that now." When that happens, a different approach may be needed:

Oh, I'm sorry! Are there people nearby you at this time so you can't say the numbers out loud? (And if the candidate says yes) Well, let me ask in ranges then. Is your base above \$50,000? (And if the candidate says yes) Is your base above \$70,000? (And if the candidate says no) So you're between \$50,000 and \$60,000? (And if the candidate says yes) What about \$53,000? (And if the candidate says no) Closer to \$58,000?

This often leads to the candidate whispering the answer – about nine out of ten times. In this case, they may say something like "56."

Since you already know what the salary range is, you will quickly know whether or not the candidate is being paid a lot more than you thought or less. If more, and they are expecting a similar salary, then you have learned that much and can move on to the next candidate if need be. Of course, if he is a really outstanding candidate, then you may decide that he is worth the extra money.

If you find that the candidate is still not willing to give you an answer, then you can provide more information. You might try:

Listen, I want to make sure we are at least in the right ballpark before we start scheduling interviews. Please at least tell me if we are in the right range. The ballpark range for this position is between \$50,000 and \$60,000, depending on what experience the candidates bring to the table. There's flexibility to do more depending on the person, but I at least need a baseline to compare to others we are interviewing, so the hiring manager can make a final decision to interview you or not. Is this range appropriate? Or can you please tell me where you're at from a base and annual bonus point of view?

It will be unusual if a candidate does not open up after two or three attempts. If they are still silent, make a note of it, and

consider this to be a serious red flag. Generally speaking, 25 years of personal experience has shown that a candidate who won't share after repeated attempts is most often going to lead to a very difficult negotiation process, as they are simply tire-kicking, or trying to get a raise, or will not be honest in their answer no matter what they tell you anyway.



Tire Kickers Are Often A Waste of Time

After a candidate starts talking about the most sensitive issue – the salary – then it will be easier to talk about all the other issues. If you are wondering about why you should start with the salary question, it is because it is the most important topic to both of you. Besides, if the salary does not at least closely line up within your range, what difference do all the other questions matter anyway?

The next issue to ask about is the bonus. Ask the candidate: "Does your position include a bonus? If it does, roughly what do you expect for a bonus for this calendar year? And what's been the average bonus you've received over the last few years?"

After that, ask "How many weeks of vacation do you get now? And how many more years must you work before your next week of vacation is added?"

The next question is: "Do you have a 401K? If so, how much does your organization contribute or match?"

That's enough about compensation for now. Now you want to approach the candidate about the motivation behind switching jobs, and why they are interested in your organization. The answers to these questions may be more important than you realize.

Here are some typical answers that might be given when asked about a candidate's motivation for coming to work for your company. Some of these answers may not be given verbally.

- A) Because I was recently laid off, and I need to take care of my family.
- B) Because I want to know what my value is in the marketplace. Am I underpaid in my current job?
- C) Because I'm unhappy with the leadership at my current organization, my peers, my job, etc.
- D) Because I want to live in Atlanta and my organization won't relocate me here.
- E) Because the recruiter called me and convinced me that I should check this opportunity out.
- F) Because I see this opportunity as a very good fit with my skills and abilities for the following reasons. . .
- G) Because of the reputation of your organization and what I bring to the table. I think we are an ideal match.

Here is what these answers may mean. The first four answers (A-D) are self-centered around the needs of the candidate. At least they are being honest. A pattern of self-seeking answers, however, for past job changes should raise a red flag. Do not ignore them. Pay close attention to see if his answers become more balanced as the interview process continues. As his interest grows, he may even provide completely different answers.

Answer E might be given by a person who is just being honest. They might be saying, "Hey, I'm not necessarily looking to change jobs, but for the right opportunity I'd consider a change." A tire-kicker would also say the same thing. You can often separate the two after the first candidate interview by determining their interest level, reactions to questions, and by how diligently they follow up. Tire kickers rarely do well in these areas.

The last two answers – F and G – are the ones you want. They are the ideal answers.

Early chapters in the book, *The Right Hire*, mentioned the use of cover letters to obtain more information in areas that needed greater clarity. You can also use the same cover letter

to ask questions that will reveal their motivations. Here are two questions you can use:

1. **Why should our organization consider you?**
(i.e., what's in it for the organization?)
2. **Why are you interested in this organization?**
(i.e., what's in it for you?).



*Were the Job Changes for Good Causes –
or Because the Grass Looked Greener?*

The final thing you want to ask when profiling the candidates is their reasons for past job changes. Ask questions like these:

- What was the last date of your most recent employment? What happened?
- If you were downsized, why were you personally let go?
- Why did this downsizing or reorganization affect your specific position?
- How many others were downsized and why were you included in this group?
- Did you get a severance package? If yes, describe what severance you got.

In each case, you want to know why the candidate left their jobs. Get a solid reason for each job change. Dig deeper, if you need to, to get to the bottom line and the whole story. Make good notes so you can come back to them at another time and still understand them. And good notes will allow you to compare with what your candidates will tell others during the interview process.

After you have answers for each job, look them over for red flags. There may be patterns, too, such as, "I didn't like this boss, and then that boss, and/or that peer." You can learn more during the interview process, and also ask about it directly when checking the references.

THE RIGHT HIRE

“The most important decisions that business people make are not *what* decisions, but *who* decisions.”

- Jim Collins, Author of *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... And Others Don't*



In most organizations, making the right hire means the difference between success and failure. This book helps you recruit great people and keep them loyal to the organization by helping you understand, assimilate and execute today's best processes, programs and practices for Sourcing and Marketing to potential candidates, Assessing and Recruiting top talent, Retaining & Training employees and Transforming your organization for the better.

What you will learn from this book

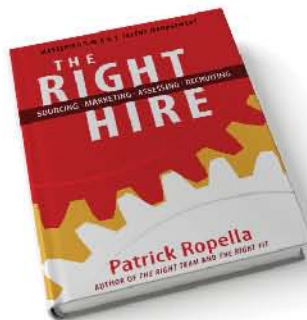
- How to successfully execute the all-important preparation stage of talent sourcing
- What to do to bring into alignment the whole interview-selection team
- Where to scout, network, and narrowcast in order to recruit the best candidates
- What techniques to use to screen and assess talent using proven tools
- How to use behavioral-based questions and interviewing techniques to uncover quality information that leads to great hiring decisions
- What can be done to dramatically improve the negotiations, offer, acceptance, start date and on-boarding processes
- And much, much more...

“People interviewing have choices, and *The Right Hire* presents the right things to do not only attract the top talent, but also to assess for culture fit, personal characteristics, experiences and credentials that will fit with your opportunity. With the growing need for companies to hire the very best talent available, *The Right Hire* is a must read.”

- Steve Watson,
International Chairman, Stanton Chase

“Too often making the right hire is seen as a matter of luck. It should not be. Follow the steps in this book and it will improve your success rate dramatically.”

- Yves Lermusi, CEO, Checkster



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Patrick B. Ropella is Chairman & CEO of the Ropella Group, a 25-year-old international Executive Search, Leadership Transformation, and Corporate Consulting firm in Florida with clients among the world's most prestigious corporations. The Ropella Group focuses on working with mid-level management and executive-level leaders regarding their search, leadership, and/or consulting needs across most roles and functions. Patrick authored the book and web based training program, *The Right Hire – Mastering the Art of SMART Talent Management*. The SMART Talent Management System covers Sourcing, Marketing, Assessing, Recruiting, Retention, Training and Transforming top talent. Patrick's status as a thought expert, and writer on talent management & leadership has been promoted, featured and published in a wide variety of trade magazines and business publications, and leadership and executive search industry blogs and journals. Patrick regularly speaks at webinars, career fairs, conferences, trades shows and more. For more information about Growing Your Great Company through Ropella services, visit www.ropella.com, or call Patrick Ropella at (850) 983 - 4777.