

Qualifying the Qualifier

We've all heard the expression "what comes first – the chicken or the egg?" The same goes for hiring when qualifying the qualifier: Is it personal motivation that drives candidates to apply their experience to your challenges, or is it their experience that motivates them to perform?

In my 25 years filling executive positions, I've found that many of the best hires don't come from sorting through resumes, hunting for the most impressive titles or credentials. Rather, great hires come from identifying those candidates who are truly motivated to perform the job at hand. Even the most decorated executive will fail without a genuine desire for the success of both their company and their career. Blue-chip credentials and a gilded curriculum vitae won't guarantee maximum performance without the will to sweat and sacrifice. As a result, motivation is the foremost qualifier!

With that in mind, here are a few tips on qualifying the qualifier:

1. How hungry is the candidate? The interview process should balance equally between the company's needs and the candidate's desires. If a candidate tilts the discussion disproportionately to their demands, you've got the wrong person.
2. Challenge or Compensation? The challenge, rather than the money, motivates successful candidates. They understand that money results from meeting the company's needs. If someone puts too much emphasis on compensation – particularly early in the interview process – make a conversational detour and change the topic. If the applicant immediately steers the interview back on to the High-Dollar Highway, pay the toll and let them go.
3. Don't be hasty! The interview process should be a series of tests to make sure candidates are consistent in their actions and statements. You know you have a winner at the end of an interview if the candidate displays the same demeanor and style as when it began. Be sure to pay continuous attention to the interviewee's behavior, as a consistent performance indicates he or she will be a more predictable employee.

Conversely, candidates can apply these tips to help them evaluate potential employers. By first understanding the other party's motivation, you can then focus on qualifications. The benefits of this approach include efficiency and familiarity with the finalists. Your time evaluating the final list of prospects will be much more productive knowing that they have the right reasons for their interest in the opportunity. Plus, the process will make employers more comfortable with the contenders and their eventual hire.

An effective process for qualifying executive candidates helps companies view an executive search as an investment rather than an expense. That investment results, not only in a fitting executive hire, but also a benchmark that adds value to future hires because of the standard you have created. A focus on motivation, as well as qualifications, will lead to a successful search.

At Christopher Frederick, we've been fine tuning the executive search process since 1985. Our high-energy approach ensures a motivated pool of candidates that meets a client's nuanced needs and an executive hire who matches perfectly a company's demands and vision. To see how we can qualify the qualifier during your next executive search, call Chris Hingle at 1-800-EXU-FIRM or send him an e-mail at chingle@cfrederick.com