

The 'WOW! Factor'

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Recruiting a top-notch candidate is a lot like dating. You want to find out all about him/her and you also want to present yourself in the best light possible. You get excited when you first meet such a candidate, just like after a great first date. The interview process is a lot like romance, too. If all is going well, you want it to go smoothly and at just the right moment you want to ask for a commitment, hoping for an enthusiastic "Yes!"

We've talked before about the importance of keeping the romance alive—and by that I mean keeping the interview process moving along. In this issue, I want to talk about the **offer of employment**. I'm going to keep using the dating analogy, so maybe this article will make you smile while also imparting timely advice.

Recently, I heard a stand-up comic talk about how men often propose. They get dinner reservations at a fancy restaurant, get a bottle of wine (or two), and hope that in the dim light of a romantic setting and after the glow of the wine has kicked in that he will have the courage to make the big offer. By presenting her with a shining rock, he also hopes that she will be so caught up in the moment (and possibly the wine) that she will immediately and wholeheartedly commit to a lifetime together.

There are many similarities between this scenario and the job offer. In today's market, once you get to the point in the interview process where decisions are made, you need to act swiftly and boldly.

Going back to the restaurant analogy, does the man who proposed want to hear, "Well, that's a very solid offer, but I'd like a couple weeks to think about it, as I'm dating other guys," or does he want her to say, "Wow! Of course, I'll spend the rest of my life with you!"?

The same is true in business. You want to hear "**Wow!**" So how do you get the "Wow! Factor"? Unlike the proposal, I don't encourage two bottles of wine, but I do recommend making an offer that is so attractive that the person can't say no. In our current employment market, when companies are determined to only hire great talent, great talent has choices, so you need to make an offer *they can't refuse*.

By the way, you might want to remember the shining rock, and by that I mean a signing bonus. Just like the diamond engagement ring is meant to dazzle and seek a commitment, a good sign-on bonus can have the same impact.

Here are some important things to remember about extending an attractive offer:

- For a great candidate, go to the maximum salary possible. Quibbling over ten thousand dollars for a great candidate is peanuts. Do you want your competition to be able to hire this candidate? Do you want the candidate to think about your offer or immediately say "YES!"?
- A signing bonus has an immediate, positive effect on the newly hired, yet only costs once.
- Move quickly once a decision has been made. Just like in romance, there is a time to propose and a time when it's just too late because the other person has moved on emotionally.
- Be decisive. If you want to hire, make the offer. People respect the ability of others to make a decision and are cautious about those who can't. We've all heard about commitment-phobia.
- Document your offer in writing so there are no misunderstandings later.

One last thing—when you “**Wow!**” a candidate, they are likely to accept. If the candidate says, “That’s an attractive offer,” you didn’t “**Wow!**” them.