

The First Five Lines

For Recruiters

Top talent has the attention span of a gnat. Although often described as passive, such individuals are almost always interested in career advancement opportunities. They just have little patience for the typical presentation of information in an online recruitment ad. They want the key facts and they want them right away, not buried somewhere in the pithy paragraphs that describe a job's requirements and responsibilities.

What do they consider the key facts? They want to know "what's in it for them." They're usually employed, so unlike most active job seekers, they have choices, one of which is to stay right where they are. To be effective, therefore, a job posting's first five lines must convince talented people to do the one thing we humans most hate to do: change. That brief introduction must persuade the reader that it's in their best interests to move from the devil they know – their current boss, employer and commute – to the devil they don't know – your employer, a new boss and a different commute.

How do you formulate such a persuasive message?

Use the first five lines to provide a succinct, hard hitting summary of your vacancy's value proposition. That summary must include four elements of information that form the acronym JECC. It stands for:

- **J**ob
- **E**mployer
- **C**ompensation
- and
- **C**onfidentiality.

Let's look briefly at each of them.

An Introduction for Passive, High Caliber Talent

The order of the four essential elements that must be present in the first five lines of a job posting is just as important as their content. Talented workers don't look for a job, even when they are in transition. They look for situations that will challenge them to excel and, as a result, promote their continued success.

For that reason, a job posting should always lead with a description of both the job and the employer. Each is insufficient in and of itself to motivate most passive candidates, but taken together, they form a

powerful expression of the work, culture and values that will enable the right person to advance in their career.

The third element of the first five lines describes the compensation offered by the job, expressed in numbers. Top talent doesn't go to work for the money, but they use their salary to measure their progress in advancing their career. You can express a job's compensation in a range to preserve your negotiating position, but avoid such meaningless phrases as "competitive salary" or "salary based on experience." They're ad breakers for the best candidates. Those individuals want to know – right up front and in quantitative terms – whether your opening offers them a financial step forward.

And finally, the last of the four elements in the first five lines is a statement expressing your organization's commitment to protecting candidate confidentiality. The best talent is almost always employed so they have something to lose if their interest in your position becomes public. For that reason, it's important to signal not only that you understand their need for privacy but that you take responsibility for safeguarding it.

The Golden Rule of Recruiting is as simple as it is profound: What you do to recruit the best talent will also recruit mediocre talent, but the converse is not true. For that reason, it's critical that you write your job postings so passive, high caliber talent will be compelled to read them. Use the first five lines of each ad to describe what's in it for them.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

Visit me at Weddles.com

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