

Idea Exchange: Ask the Insurance Recruiter

Dear Insurance Agency: Never Say This to a Potential Producer During An Interview

There are a lot of moving parts to hiring a producer like timing and money. **Where I see insurance agencies get into trouble during interviews is saying things that are real “headscratcher” to candidates.**

Producers assume that you're in the interview process to find reasons to make a hire. **If you utter any of these three phrases, the candidate interprets the exact opposite intent.** Producers believe you're not really looking to hire a salesperson, and they are immediately disinterested. You've lost your chance to hire them now or in the future.

I encourage you to use this article as a teachable moment within your agency. Talk with sales managers, HR, executives and other producers. Find out who has made comments like this before. Was the outcome good or bad? What can you do differently in the future?

This exercise will improve your agency's opportunities to attract and retain the right sales talent.

'We Don't Have a Spot for a Producer Right Now.'

The producer thinks... “Then what am I doing here? This is a brush off. This agency doesn't know what they want to hire.”

- **Insurance producers aren't like other candidates.** They don't understand perfunctory interviewing because they don't passively look for a job. **A salesperson who decides to interview is already one foot out the door at their current agency.**

- **You don't need a formal opening to hire a producer.** Yes, there may be times when it's more financially advantageous, but **the average time to recruit and onboard a new producer is four to six months, so the reality is you're always hiring.**

Convey This Message Instead: “Our agency is aggressively growing and constantly looking at different options that fit into our short- and long-term strategies. We'd

love to keep learning more about you and your career goals. As you know, timing is everything.”

'We've Been Looking to Hire for a Year.'

The producer thinks... “**What's wrong with this company?**”

Saying you've spent six, 12 or more months trying to hire salespeople leads producers to draw one of two conclusions:

- **You're always looking but never hiring.** Basically, you can't pull the trigger on anyone because you don't really want to invest in people or grow. The other reason is because you lack self-awareness or may **not understand what sales profile fits your agency.**

- **You have retention problems.** You're quick to hire but quicker to fire. Other producers have tried, and for some reason, no one can successfully sell at your agency. **Candidates conclude this is probably due to problems with your culture, management, organizational structure or resources.** Once this seed is planted, you can never bring them on board.

Convey This Message Instead: “Bringing experienced sales talent into our organization is the key to our future success. We are careful to make sure people fit our culture. We may have a longer interview process, but once we see a person who can thrive in our organization, we pull the trigger quickly.”

'We Only Want Million Dollar Producers.'

The producer thinks... “I have a non-compete, so this probably isn't for me since I can't guarantee 100% of my book will follow.”

Your agency can and should hire a lot of different salespeople — college grads, B2B non-insurance converts, experienced insurance producers, mini-liftouts and agency acquisitions. Making this statement short sells your talent acquisition strategy as well as your capabilities to attract, train and retain diverse backgrounds and skill sets.

Convey This Message Instead: “We know a lot of people are successful in this business in spite of the current company they are with. We don't always land our forever home the first go-around. We've had tons of success integrating experienced insurance producers from other agencies because:

- You are experienced and don't need the 'newbie' training.
- You'll find more happiness and sales success with us. With our resources and leadership capabilities, we can help you take that \$500,000-plus book of business and turn it into a \$1 million-plus book of business in short order.”

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By Mary Newgard

