



Watch Out for Vicious Political Climate—No, Not That One

By Stephenie Overman, April 2008

NASHVILLE, TENN.—Beware the Machiavellian manipulators, the defensive turf protectors, the gossiping cynics. They can disrupt workplaces and derail recruiting efforts.

“Your job as a recruiting professional is one of the most politically charged roles in all of the business,” says Jeremy M. Eskenazi, SPHR, who spoke April 15 at the Society for Human Resource Management’s 2008 Staffing Management Conference here. “Did you know that when you signed up?”

Eskenazi, managing principal of [Riviera Advisors Inc.](#), in Long Beach, Calif., offered conference attendees a “recruiter’s guide to navigating corporate politics.”

Recruiters and HR generalists in some companies “seem to hate each other,” Eskenazi said. “We have to realize that we’re in this together. HR generalists are our partners.”

Both recruiters and HR generalists “are validated by our ‘likeability’ and ‘credibility’ ” factors by our hiring managers. “The moment that we recognize we both want the same credibility with our hiring managers, we can work together.”

Also not “the enemy,” according to Eskenazi, are third-party recruiters. “They are a valuable tool in our tool box. Understand that if you and the third-party recruiter work together as a team, then the business wins,” he said.

Instead of “putting a bag over your head” concerning workplace politics, Eskenazi urged participants to learn to “leverage the concept of being politically savvy,” because any time more than two people operate together, there will be politics.

After all, HR generalists and internal and third-party recruiters share a common goal—meeting the needs of hiring managers.

“You have to understand whose role is what. If you start to compete with the HR generalist, you will always lose,” he said. Always keep in mind that “it’s not our job to hire people. Our job is to facilitate the process.”

To most effectively meet the needs of hiring managers, “never assume that they understand anything about your process; always clarify what you understand their needs are, what you are going to do, what they are going to do, and what others are going to do in the process,” he said.

Don’t avoid confrontation with hiring managers. “Always follow up and communicate even if there is nothing good to share. No news is bad news.... If there are problems, deal with them now.”

He offered a list of characteristics that make for great recruitment relationship managers:

- They set and manage expectations well.
- They build strong relationships with hiring managers and HR generalists.
- They communicate regularly, with credibility. They send follow-up e-mails when key decisions are made or changes are agreed on.
- They make sure they have the data they need to push back on bad ideas.
- They measure ROI and highlight consequences when commitments are missed.
- They know to highlight successes and complete post-mortems on “failures.”
- They reward good hiring managers and solicit thanks from executives for successful efforts.
- They deal with problem areas head on. They don’t wait for things to get really bad because struggling hiring managers or upset agencies may escalate problems and play the blame game.
- They teach hiring managers and HR how to be successful in the organization, which may require hiring managers and HR generalists to adapt to their process.
- They prioritize. They realize that not all requisitions are created equally, and not all activities have the same ROI.
- They ask questions, listen and learn. They know their business, their candidate pools, recruiting ROI and best practices.
- They come to the table with solutions and consultative suggestions; they don’t come off as the policy police.
- They make recommendations and encourage feedback.

To work more effectively together, “remove the word ‘you’ from your conversation. Take out the personalization,” Eskenazi said. “Triangulate your conversations by talking about the issue or problem and not making the conversation about the other party.”

It doesn’t hurt to be a little paranoid in the corporate political world, he added, because “you’ll see what’s coming a mile away” and “you’ll keep your job.”

Stephenie Overman is editor of Staffing Management magazine.

Quick Links:

[SHRM Online Staffing Management home page](#)

[SHRM Online Staffing Management news](#)