



# A Tale of Two Clients

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In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens begins his historic novel with that famous line many of us have heard: It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. This short piece will shed some light on the staffing industry's unique challenge for effectively marketing to its two unique client constituents.

For any business, it's challenging enough to have one client market to satisfy, but it is far more difficult if you have two sets of clients. That is exactly what companies in the staffing industry face. They deal directly with client companies who request a wide

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variety of talent to fill job openings, both skilled and unskilled. In addition to the companies they serve, they must also direct their efforts toward a second set of customers – those candidates who are seeking employment. Unlike companies that market products or intangible services, staffing companies deal with human capital. And as we all know, that brings a certain element of unpredictability into the equation.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE?**

If you are a company manufacturing and selling widgets, through your quality assurance efforts you can ensure that the final product meets a very rigid standard and one widget is exactly like the next. When you are dealing with people, however, that type of scientific certainty can no longer be expected. People are different in their personalities and in the skills and job experience they bring. As anyone who deals with the hiring process knows, it is mostly art and relatively little science.

There are a number of resources that can be used to help determine each candidate's skills and where they might best flourish, but these resources only offer a slight edge in helping the staffing firm make the best match of the candidate with a client company.

## **BRANDING AND MESSAGING**

The best way to make sure the right candidates are matched with the appropriate clients is to be clear on who you are seeking and know how best to reach and communicate with them. As a former staffing executive, I understand how difficult this is. I also know that as the CEO of a marketing agency working directly with staffing firms, too little attention or effort is given to delivering a clear and effective message to candidates.

Staffing companies are laser-focused on their client-facing brand, but in most cases, have no formal brand or messaging established to attract and engage the candidate market they seek. The belief seems to be that if the staffing firm deals with clients who are “employers of choice” they will automatically attract the right talent to fill those job requests. Experience tells quite a different story. With the explosion of

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social media and other mediums, competing against so many other staffing firms for the best talent must go beyond the reputation of the client company itself.

### **SPEAK TO ME**

Candidates speak a much different language from that of client companies and are drawn to messages that speak to them. They are seeking the “what’s in it for me” value and will weigh their options based on that criteria. Even in tight labor markets, like those prior to COVID-19, candidates have choices and relate to staffing firms that connect with them through well-crafted messages.

### **What are the things most important to candidates?**

- Money is certainly an important component, but it’s often not the driving factor. Candidates want interesting work where they can succeed.
- An engaging culture that supports them and gives them every opportunity to win – individually and for the company they work for.
- Opportunities to excel and move forward, along with training and support for those opportunities are important, as well.
- A work environment where their fellow team members are engaged, positive and fully support the mission of the company.

### **SEEKING DELIGHT**

Staffing firms that want to exceed the expectations of their clients need to take the time to determine who their ideal candidates are, where to find them, and most importantly, how to communicate with them effectively. This requires dedicated and consistent effort through research and experience, but when staffing companies get it right, the flood gates will open. The real test of success in this area is not simply more candidates, but more qualified candidates for the client companies being supported. With more qualified candidates comes better retention and less turnover, which leads to clients and candidates who are delighted. When candidates and clients are delighted, they can’t wait to tell others – and the process repeats.

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