



## “I’M OPEN TO RELOCATION ... FOR THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY.”

Is your relocation candidate just saying what you want to hear?



Hiring managers, human resource personnel and recruiters everywhere have lamented the most common response to the question: “Are you open to relocation?” If one accepts this answer “Yes” as-is, hiring anguish and embarrassment are likely to follow. Unfortunately, too many hiring managers take this answer at face value, sending candidates through a long interview process only to have them turn down the job.

In the search for exceptional talent, the ability to distinguish a serious relocation candidate from one just entertaining the thought of moving can have a significant financial impact on your organization. Airline tickets, hotels, limousines and taxis are the least of the expenses. The lost opportunity costs and wasted time of your senior management interviewing candidates that will probably never move is immeasurable.

To take some corrective actions immediately, stop asking candidates if they are willing to relocate. Why? Almost everyone says yes. Instead try an open-ended question like, “Tell me about the relocations you have made in your career.”

One of the best ways to predict a person’s future behavior is by finding out what their past behavior has been. Have they sold a house before? Did they have trouble with the kids switching school systems? Did they live in temporary housing for awhile? Some candidates are convincing when they know the routine. With others, it becomes obvious they dread the thought. If you ask this open-ended question, the follow-up questions won’t sound combative. Of course, be careful to follow all state and federal human resources guidelines when doing so.

Some other great questions to ask: Have you

considered relocation? When they answer “yes,” follow up with this question: “Great. What are the top three cities you and your family have targeted for a move?” If they can’t rattle off at least one location quickly, you probably want to move on to the next candidate. If they are able to articulate a couple of destinations, dig deeper. Why is that area desirable? Have they ever lived there before? More importantly, do they have family there?

One of the biggest and most fool-proof candidate motivators to move is getting closer to family. When the recruiters at my firm hear a candidate give this response, it is music to their ears. Having family at the destination city changes everything. Now they have relatives to stay with during the move, people to help unpack, free childcare, hot meals and a friendly face to help smooth things over.

Finally, you should test them on housing. Do they own a house or do they rent? It is much easier to relocate renters because there is no house to sell, and they typically have less household goods. Be sure to find out if they will incur any penalties for breaking a lease, though; you don’t need an unforeseen relocation expense. If they own a house, you should ask more questions. Can they sell the house in their marketplace? Are they “underwater” with their mortgage? Was this their custom “dream house” that they won’t be able to part from emotionally?

Nothing is worse than having an offer accepted by a candidate only to watch them crash under the pressure of a move and back out. Dig deep; ask the hard questions up front, and you will benefit down the relocation road. ■

## EXECUTIVE SEARCH

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