

WHY MOST RECRUITMENT BUSINESSES ARE CRAP AT MARKETING

Why most recruitment businesses are crap at marketing

Hi, welcome to my latest podcast, which is 'Why most recruitment businesses are crap at marketing'.

The reason why I'm doing this is that most recruitment businesses are crap at marketing. As you probably know from the blogs and podcasts I've done in the past, I've got a big thing about marketing. Part of the reason for that is one of the two businesses I've built and sold was pretty much a marketing business. We got the company to the point where we had that many incoming inquiries, we realised that we didn't actually need 360 recruiters. We just needed a handful of closers and the rest of the team will be deliverers. You can imagine the value that business was worth because if all you're going to do is find resourcers, that's a lot easier than finding 360 recruiters. That's where I got converted into why marketing can be transformative to a recruiting business.

Marketing can be transformative

So, with Davidson Gray and the businesses I've helped to support and grow, I've obviously carried on that ethos and just as an example, one of the businesses that I worked with, I told the story that one of the previous businesses that I sold was purely reactive. Only nine months ago he said to me 'Do you know when you told me that, I thought it was bollocks'. I said, 'oh right, that's complimentary'. He said, 'well, no, I've looked back and we've not done any new business for nine months. It's all coming in through branding and marketing, which is amazing. There are also many other businesses, again they didn't believe that the website would deliver what I said it would deliver but went along with it and it turns out that they place virtually half their business through candidates through the website which again is amazing.

So, it got me back to thinking, 'well, why is it that the rest of the recruitment industry hasn't really cottoned on to how good marketing can be for a business?' And I looked at it and said 'well let's analyse what it is'. And I think a lot of it comes down to firstly, patience because as a recruiter we're taught that time kills deals, so everything has to be fast. We have to move fast all the time. So, as you're bred like a racehorse to run, you're not very good at jogging. Now marketing it's not an overnight thing. Some of it is a very slow burner. Brand building is a slow burner; SEO on your website is a slow burner. A lot of it is a slow burn; it's not a quick fix. So, because it's not quick, the business owners don't buy into it but with any new marketing strategy. Some of the stuff, fair enough direct marketing, maybe the e-messages or through LinkedIn, are going to be quick, but if you want to do something like brand building or working on the website, your blogs, or your podcast; it takes time. You've got to commit to it and it's got to be consistent; you've got to follow it through. And to do that you've got to have somebody in your business that's going to do that for you.

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You need someone to do it

And that leads me to my second point. I think a lot of the businesses that aren't very good at marketing are because they haven't actually got anybody that can do the marketing for them. Marketing is a skill and I liken it a little bit to the fact that a lot of your clients will think they're good at interviewing because they will interview themselves. Well, you get a lot of recruiting business owners that think they know marketing because they've seen marketing, they've received marketing and a lot of the tech and the products and the things that recruitment business owners buy are sold through marketing, not direct sales. So, they think they know a bit about marketing. So, they think, 'we'll just set up a LinkedIn page and we'll work on that. I'll do that for two months' or podcasts or whatever it might be.

But because they don't really understand it, it never gets done well. If it doesn't get done well, they think it doesn't work. It's not the case it didn't work, it was the execution that didn't work, not necessarily the idea itself. So where does a business owner go if they don't really understand marketing? First of all, what I found as a business owner, you've got to understand it to a degree to be able to use a marketing agency or have an internal marketing department. You've also got to give them a certain degree of freedom to do it, so trust what they're doing. I interviewed a lady a long time ago for a marketing role and she was very good, an excellent marketer. But the results of where she was, were quite poor and the reason was the senior managers and the directors would tell her what to do. Do this marketing, do that marketing, and she didn't have the freedom to do it properly, she couldn't choose what she wanted to do. She had people telling them what to do that didn't know what they were doing when it came to marketing. You have to trust your marketing people.

Measure your marketing

On the other hand, you've got to measure everything. You've got to make sure you're getting results. So, this is where having a certain degree of understanding of marketing will help. For example, if you're looking at making more money from the website, you'll do a couple of things. First of all, you'll try and get out there through social media, etc. You'll pay-per-click it and you'll optimize it. Now both are slow burners, but you've got to measure the results you get from that. So again, as an example, you can go to a marketing company that'll say 'I'll get you 5,000 viewers of your website next month. I can do that. It's not necessarily going to make any more money though. People who visit your site is a vanity number.

What you really want is a sanity number, which is 'do we get job applicants and do you get clients ringing it' and that's the thing you really need to measure. That's the thing that you need to give your marketing company the KPI on and it's similar with everything that you work on. You've got to drill it back to what actually makes you money. And measure the people that are delivering the marketing to make sure that they're actually giving you value for money.

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Marketing makes everything else easier

The other thing I think that recruitment business owners struggle with is they cannot believe either and that more often than not, is built on the fact that they've been at other recruitment businesses where it's not worked. It's also bread on direct sales. Direct sales and recruitment to me is by far and away the most important thing. I'm not going to pretend marketing is, because it's not. It facilitates direct sales but picking up the phone, speaking to people, that's where it's at. But the marketing amplifies the effect of that, so if you've got candidates coming to, you've got clients coming to you; it makes that job a whole lot easier. But recruitment business owners quite often think it is direct sales, it's not marketing, they don't really believe it. So, when they do have a go at it, they play with it.

That comes back to the patience thing, where they don't realize that one or two, or three months of trying a particular strategy is not going to give you a result. You need to keep it going, you need to measure. You need to be consistent and also just because it doesn't work doesn't necessarily mean that strategy of pay-per-click, blogs, whatever, doesn't work. It could be the execution, it could be the strategy of doing that particular thing that doesn't work, so you've got to be consistent in it. It's the delivery and the execution of the marketing that makes the difference, but overall it's that belief that marketing can make a difference and also I think, part of is the fact that, because we are pack animals, recruitment business owners always speak to other recruitment business owners and because there are very few recruitment companies that get results from marketing, the general consensus is marketing isn't that important.

Because of that recruitment business owners then tend to believe that it doesn't work. You have the odd story from somebody where it works, but they don't really believe it. It's believing in the marketing, it's committing to the marketing because with any strategy, you've got to commit to it, and it's got to stick. You've got to be consistent. The problem when you're running a recruitment business, especially if it's a small recruitment business, you're going to have various distractions and recruitment consultants tend to be easily distracted. I know, I'm a recruitment consultant and I'm often going, 'oh shiny, something new!', because it's more interesting than just sticking with something that's a slow burner where you're not going to get a result. Canvassing a candidate out, you're going to get an interview. You know if you find a great candidate for a vacancy, it's straight away, but marketing is a bit slow.

Be consistent

So, my advice would be is get somebody within your business that can stick with it. Maybe it could be an operations manager, it could even be PA, it doesn't matter, but somebody who's going to stick with a strategy and make sure it carries on and measure it to see if it works. If it doesn't work, try and do it better or try a different strategy. You don't have to do all things at the same time. You don't have to go,

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'right, we're going to do lots of marketing, we're going to do blogs, we can do podcasts, we can do LinkedIn, we're going to do a website'. You could try something that you think might work first. Think about whether candidate attraction is your biggest thing. Is it client attraction that's the biggest thing? Do you want brand building? I know brand building is a bit of a grey area and people like brand building, but they don't really know what it is and that's a bit of a grey area. I would suggest that you try one particular strategy and have a go. One thing done well is better than 10 things done badly, so stick with one thing so give somebody within your business that responsibility to do that one thing.

You can use an external marketing agency. I've got to be honest, my experience with that is probably the experience that clients have with recruiters - there's a lot of rubbish ones, so you've got to make sure you get the right one. It comes back to what I said earlier on. If you measure their results and you tell them you want really good KPIs, then you shouldn't go too far wrong. When you're given the KPIs it's got to be drilled back to the most important thing in your business and that's making money.

Marketing has to make you money whether it's now, whether it's six months, whether it's five years down the line. Marketing has to make your money, so you've got to measure it based on the making of money. Do you get good candidates? Do you get good clients? Do you get people contacting you rather than you contacting them? When you contact people, do they say 'oh yes, I've seen you there, therefore I believe that you are good at what you do'. Do you get any of that? That is what you've got to know from your marketing results. You've got to find that the business is actually delivering serious cash to your business, but you've got to give it time.

Just one other thing which I've mentioned before I'll mention it again because it's marketing related. If you are truly building your business to sell, one of the most important things that a would-be buyer will want to see is if you have a strong brand. Do clients come to you; do candidates come to you? If you're looking to sell your business, don't think 'right, I'm ready to go to market, oh quick we'll strap on some marketing'. It doesn't work like that. It takes time so get it in early. We work with the partners within Davidson Gray to help them build a business as if they want to sell it. We don't advocate selling, that's a different podcast altogether but we build it as if they want to sell it to get the biggest value if they did want to sell it. But also, it's a good strategy to have those things in your business and a strong brand of marketing is one of those but it doesn't happen overnight.

Conclusion

So, if you are thinking that in the future you may want to sell your business, future proof that by doing the marketing now. Get that brand built, get that marketing strategy in and see the benefits because if your marketing works well, it not only brings in the inquiries and the candidates, but it helps your staff bill more. It will help them bill more so you'll get good people that become great, great people that

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become brilliant. Recruiters want to join your business; recruiters don't want to leave your business; marketing is massively important. One of the reasons why I'm doing this podcast is I don't really understand why the vast majority of recruitment companies haven't cottoned on how important marketing is. It's important to the growth of the business, but it's also the key to the door to the thing that makes you money. Good recruiters, attracting good recruiters, keeping good recruiters and good marketing makes your environment an easier place to make money and that will help you with both.

I hope you've enjoyed this introduction to marketing as to why most businesses are crap at marketing. I will be doing some more follow-ups to help you stop being crap but for the time being hope you've enjoyed this.

