

Hiring People is like Fishing

By: David J. Saxton

President, CEO & Owner North American Recovery

Hiring people is like fishing. I'm serious. You have to select the appropriate bait, plan your trip so you're in the right place at the right time, cast your line, and then be ready to hook a fish and reel it in.

Hiring people is exactly the same—we just use different terms. During the past 21 years, I've learned what does and doesn't work when it comes to hiring people. Strangely enough, it is just like fishing, but I need to make a confession: I'm not a good fisherman. In fact, I can barely fish at all. That's bad because I spend a LOT of time on my boat, mostly relaxing and decompressing, but regardless, I should be a better fisherman than I am.

Realizing this, I recently made an effort to improve. I watched a few instructional videos and read some articles. This helped a little, but more importantly, going through the process of teaching myself how to fish helped me recognize similarities with the process of hiring the right people.

Let's start with the bait. I quickly learned that putting a slimy worm on a hook, throwing it out as far as possible, letting it sink to the bottom, and hoping for the best would land an ugly carp. I'm fishing, but carp is not what I want. I want striped bass. When you're hiring, if you post a stripped-down Help Wanted ad that lists basic duties and the wage, you're going to get someone looking for just that: a basic job, but nothing more.

Here's what such an ad looks like:

Sales Representative. B2B sales. Experience in cold-calling and lead generation. Hours: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Base salary between \$30K and \$50K plus commissions with the potential to earn \$100K/year. Health and dental benefits offered. Email your resume to Contact@North-American-Recovery.com.

This ad attracts people who want to do the bare minimum to get by, but we're looking for motivated, driven individuals who are seeking opportunities for advancement — people who will elevate the job, their co-workers, and the company. Those people respond to a different type of ad.

It's just like fishing. If I want better fish, I need better bait. Catching *anything* was exciting at first, but I quickly grew tired of pulling carp out of the lake. So, I ditched the worm and went with premium smoked turkey from Costco. (By the way, that turkey is delicious on wheat bread with mayo, mustard, lettuce, tomato, and extra onions.) Anyway, in addition to better bait, I added a couple of sinkers and a bobber. I cast the line closer to shore and waited. That bait and better placement proved to be a magical combination for Lake Powell catfish. The first time I cast this bait and line setup, I had a fish on the line within 60 seconds! I was shocked. My wife was equally shocked. My new technique proved flawless—during the right time of day. It was so good that I bragged to friends that I could catch a fish within one minute of casting my line—and I routinely prove it.

Hiring great employees also requires better bait. Instead of a stripped-down help wanted ad, you need a sophisticated ad with rich content. Potential employees need to know about your company, how you rank in your industry, how long you've been in

business, the pay, benefits, job duties, responsibilities, etc. The list goes on. You also need to “sell” the job—and your company—in the ad. Here’s an example:

Outside Sales Representative. After more than 21 years of providing outstanding debt collection services, North American Recovery, one of the nation’s premier collection agencies, is still growing! We currently have two new openings for polished, assertive, dynamic, professional sales representatives. This is a sophisticated business-to-business sales position. Our Sales Representative must be a confident self-starter with the ability to cold-call as his or her primary way of generating leads. If you’re afraid of cold calls, don’t apply for this job.

This position requires an individual who can effectively understand our complex service model, help potential clients analyze their current solution using our Collection Process Analysis interview, and, finally, use the results of this analysis to see if our service would provide a better solution for potential clients. You don’t need to be an expert in the collection industry—we will teach you everything you need to know about collections. You do, however, need proven skills in consultative selling to high-level individuals.

Skill Requirements:

- Professional appearance
- Reliable transportation
- Upbeat, friendly, and outgoing personality
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Good written and verbal communication skills
- Initiative and creativity in generating leads
- Ability to work with minimal supervision
- Ability to multi-task, prioritize, and meet deadlines
- Strong organization and problem-solving skills
- Ability to interact with top-tier professionals
- Availability to travel
- Proficient working knowledge of computers
- Ability to work as a member of a team.

Education/Experience

Minimum of a Bachelor’s Degree in marketing, public relations, or a business-related field. Master’s Degree preferred.

Pay and Benefits Pay will be based on education, experience, technical expertise, and overall ability to perform the job. Starting base salary is between \$30K and \$50K/year, based on these factors. However, we are looking for someone who wants to earn a six figure income. Our commission schedule will pay a top performer well in excess of \$100,000 per year. This is a top-level professional sales position for someone who wants to be part of an industry-leading team and has the drive, ability, skill set, and determination to make it happen.

Other benefits include health and dental insurance, one week paid vacation after 180 days of employment, 2 weeks paid vacation after one year, 3 weeks after 3 years, 4 weeks after 6 years, and a paid day off on your birthday! Interested applicants should email a cover letter, salary history, and resume to DaveSaxton@North-American-Recovery.com. Equal opportunity employer. Learn more about us by visiting our website: www.North-American-Recovery.com. Visit our social media sites: [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Mazree](#) | [Our Video](#)

The right bait—or the right ad—is just the start. When you run an ad like this, you also need to make sure your Internet presence impresses a potential employee. A lot of business owners and managers don’t realize this. They know how great their company is, so they assume everyone wants to work there. That’s a mistake—and one reason small

businesses struggle to find talented employees. You have to convince a great applicant they're joining a great team if you want great employees.

Your company website needs to talk about your positive work environment. You also need examples of how your employees feel about working there, like this: [NAR Employee Testimonials](#). Your social media sites need to be content-rich. Prospective employees will visit them—or even look at your personal Facebook or LinkedIn pages. Make sure they impress, like these: [NAR on Facebook](#) — [NAR on LinkedIn](#). I learned the hard way. When asked why we should hire a potential client service representative, she said, “Um, so you can have more than 29 likes on your Facebook page...” Your online image should sell your business to potential customers, clients, *and* employees. Use Kirkland Brand Premium Smoked Turkey, not a worm.

However, that's still not enough. Just like with fishing, you can't expect to cast your line at any time of the day or night and catch the fish you want. It's crucial that you choose the right time to run your ad. When is that? Monday morning at 7:30 AM. That is by far the best time to run an ad, regardless of where you post it. There are two reasons. First, job sites by default list the newest jobs first. If you post a job Monday morning at 7:30, it's going to be at the top, no matter what job someone is looking for. Second, the employees you want to hire will be looking first thing Monday.

Think about it. Motivated, talented people get up early Monday morning and “start looking for a job.” They apply for jobs during the first two hours. By Monday afternoon, they are receiving calls and scheduling interviews. They interview on Tuesday and Wednesday. They're offered a job by Wednesday afternoon. They accept and stop looking.

On the other hand, those who aren't as motivated will sleep in Monday morning (long weekend). They'll roll out of bed around 10:30, have some coffee, and watch a bit of TV. By noon, they'll be distracted by “Halo” or the dog. Then, it's lunch. After a big lunch, they're sleepy, so it's nap time. After their siesta, they'll have lost their motivation to look for a job.

Tuesday will have a similar routine but will include some nagging from their mom, girlfriend, boyfriend, etc. They start hearing (in a nasal voice), “I thought you were going to look for a JOB this week...” The same thing happens Wednesday, but the nagging intensifies. Finally, by Thursday around 9:00 am, they start looking. If you had a staff meeting Wednesday and determined you need to hire a few people in department X, if you post your job that afternoon—or even worse—Thursday morning, guess who's going to apply? That's right. Mr. Halo. The people you want to hire already have a new job. Even if you use a great ad (the correct bait), posting a job on any other day or at any other time is like fishing in the middle of the lake at noon when it's 112 degrees. Don't do it. No matter when you realize you need to hire someone, wait until Monday morning at 7:30 a.m. to run your ad. You'll get responses from smart, motivated, and talented job seekers. These are the people you want to interview.

Okay, we have the right bait: an appropriately worded ad. We're casting that bait at the correct time on the correct day: Monday at 7:30 a.m. Now we have to watch the line and be ready to “set the hook.” After success with catfish, I was ready for more, not quite striped bass, but close. During a visit to Good Hope Bay, there were Bluegill Sunfish everywhere. I could see them just off the back of my boat. The ones at the surface were small, about three or four inches. Every once in a while, a BIG one would swim up from the depths. Big for a Bluegill is 12 to 14 inches. These were the guys I wanted to catch.

I dropped the hook about two feet deep. All the little guys went after it, and eventually I had one, but I was embarrassed. It was way too small. I needed to go deeper. I added a few sinkers and a bobber, then cast again. The bait and sinkers dropped out of sight. I was patient. I waited, and I watched the bobber closely. When I saw it start bouncing, I yanked on the line and had a fish! I finally caught one! It's a 14-inch bluegill! I could catch a decent fish. The wife was impressed.

When adding people to your staff, you need to be ready to watch that bobber and set the hook when they bite. You accomplish this by using an email address that will be diligently monitored Monday morning. The person monitoring the email will give each resume and cover letter a cursory review to ensure the applicant meets the minimum requirements. Then, the moment they've identified a qualified candidate, get that person on the phone and set up an interview—for Monday afternoon, if possible. Set the hook!

If Monday afternoon doesn't work for the candidate, set the appointment for Tuesday. If they can't meet Monday or Tuesday, tell them those are the only two days available right now, but we can get back with them later in the week if something changes. This is another way to filter out those not committed to finding a job. If you're fishing, this is when you try to set the hook, but the fish gets away. That one wasn't serious about taking the bait, so it's okay. Cast the line again.

Reeling in the applicant and "catching" them happens when they arrive at your office. In our company, we have two people interview every applicant. They plan on being available to interview all day if necessary. If you have testing procedures, have the candidate complete as much of the testing as possible online before they get to your office. Then, when the candidate arrives, conduct your first interview.

If the first interviewer likes the candidate, he or she will ask them to stick around for a second interview. If both interviewers like the candidate, the second interviewer should offer the candidate the job on the spot—before they leave. Cast the correct bait at the right time, hook the fish, then reel it in! Making an offer "on the spot" to a talented, qualified, and well-interviewed candidate improves your chances of them accepting.

If they are that good, they will certainly have other interviews lined up. If you wait until "tomorrow" to decide, they will have already interviewed with other companies and quite possibly accepted a job from someone else (perhaps a good fisherman). Don't let that happen! Be ready. Get them in the boat (your company) without the line breaking or them working off the hook (taking another job)?

You will, of course, give them a disclaimer about passing any background checks and/or drug tests as a condition of the offer, but the most important part is to make the offer before they leave. There's nothing worse than reeling in a great catch only to have it wiggle off the line before you lower it into the net—the big one that got away.

Now you know how to prevent that. Use a good ad, run it at the right time, get applicants in for an interview ASAP, and make an offer when you know the person will be a good fit. You'll have better success at hiring people. As for your fishing—sorry, as I mentioned earlier, I'm not a good fisherman. I still haven't caught a striped bass. Maybe next year.

About the author. David J. Saxton is the President, CEO and owner of North American



Recovery, a third-party collection agency founded in 1993 and headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah. Dave and his 47 full-time employees provide debt-collection services to more than 3,000 businesses in 37 states. Dave enjoys writing, the great outdoors, sports cars, motorcycles, and spending time with his wife of 26 years, Shelley, and their two daughters, Jordan and Breeanne. Dave would love your feedback and comments. Contact him at: DaveSaxton@North-American-Recovery.com or (801) 364-0777 ext. 106.
