

by Allen Anderson

The Need for Needs

Remember needs are the problems to be solved or the desires to be fulfilled. In employment they relate to the ability to get a task or job done. They involve something that will be solved by putting a person to work to leading to fulfilling the need.

Needs drive almost all employment situations and thus are the first and clearest focus for job development. Some employment decisions are not solely based in the employer's needs but these are rarer and much more difficult to work with. The examples of these are hiring decisions based in the employers values (equality is a corner stone to our society) or goals (if I help out this sector of our population it will strengthen the whole community).

I concentrate on the needs rather than the values or goals as they are easier to identify, easier to respond to and are much more objective and clear. One way to identify employment needs is through their types. Some examples of these are needs that relate to immediate problems needing solving and those that relate to longer term issues that are hoped will be addressed in the hiring decision. Or the difference between business needs- relate to the functioning of the business, quality, production, speed or those that relate to the personal needs of the decision maker—feelings, status, relationships. There are more type distinctions and recognizing that needs are not all the same all the time allows us to know what type to go after or more clearly distinguish to better understand what the employer is looking for in their hiring solution.

Yet before you can put needs into types the needs have to be revealed and in getting needs revealed there is another level of distinction that is crucial to the job developer's work. I have from my experience divided the revelation of needs into three separate categories that I find helpful to job development and moving forward into getting a hiring problem defined such that we can offer a potential solution with our candidates. These types represent a style of job developer exploration that maximizes the selling ease by getting the employers needs on to the table before putting forward the candidate solution.

Often new or untrained job developers make the fatal error of trying to sell their candidate and services to the employer without first knowing the employers needs. The primary question in job development selling is how can you possibly sell anything to the employer if you don't know what that employer actually needs. It can be argued that by putting forward your candidates, an employer can merely pick someone they are interested in and the process will proceed from there. The challenge with our candidates with visible employment barriers is that they are seldom picked.

We know that to get an employer to pick our candidate even though they would not have at first have chosen our candidate it is done best through an earned relationship with the employer. Through the job developer earning a relationship with the employer a trust is formed such at when a candidate is presented, it is not so much for



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employer selection but rather employer verification and confirmation that the candidate we selected for them is one they agree with. The foundation of this earned relationship is doing the work with the employer around understanding the employers needs well enough that a job development recommendation will be believed as viable. So starting the relationship with the employer around needs gives us a place to earn a relationship by spending time getting to know that employer's employment needs. So finding the needs focus that allows us to get the time and put in place the investigation/revelation process is very important to job developers.

I have identified three needs focuses that have been useful in gaining that connecting point on which to earn the relationships with many employers at different points in the their hiring process. I use these needs focuses to adjust my approach and focus my engagement with the employer by needs that are clearly present, needs that may be there but not said or needs that are not fully understood as to what are the potential solutions.

I call these three needs types overt needs, hidden needs and emerging needs.

Overt needs are where the needs and types of solutions are well defined. This a basic job where an employer is looking for a suitable candidate. The employer knows their needs and to such an extent that they have defined what the solution should look like in terms of the attributes and characteristics of a candidate. Example: the employer needs a front desk clerk who has hotel experience, good customer service and can use the hotel's computer system. This can be spelled

out in a job ad or verbally on request from the job developer. This one provides the easiest needs focus to start the earned relationship as it centers around an issue already well defined and known. All the other needs identification and relationship building skills come into play. This is the crux for the starting point of the relationship.

The question is what happens if this starting point does not exist or is not offered as a starting point for the relationship with the employer. Some times your candidates need job opportunities not addressed with the overt needs as they don't have the levels of skills requested or a specialized opportunity like a job carve needs to be found. If you just look for overt needs or needs the employers themselves could identify for your candidates you will not do well. This leads us to our second set of needs—hidden needs.

Hidden needs are those job related needs the employer has, generally hidden inside an existing job for, which the existing job solution is not providing a great answer and may be causing many problems but for which the employer does not have another or innovative solution. The most common example of this is the simple task that is hidden inside a job with more complex tasks such that doing the simple tasks aggravates the person who was hired to do the complex task. This is a need felt with in an existing solution that just does not perform to the level desired. The problem is that the employer does not overtly bring up this hidden need as they don't know how it can be solved other than how it is being solved now and so this need never comes on to the table unless directly requested. Yet many of our candidates could benefit from the unique job opportunities found with in hidden needs.

