

# "COMPANIES MUST BE TRUTHFUL WHEN RECRUITING TALENT"



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The central New York technology company had need of a product manager for their marketing department. They identified a candidate who worked for a related industry outside of Chicago. After a successful telephone interview, they flew the prospective employee to Syracuse, where she got the “royal” treatment.

During the interview process, the woman inquired about industry “buzz” that this company had had discussions with another entity about selling the division in which she would be hired. She was told that yes, there had been some interest but that the inquiry didn’t go any further. The vice president to whom she would report told her that the strength of her ability and reputation would help them to be a stronger player in a competitive market.

The executive team of the hiring company was very impressed with the candidate, and decided that this was the person that they wanted for the job. After much discussion, an offer was extended and accepted. The woman sold her home and relocated with her husband and two school-aged children to central New York. Contrary to their earlier indications, the company decided to sell the division in which she worked to a competitor eight months later. The new company was based in Atlanta, and she was told that she was needed by the new company and would be expected to relocate to their headquarters within three months.

This created a dilemma for the woman. She had been savvy enough to negotiate a clause to protect herself financially if the job did not work out. But this situation was not about the money. She later found out that the senior management had fully intended to sell the division when they had told her otherwise. The strategy was that they were counting on her to strengthen the product line to make it more attractive to the potential buyer.

Beyond the deception, the employee resented the fact that the company knowingly disrupted the stability of her family, forcing them to make another difficult career and relocation decision within less than a year of the last one. By the time eight months had passed in CNY, the manager’s spouse had found a terrific job in his professional arena, and their kids were nicely settled into their new school and neighborhood. Adamant about not uprooting her family again so soon, she decided to decline the Atlanta transfer and hoped that she wouldn’t lose too much career momentum by having made the choice she was right for her family.

Most companies have mission and values statements that hang prominently in their front lobby. Many of those statements refer to valuing and respecting employees. However, when companies say and do “whatever it takes” to get a candidate to accept a new position, it violates the values that they profess to have. Ultimately, these hidden agendas create environments where the integrity of leadership is questioned, and where mistrust will generally permeate the rest of the culture. Low morale and high turnover result.

When companies are living their values, however, they will be cultivating a healthy culture. In a healthy culture, management will be direct and honest with candidates when there are career, financial and family risks involved. In the above scenario, a fairer approach might have been to let the woman know that they were still hoping to sell the division that they were recruiting her for, and perhaps offer her an incentive for assisting in the goal. This way she could have openly assessed all aspects of the situation and the risks involved, to make a more informed decision.