

## Deal or No Deal? 3 Sales Lessons to Close the Deal in 2026

### Year-End Tax Prep for Staffing Agencies



A Year In Review . . .

New Labor Laws  
for 2026

Plant Your Tree:  
How to Unlock  
Recruiting Success  
Now!



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# DID YOU KNOW?

\* With a strong 2026 in sight for the staffing industry, it's important to be ready to take the right steps with prospective clients to close the deal. pg 5

\* The most dramatic AI-driven shift in recruitment will happen at the entry level. The traditional early careers model—mass hiring of recent graduates into generalist, training-intensive roles—is being dismantled by AI. pg 9

\* Unlock Recruiting Success: It is simple in theory and a little more complicated in execution. My gut feeling is you are not tracking your numbers. pg 12

\* You cannot extract answers to all of those questions from a single magical question. Anyone who tells you otherwise is selling you something, probably a course or a script or some other oversimplified solution to a problem that doesn't have a simple answer. pg 15

\* First, it helps to review a few key reports before running the main year-end tax reports. These early checks make sure your employee information and wage details are correct before totals are finalized for the year. pg 17



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February 18  
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# Deal or No Deal?

## 3 Sales Lessons to Close the Deal in 2026

By Jennifer Roeslmeier Mikels

2025 is behind us and the staffing industry is ready to hit the ground running in 2026. Many staffing experts predict the industry will see a boom this year. On the two-year anniversary episode of our podcast, [The Staffing Buzz Network](#), Congressman Moran (former staffing industry veteran), also predicted that contingent staffing is going to see strong growth in 2026, similar to the growth that was seen in 2021. He also mentioned that the new government incentives will help drive workforce growth.

With a strong 2026 in sight for the staffing industry, it's important to be ready to take the right steps with prospective clients to close the deal. I sat down with Chief Sales Officer, [Bob Pettke](#), at [Automated Business Designs](#) to discuss 3 lessons he often preaches to sales teams. Before Automated Business Designs, Bob worked 15 plus years as a dynamic leader in the staffing industry and wore many hats including Director of Franchise Sales, President of Mergers & Acquisitions, and Chief Sales Officer for staffing companies that ranged in size from \$35 million to \$3.5 billion dollars in sales. Here are 3 lessons from Bob to close more deals in 2026!

### Lesson 1 – Listen


When having a conversation with a prospective client, it's easy to be more focused on what you are going to do next and how you are going to respond to what they are saying. Instead, **really listen** to what they are saying and think about their problem. You're having a conversation to begin with because they have a problem that you might be able to resolve. Prospects will be most interested in hearing **how** you will be able to solve their problem and the value you will be able to bring to the table. Avoid thinking about what you are going to say next, instead say something that is valuable that will help solve their problem.

### Lesson 2 – Put the Kids to Bed (Say How You are Going to Solve the Problem)

You probably weren't expecting the headline to read "Put the Kids to Bed." This is the name of the story though for Lesson 2. Bob shared a story from years back when his kids were little. His wife was at home all day with the baby and his other small child and one thing after another happened: From diaper explosions, to SpaghettiOs everywhere, everything that could go wrong went wrong! At the same time, Bob was also having a day at work. When Bob returned home, he opened the garage door and was thrilled to be home. As he was doing that, his wife also opened the garage door in anticipation of Bob getting home to help out. Bob was about to ask the infamous question that most people ask around that time in the evening, "What's for dinner?" But instead of asking it he stopped himself and his wife said, "Don't ask...."

In that moment, Bob saw his wife was distressed and said, "This is what is going to happen. You are going to go upstairs and draw a bath. I am going to make dinner, clean up, play with the kids, draw them a bath, and put them to bed."

When Bob shares this story, he always asks how people think his wife reacted. Was Bob being too bossy or was she happy he was solving her problems? It was of course the latter.



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**Similarly, in sales, you need to tell the prospect what you are going to do to solve their problem.** If a client or prospect says I need 4 forklift drivers for tomorrow, 5 machine operators, and 2 packers, what are you going to do? Tell them how you are going to solve their problem. "I will find 4 forklift drivers, 5 machine operators, and 2 packers for tomorrow."

When someone is faced with a problem, they want to know **how you are going to be able to help** alleviate the problem at hand. **Show your value to them.** This will get you one step closer to closing the deal.

### Lesson 3 – Close the Drawer (Go for the Close)

The second story Bob shared was about laundry day at his house. The whole family would bring each of their baskets to the laundry machine, sort the clothes, wash the clothes, and fold the clothes into each person's respective basket. Everyone would then be in charge of putting the clothes away in their drawer. Bob, however, got into the habit of picking clothes right out of the laundry basket each week and not even bothering to put it away in the drawers. The point? Bob would take all these steps to do the laundry and never "closed the drawer" to finish the process.

Similarly in sales, we go through many steps with a prospect. We have a discovery call, we have meetings, phone calls, etc. If you do all these steps and never go for the close, what's the point? Time kills deals so it's important to not go through all of that hard work and leave it waiting. **Ask for the business when the time is right, but don't wait too long.**

At the same time, if you won't be able to close the deal, it's better to find out sooner than later. The last thing you want is to spend hours and hours of time working with a prospect that lands up doing nothing. That time could be spent winning other deals.

### Bonus Lesson

I wanted to include a bonus sales lesson because who doesn't like a bonus? It's something that Bob says often but wasn't included in this chat. Before ending a conversation with a prospect, know what you are going to do next and when you are going to do it. Don't ever walk away from a conversation without knowing what your next steps will be with that prospect and when. This will keep you moving prospects to the next phase in the sales cycle to bring you one step closer to closing the deal!

### Deal or No Deal? I Think Deal!

As we start off the new year, keep these sales tips in mind from a staffing industry veteran to help you close more deals and have a strong 2026 right out of the gate. Remember to:

1. **Listen**
2. **Say How You are Going to Solve the Problem**
3. **Ask for the Close**
4. **Know What You Are Going to Do Next and When You Are Going to Do It**

Did you find this article helpful? See how you can use these sales strategies with a staffing software solution made for staffing. [Schedule a Demo](#) of Ultra-**Staff** EDGE to see sales tools for goal tracking, forecasting, and managing staffing sales activities on a dashboard!

# A Year In Review . . .

## Jan



### Ultra-Staff EDGE Named a High Performer in the G2 Winter 2025 Report by Real Users on G2

reality hit recruiters like a soggy pool noodle. The surge of free money fizzled out, and many firms found themselves staring at a half-empty pipeline. Searches were halved (if not worse), and the hiring frenzy cooled to a glacial pace.

## Feb

### 2025 Economic Outlook for Recruiting Firms and the U.S. Labor Market

By Jeremy Sisemore

Let's take a walk down memory lane to the wild, wobbly years of 2023 and 2024. After the post-pandemic sugar rush of 2022, when the hiring market was practically bursting at the seams,

## March

### HireVue's 2025 AI Report Shows the Majority of HR Leaders Trust AI Hiring Decisions

57% of Workers Believe AI in Hiring Would Reduce Bias

-- HireVue, the global leader in skills-based hiring, today released its 2025 Global Guide to AI in Hiring, revealing how artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping hiring at a rapid pace. Based on insights from more than 4,000 HR leaders and employees worldwide, the report highlights a shift from AI experimentation to full-scale implementation. AI adoption among HR professionals surged from 58% in 2024 to 72% in 2025.

Importantly, the gap between candidate and HR leader perceptions is closing as candidates embrace generative AI as a partner in their personal race for employment.

## April

### Retailers Brace for 2025: Fallout from Amazon & Dockworkers Strikes

By Trevor Fandale

Significant strikes in 2024, such as the Amazon workers' and the dockworkers' strikes, are preparing retailers for 2025, which could be challenging. With the resurgence of powerful labor unions, these two strikes of 2024 are worrying retailers as they portend supply chain delays and rising prices for 2025.

#### Amazon Strike

Between Black Friday and Cyber Monday of 2024, Amazon workers in more than 20 countries, including the U.S., went on strike. The strike aimed to target one of the biggest shopping weekends of the year to raise awareness of what the Amazon workers describe as "anti-worker practices."

## May



### NPAworldwide Unveils Bold Brand Evolution to Reflect Global Growth

Featuring a modern logo, vibrant colors, an inspiring mission, and the tagline "Placing People Together," this transformation reinforces NPAworldwide's commitment to connecting independent recruiting firms across the globe for collective success.

NPAworldwide, the world's leading recruitment community, is excited to announce a significant brand evolution that reflects the organization's growth and vision for the future. This new branding update aims to enhance the identity of NPAworldwide and reinforce its commitment to connecting independent recruitment firms around the world.

## June

haley MARKETING

Watch the full webinar here!

**Demand Generation Cheat Sheet:**  
How Smart Staffing Firms Are Reengineering Sales in 2025



July

## Talos360 Launches Tali – The Autonomous Hiring Agent Set to Redefine Recruitment

- Talos360 launches Tali, an AI-powered autonomous hiring agent, unveiled at Talos Innovate 2025
- The tool is expected to transform recruitment for businesses by automating admin tasks and enabling faster, smarter hiring decisions
- Tali empowers hiring teams to focus on people, not paperwork, with intelligent, data-driven support
- Early adopters have reported 31% faster hiring, reduced candidate drop-off, and increased recruiter satisfaction

Aug

## In Memorandum



Paul Hawkinson passed away on July 8th, 2025. Following an extensive career in the executive search and recruiting field, he founded a newsletter entitled The Fordyce Letter which became for 35 years, the most widely read print and online publication in the entire industry. Throughout that time, as a result of his personal knowledge, wisdom and exposing others to the best business knowledge of others, the entire industry took a giant step forward as a direct result of the material presented. Untold numbers of people benefited professionally from Paul Hawkinson and The Fordyce Letter plus his several books.

Sept

## Mel Weinburg Retirement



Oct

## RMAR Rocky Mountain Association of Recruiters Annual Conference



Nov

## Beyond 360: The Adaptive Recruiter: Navigating the Future of Recruiting Communications

By Jon Bartos

The world of recruiting is undergoing a seismic shift. In an increasingly candidate-driven market, the days of one-size-fits-all communication are long gone. To thrive, recruiters must evolve into "Adaptive Recruiters," mastering the art of personalized outreach that resonates deeply with diverse individuals. This future hinges on a dual-lens strategy, meticulously tailoring both the communication channel and the message content to the recipient's generational context and DISC behavioral profile.

Dec

## Independent Women Unveils Model Legislation to Modernize Labor Policy for America's 74+ Million Freelancers

After developing sex definitions model legislation, now law in 18 states, Independent Women turns to enact legislation that reforms access to benefits for independent contractors, half of whom are women.



# 7 Breakthrough Predictions for Recruitment in 2026

The talent landscape is in an era defined by dual pressures: accelerating technological transformation and persistent economic uncertainty. For organizations navigating this terrain, 2026 won't be a year of incremental adjustments—it will mark a fundamental shift in how companies attract, assess and retain talent.

Here are seven predictions that will reshape recruitment next year:

## 1. The Growth of Short-Term Recruitment Outsourcing

The traditional model of building permanent, full-scale recruitment infrastructure is giving way to a more flexible approach. Organizations are increasingly adopting modular talent strategies that allow them to scale capabilities up and down based on actual need.

We'll see companies embrace:

- **Talent Sprints:** Focused 6-to-12-month initiatives to address critical hiring challenges—whether launching in new markets, filling specialized technical roles, or managing seasonal demand fluctuations.
- **Selective Outsourcing:** Rather than choosing between fully internal or fully outsourced recruitment, organizations will increasingly rely on RPO partners for specific hiring stages like advanced sourcing, candidate relationship management, or screening automation—while keeping final decision-making in-house.

This shift reflects a broader organizational principle: treat talent acquisition as a dynamic capability that flexes with business conditions rather than a fixed cost center.

## 2. Early Careers Recruitment Goes from Volume to Specialization

The most dramatic AI-driven shift in recruitment will happen at the entry level. The traditional early careers model—mass hiring of recent graduates into generalist, training-intensive roles—is being dismantled by AI.

2025 saw the systematic elimination of traditional entry-level positions that served as career launching pads. Job tasks like research, drafting and analysis, which historically absorbed thousands of graduates annually, are increasingly being handled by AI. The data tells a stark story: there were 15% fewer job postings to the entry-level job-search platform Handshake this school year compared to last, while the number of applications per job vacancy surged 30%.

In 2026, this trend will intensify. Organizations will face unprecedented volumes of applicants competing for significantly fewer placements. The winners will be organizations that fundamentally rethink their early careers strategy, shifting from volume hiring to precision hiring for specialized roles and building new talent pipelines beyond traditional campus recruiting by offering alternative education opportunities.

## 3. AI Agents Join the Recruitment Team

AI in recruiting will cross a critical threshold in 2026, moving from supportive tool to autonomous team member. Organizations will deploy AI agents capable of managing entire workflow segments without human intervention.

These agents could handle up to 80% of transactional recruitment activities: initial résumé and CV screening, chatbot-driven candidate Q&A, interview scheduling coordination, and compliance documentation.

As AI absorbs routine tasks, the roles of recruiters will evolve into specialists

focused on the irreplaceable human elements: building authentic relationships, conducting nuanced assessments, persuading passive candidates, and ensuring ethical AI deployment.

#### **4. Protecting Assessment Integrity in the Gen AI Era Becomes Non-Negotiable**

As generative AI (Gen AI) tools become ubiquitous, organizations face a critical challenge: candidates can now use AI to polish résumés and CVs, craft compelling cover letters, and even generate interview responses in real-time. While current adoption remains relatively low—our research shows only one in five job seekers currently leverage these capabilities—2026 will mark the tipping point where AI-enhanced applications become the norm rather than the exception.

Organizations that maintain assessment integrity will adopt a multi-layered defense strategy. Rather than chasing unproven “AI-proof” assessment technologies, successful organizations will strengthen existing processes strategically: designing application questions that require candidates to draw from unique personal experiences, doubling down on in-person assessments and leveraging practical demonstrations where AI assistance provides minimal advantage.

The organizations that invest in robust, human-centered assessment will gain unprecedented competitive advantage in identifying genuine talent in the Gen AI era. Those that continue relying solely on résumé and CV screening and generic online tests will find their talent quality deteriorating rapidly.

#### **5. Small and Mid-Sized Companies Level the Playing Field**

Sophisticated recruitment capabilities will no longer be the exclusive domain of large enterprises. In 2026, small to mid-sized organizations will dramatically increase their adoption of advanced talent acquisition strategies and technologies.

The rise of modular, project-based engagement options means a 200-person company can access specialized recruitment expertise for a targeted three-month sourcing initiative without committing to a multi-year contract. Plus, cloud-based talent technology suites and AI tools have eliminated the need for massive capital investment, making enterprise-grade capabilities available at SME price points.

#### **6. From Metrics to Meaning: The Data Storytelling Revolution**

The measure of recruitment success will fundamentally change. Time-to-fill and cost-per-hire will become secondary metrics as organizations demand proof of talent acquisition’s business impact.

The best recruitment functions will move beyond simple activity reporting (“We screened 500 candidates”) to data storytelling that connects hiring outcomes directly to organizational results.

Talent acquisition leaders will focus on demonstrating that hires in specific functions show measurably higher performance—for example, proving that sales hires sourced through a skills-based process generate 25% more first-year revenue than those hired through traditional methods. Plus, they look to predictive analytics to forecast a candidate’s likelihood of long-term success and retention, enabling better hiring decisions.

Recruitment leaders who can tell compelling stories with their data will secure budget and executive sponsorship.

#### **7. Employer Branding Becomes Everyone’s Responsibility**

In an era of radical authenticity, where candidates research companies through Glassdoor, Reddit, and their networks before applying, employer brand isn’t a marketing exercise, it’s a competitive necessity. In 2026, organizations will finally recognize that employer branding and candidate experience must be integrated into every aspect of the recruitment process, not treated as a separate initiative.

Leading organizations will move beyond one-off employer branding campaigns to building comprehensive brand ecosystems that span multiple dimensions. This means excellence across employee experience, content strategy, social media, search optimization, user experience and candidate experience.

Every person involved in hiring must understand their roles as a brand ambassador, responsible for communicating company mission and values consistently across every candidate interaction. From initial outreach emails to rejection messages, each touchpoint becomes a brand moment. Organizations that treat candidate experience as their most authentic advertisement will build talent pipelines that refill themselves through referrals and reapplications. Those that don’t will watch their talent pool evaporate as word spreads about poor experiences.

The Bottom Line

These predictions point to a common theme: 2026 will reward organizations that treat talent acquisition as a strategic, adaptable capability rather than a transactional function. The winners will be those who embrace flexibility, govern AI responsibly, prioritize critical thinking, and tell compelling stories about their impact.

The future of recruitment isn’t about doing more of the same, faster. It’s about fundamentally rethinking what recruitment means in an AI-augmented, skills-first, economically volatile world.

Credit [PeopleScout](#)



# JUST ASK Judy

## New Labor Laws for 2026



By Judy Collins

With every New Year there are new Labor Laws that go into effect January 1<sup>st</sup>. Some of the new laws include increases in minimum wage, tax-free overtime, changes in paid leave policies, and pay transparency laws. Every employer needs to be aware of all the different local, state, and federal changes that impact payroll, HR compliance, and workplace policies. There are several states that have increased minimum wage requirements which will affect overtime calculations and exempt salary thresholds. Employers should update their payroll systems to avoid wage compensation issues.

This is a small list of the major changes, especially with the increases in minimum wage per hour, that you can expect to see:

### **Arizona**

Minimum wage will increase to \$15.

### **California**

CA has multiple changes affecting wages, contracts, data, and workforce management. Statewide minimum wage will increase to \$16.90. There are also changes to new immigration-related workplace notices, job posting requirements, equal pay enforcement, and pay data reporting.

### **Colorado**

Statewide minimum wage increases to \$16.57. Employers should also account for local minimum wages, which may exceed the state rate.

### **Connecticut**

Statewide minimum wage increases to \$16.35. CT significantly expands its paid sick leave law, extending coverage to smaller employers that were previously exempt.

### **Illinois**

IL continues to expand worker protections and employer obligations. Key updates to the Illinois Human Rights Act (IHRA) introduce new guardrails around the use of artificial intelligence in employment decisions, requiring employers to provide notice when AI is used in certain hiring, promotion, or employment-related evaluations.

### **Massachusetts**

MA implements updates to its Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program which will affect benefits calculations and program administration.

### **Michigan**

MI's state minimum wage increases from \$12.48 to \$13.73. Tipped employees' minimum base wage rises to \$5.49. Minors aged 16–17 will increase to \$11.67, while the training wage for employees under age 20 during their first 90 days remains \$4.25.

### **Minnesota**

Statewide minimum wage increases for large employers to \$11.23, while small employers move to \$9.23. MN launched its new Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) and expanded meal and rest break requirements. MN also updated its Earned Safe and Sick Time (ESST) law, increasing employee usage rights and employer tracking obligations.

**Missouri**

Statewide minimum wage will increase to \$15.00. MO also flags an insurer data breach notification law, tightening requirements around how and when certain data breaches must be reported.

**Montana**

Minimum wage increases to \$10.55. MT also expands its ban on noncompete agreements for healthcare professionals.

**Nebraska**

Statewide minimum wage increasing to \$15.00. There are also new limits on fees healthcare providers may charge employees for complying with FMLA medical certification requirements.

**New Jersey**

Statewide minimum wage increases to \$15.69.

**New York**

NY minimum wage increases to \$17.00 in New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County, while the remainder of the state increases to \$16.00. NY also overhauled the Healthy Terminals Act, expanding wages, benefits, and leaving protections for airport and terminal workers.

**Ohio**

Statewide minimum wage increases with the non-tipped minimum wage rising to \$11.00 and tipped minimum wage increases to \$5.55.

**Rhode Island**

Statewide minimum wage increases to \$16.00. A new onboarding notice requirement will obligate employers to provide written notice of key terms and conditions of employment at the time of hire. In the hospitality sector, employers must comply with an annual human trafficking awareness training requirement.

**South Dakota**

Statewide minimum wage increases to \$12.25.

**Vermont**

Statewide minimum wage increases to \$15.01.

**Virginia**

Statewide minimum wage increases to \$12.77.

**Washington**

Statewide minimum wage increases to \$17.13. Washington expanded its Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program, adding written notice obligations for employers.

It is important that every employer knows the details of new laws affecting all their employees. Review your employment contracts, keep good records, and stay updated through a trusted legal provider.

If you found this article helpful and interesting and would like to discuss any of these ideas, please feel free to give me a call or contact me at [judy@jcsrllc.com](mailto:judy@jcsrllc.com), or visit my website at <https://www.jcsrllc.com> for more information on partnering with the best service providers.

[Read More By Judy Collins](#)





# Plant Your Tree: How to Unlock Recruiting Success Now!

**QUESTION:** Mike, we are more than halfway through the year, and I am nowhere near my goal. I am incredibly undisciplined and if I had to confess, unfocused. I have a goal of \$300,000 for the year and am sitting at about \$75,000. How do I fix that and unlock recruiting success?

## **The Importance of Tracking Your Recruiting Numbers Effectively**

Unlock Recruiting Success: It is simple in theory and a little more complicated in execution. My gut feeling is you are not tracking your numbers. You do not have a roadmap to \$300,000. An exact, specific, and precise path to \$300,000 in billings exists. Think about the old Chinese proverb, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time to plant it is today."

You obviously cannot go back to January and start over. I am not aware of any time travel device yet. However, we can say, okay, what has to be true for me to do \$150,000, to get on track to do \$150,000 in the second half of the year?

## **How to Set Realistic Recruiting Goals That Unlock Success**

I will give you some pretty standard metrics for what our clients do with tremendous success when they follow the numbers. So, \$150,000 is six placements, let's say, at \$25,000 a piece, the average fee, adjust accordingly.

Without knowing your numbers, I would just say, that is a placement a month to do \$150,000. Then, on the other end of the spectrum of conservative – I do not care if it is phone or Zoom or face-to-face just the first time – that's eight interviews to a placement, meaning you would need eight interviews in a month. Okay. So, I need 2 in a week, 2 x 4, probably a little bit less because there are 13 weeks in a quarter if we are going to get technical, but to keep it simple, two interviews in a week.

## **Unlock Recruiting Success by Understanding Candidate and Interview Metrics**

Let's say it takes 15 candidates for you to talk to get one to go on an interview. You have got to talk to 30 candidates a week or 6 per day. Then, of course, I do not know if you are all contingency. Let's say you are 4:1 on the marketing side, 4 job orders to make one placement. You need a job order a week.

Even in this economy, we are finding, depending on the person, it is 10 to 15 marketing conversations – conversations, not email exchanges, email exchanges that lead to phone conversations – 15 conversations get a good search, even now, so that means three a day. If you are committed to doing \$150,000 in 6 months to put you on a \$300,000 run rate, you need to talk to 6 candidates and three hiring managers daily to give you 30 and 15 for the week.

## **How Tracking Your Recruiting Metrics Helps You Unlock Recruiting Success**

What you will notice after about 4 weeks is that you will have your numbers. Maybe you are 17 marketing presentations to a job order. Maybe you are 10 marketing presentations to a job order—same thing on the candidate side.

What I always advise people to do, some people have decent records on this, is go back over your last 6 to 9 months and total up all your first-time interviews and total up all your invoices and do the math, meaning over the last year or last 6 to 9 months I have arranged 60 interviews, we have made 7 or 8 placements. Eight placements divided by 60 gets you in that realm of 7.5. Now I know I am 7.5 first-time interviews to a placement.

## Unlock Recruiting Success With Focus and Accountability

The most significant transformation I see when people join our program and we put them into an accountability group for a fast ramp-up and have a changing program is that (1) when they are focused, they are shocked at how many people they can talk to in a day, and (2) how much more fun they have when they talk to more people in a day, and (3) knowing, because we reverse-engineered their numbers based on their goal, at the end of the day, they know when they are done.

This person in this example would be saying: Did I talk to 6 candidates? Did I talk to 3 prospects? Yes. Even if they were all hang-ups, you hit your goal for the day. It is literally that simple. We have never not seen people that execute the numbers that are the right metrics for them not get the financial number they want, or greater.

### Whenever You're Ready... Here Are 4 Ways I Can Help You Grow Your Recruitment Business:

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#### 4. Work with me and my team privately

And if you ever want to get some 1:1 help, we can jump on the phone for a quick call and brainstorm how to get you more leads, more placements, and more time. <https://get.therecruiteru.com/scale-now>

[Read More by Mike Gionta](#)



Will your existing organization and/or personal style allow you to implement any resolutions or changes that you would like to make?

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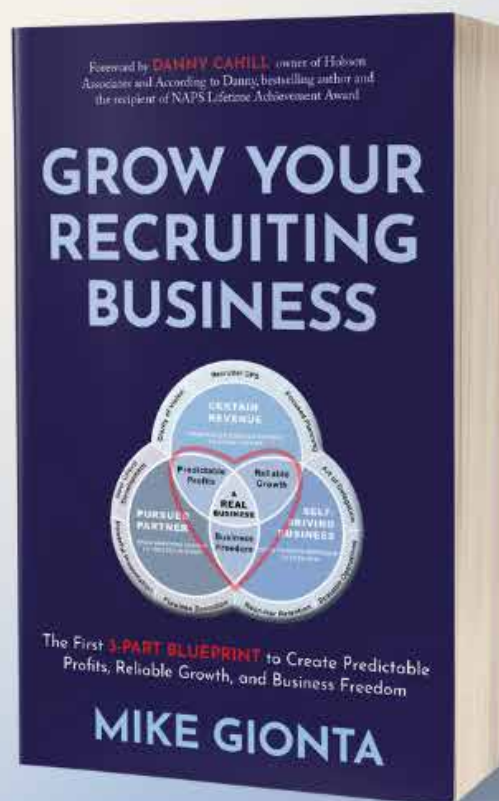
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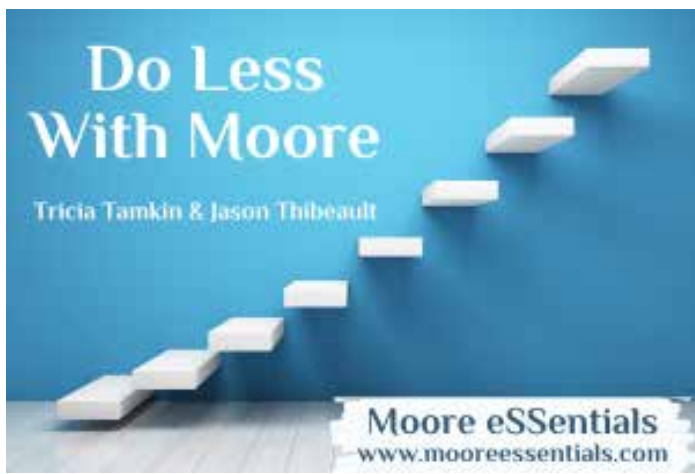
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*"I've read several books on recruiting and listened to a number of trainers over the years, but Mike is the one that has helped me the most in growing my recruiting practice. Mike and his team have a way of identifying and clarifying the key processes and mindsets to be successful in recruiting. They also present it in a way that breaks it down to help you identify your starting steps, and to keep you going." – Marts King*







By Tricia Tamkin

# There Is No Magic Question (And That's the Point)

Someone sent in a question for a recent session:

If you could only ask one question to determine whether a potential client is worth your time, what would it be?

To answer the question, I'm going to reject the entire premise. If you're searching for one perfect question that tells you whether a client is viable, you probably shouldn't be in this business.

That sounds harsh, but hear me out. Recruiting is complicated. It requires nuance, observational skills, pattern recognition, and the ability to discern what people are actually saying beyond their words. We vet, pre-qualify, negotiate, and close deals by synthesizing information from dozens of data points collected over multiple conversations. The idea that you could distill all of that down to a single question, some magic silver bullet that reveals everything you need to know, is simply absurd. It betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of what we actually do.

When we're trying to identify whether a potential client is worth pursuing, we take them through a ninety-minute, two-step discovery process. Not a quick call. Not a handful of surface-level questions. A detailed, structured conversation with pre-planned questions delivered in a specific order, designed to uncover not just what they say but how they say it, what they avoid saying, and how they respond when pushed on complex topics. Only at the end of that entire process are we able to make an educated guess about whether this client will be worth our time. And even then, we're still guessing. The only way to truly know is to do business with them and see how they behave when money and candidates are on the line.

Consider what you're actually trying to determine when evaluating a potential client. Do they have real hiring authority or are they just gathering information? Do they respect the recruiting process or do they see you as a vendor who should be grateful for their business? Will they respond to candidates in a timely manner or will they ghost you for weeks? Do they actually have some budget approved or are they in exploratory mode? Are they willing to pay a reasonable fee or will they nickel-and-dime you on every placement? Will they honor exclusivity if you ask for it? Do they understand what makes a strong candidate or are they chasing unicorns? Are they collaborative or combative? Do they value your expertise or do they just want you to execute their instructions?

You cannot extract answers to all of those questions from a single magical question. Anyone who tells you otherwise is selling you something, probably a course or a script or some other oversimplified solution to a problem that doesn't have a simple answer. Real client qualification requires sustained conversation, careful observation, and the willingness to dig deeper when something doesn't add up.

Here's what actually happens during effective discovery. You ask about their hiring process and listen not just to what steps they describe but to how much thought they've put into it. You ask about their timeline and pay attention to whether it's realistic or completely divorced from market reality. You ask about past hires and notice whether they speak positively

about people they've brought on or whether every previous employee was somehow deficient. You ask about their ideal candidate and observe whether they can articulate clear priorities or whether they rattle off a wish list of twenty conflicting requirements. You ask about compensation and gauge whether they're in the right ballpark or living in fantasy land. You ask about their team dynamics and culture and listen for red flags about dysfunction or turnover.

None of these individual questions gives you the full picture. It's the pattern that emerges across the entire conversation that tells you what you need to know. A client might give you a great answer about compensation but a terrible answer about timeline. They might be realistic about candidate requirements but completely naive about their hiring process. You're constantly weighing and balancing competing signals, and that synthesis happens in your brain over the course of an extended conversation, not in response to a single brilliant question.

The desire for a magic question comes from the same place as the desire for perfect scripts or foolproof closes or any other shortcut that promises to make this job easier than it actually is. We all want the cheat code. We want someone to hand us the secret that makes everything click into place. But recruiting doesn't work that way. It's a relationship business built on judgment and experience and the ability to read situations and people accurately. Those skills develop over time through repetition and reflection, not by searching for the perfect question.

This isn't to say that questions don't matter or that some questions aren't better than others. Of course they are. But the power of good questions comes from asking them in context, in the right sequence, with the right follow-up based on what you hear. A question that works brilliantly at one point in a conversation might fall flat at another point. A question that reveals important information with one type of client might tell you nothing useful with a different type.

The art is in knowing which questions to ask when, and that's something you learn by doing discovery conversations over and over until you develop instincts about what to probe and when to push.

Even if there were magic questions, it still wouldn't work because our clients lie. Not necessarily maliciously, but they tell you what they think you want to hear, or what they wish were true, or what they've convinced themselves is true even though it isn't. They say they have budget when they haven't actually gotten final approval. They say they'll move quickly when they have no real urgency. They say they're open to candidates from various backgrounds when they really want someone who looks exactly like their last hire. You don't uncover those gaps by asking one clever question. You uncover them by asking multiple questions from different angles and noticing when the answers don't quite line up.

Ultimately, the only way to truly know whether a client is worth your time is to do business with them and see how they behave when things get real. You can get pretty good at predicting these things through thorough discovery, but you'll never be certain until you're in the trenches actually working together.

If you're looking for the one perfect question that will save you from bad clients and lead you to good ones, I'm telling you it doesn't exist. What does exist is a disciplined approach to discovery that involves asking many questions, listening carefully to the answers, observing patterns, trusting your instincts, and being willing to walk away when something feels off. That's harder than memorizing a magic question, but it's also the only thing that actually works.

There are no shortcuts, no silver bullets, no magic questions. Just the hard work of getting to know people and learning to distinguish the ones worth your time from the ones who will waste it.



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# Year-End Tax Prep for Staffing Agencies: Reports to Reconcile Before January

By Lynn Connor

As the year winds down, year-end tax prep for staffing agencies becomes one of the most important operational responsibilities.

Additional Reports That Help Prepare for Year-End

## Employee Data Cleanup Reports

First, it helps to review a few key reports before running the main year-end tax reports. These early checks make sure your employee information and wage details are correct before totals are finalized for the year.

The Employee Master List is the best place to start. You can find it under Reports → Employee → Roster. This report gives you a clear view of each worker's profile. It shows addresses, tax locations, active or inactive status, and any missing fields. Fixing these issues now helps prevent returned W-2s and questions from employees when tax season begins.

In addition, many staffing agencies run a year-to-date Payroll Register before starting their official year-end work. This report is located at Reports → Payroll → Payroll Register. It confirms that earnings, deductions, benefits, and taxable categories were set up correctly throughout the year. As a result, you can catch any pay code changes or manual entries that might cause W-2 totals to be off later.

## Payroll and GL Accuracy Checks

Then, it is helpful to check your State Unemployment Wage Report next. This report appears under Reports → Payroll → State Quarter Report. It shows SUTA wages for each employee and helps confirm that wages were assigned to the correct state and that no one exceeded the state wage limit too early. Correcting these issues now can prevent state notices and adjustments after filings are submitted.

Afterward, many agencies benefit from running the GL Reports. You can find it at GL → GL Reports. These Reports/Grids show how payroll and billing entries will map to your accounting system. Reviewing it before year-end prevents mismatches between your COATS Reports and the financial statements your accountant prepares.

Once these data cleanup reports are complete, you can begin running the four primary reports used for year-end tax preparation with greater accuracy and confidence.

### 1. 941 / 940 Reconciliation Report(federal totals)

Payroll → Quarterly → 941/Federal Quarterly Reports (We don't yet have a 940 but will do what we can to have this year)

Next, these reports verify that federal tax liabilities match deposits and IRS expectations. Review wage bases, employer match totals, and FUTA taxable wages. Checking each of these items before your CPA prepares Q4 filings can save a lot of time and money. For official IRS guidance, reference the Instructions for Form 941 (2025) and Federal Quarter can be used to fill out the 940.

## 2. W-2 Preview & Employee Record Audit(final employee data accuracy)

Payroll → Yearly → W-2

After the reconciliation report, We suggests previewing every employee's W-2 before files are created. Checking SSNs, addresses, jurisdictions, taxable wages, and benefit contributions. Having a staff member ensure all employees' addresses are up to date can prevent your firm from having to re-mail and pay for postage again. Not to mention the time it takes for staff to answer phone calls from employees looking for their W-2 to file taxes. Protecting you from costly W-2 corrections in February. IRS guidance is available in Publication 15 (2025).

## 3. Client Billing vs Payroll Hours Report(ensure billed = paid)

Reports → Client Reports→ GMGP History & Sales by Hours

Additionally, These reports compare what you billed your clients to what you paid your employees. It identifies missing timecards, overtime errors, incorrect bill rates, and variance between billed vs paid hours — all of which influence year-end totals. These checks are critical for year-end tax prep for staffing agencies. Why? Because wage totals and taxable amounts must match across payroll, billing, and GL activity.

## 4. W-2 Employee Audit & Year-End Payroll Integrity Check(IRS-compliant wage/tax breakouts)

Payroll → Yearly → W-2

Finally, this W-2 review checks to ensure all taxable wages, benefit deductions, Social Security and Medicare wages, and SUTA wages align with IRS rules. If you issue any vendor 1099s, guidance can be found in the General Instructions for Information Returns (2025) and the IRIS e-file portal.

## Starting the New Year Clean

When these reports are aligned, everything else at year-end becomes easier. W-2s generate cleanly, 941 and 940 totals match, and your accountant gets accurate numbers. These steps set your agency up for a confident start to 2026 — and they represent best practices for year-end tax prep for staffing agencies.



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# NEWS RELEASES

## Dimensional Search Attains 100 Awarded Franchises in Less Than 24 months

Dimensional Search has achieved a milestone attained by fewer than 1% of all franchise brands – and in less than two years.

We're building the future of recruiting"

— Jon Bartos

PLANO, TX, UNITED STATES, November 18, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/  
-- Dimensional Search Attains 100 Awarded Franchises in Less Than 24 months

Subheading (If needed): Dimensional Search has achieved a milestone attained by fewer than 1% of all franchise brands – and in less than two years.

Dimensional Search, recognized as one of the fastest-growing, emerging franchise brands in the U.S., has surpassed 100 franchise offices in less than two years, a milestone achieved by fewer than 1% of all franchise brands.

"We're building the future of recruiting," states Jon Bartos, Chief Executive Officer of Dimensional Search. "Each new office represents more than a franchise – it's a business that enables the owner to stay in their industry of expertise, own their own business, and achieve their life vision, all with the full training, support and strength of our organization that boasts over 65 years of experience in the executive search and staffing industry."

With a focus on growth and progression, Dimensional Search now joins the elite 1% of franchises that achieve 100 units in under 8 years. Few franchises ever reach this level of scale. 82% of franchise brands operate with fewer than 100 locations, with fewer than 5% reaching 100 units within 10 years.

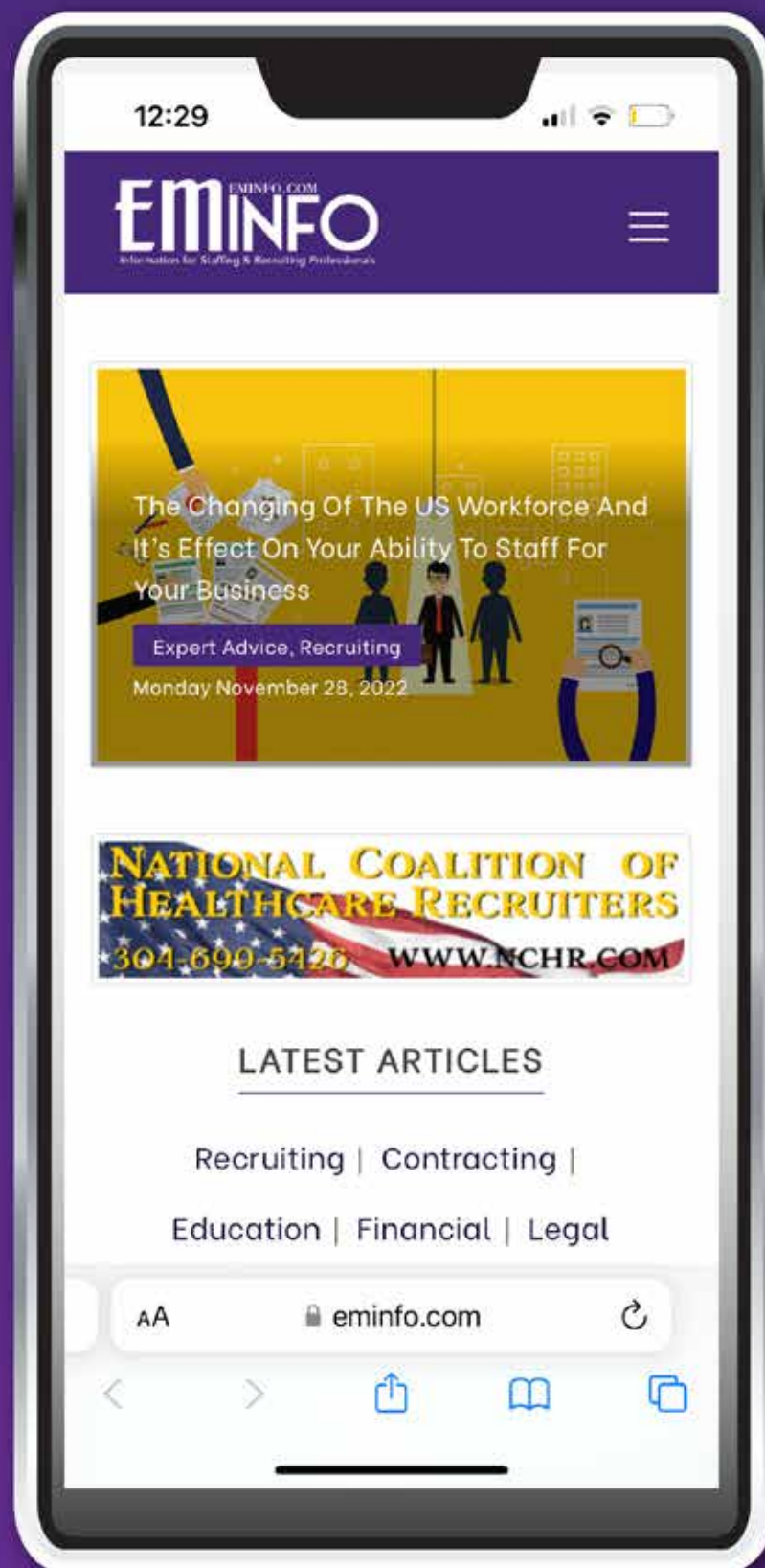
A core pillar of the Dimensional Search franchise system is a commitment to coaching and supporting franchise owners. They receive comprehensive training and guidance based on proven methodologies that have helped nurture successful business owners in building, growing, and scaling their firms across various industries.

Dimensional Search, a brand within the Sanford Rose Associates International franchise system, provides entrepreneurs with an acceleration platform to launch their executive search and staffing businesses. Dimensional Search is comprised of an elite network of independently owned executive search firms known for personalized service and top-tier talent acquisition solutions, catering to the needs of both clients and candidates.

Dimensional Search has maintained an exclusive network of offices that are unparalleled in professionalism, performance, and service, exceeding client expectations. Founded in 1959, with an executive leadership team boasting over 300 years and an average of 25 years of experience in the recruiting industry, the Sanford Rose Associates and Dimensional Search network is the strongest group of search firm experts ever assembled. Dimensional Search offers the opportunity to be in business for oneself, yet not by oneself, with the freedom and flexibility to grow within a structured and supported environment, built upon the foundation laid by others who have paved the way.

Learn more at [dimensionalsearch.com/join](https://dimensionalsearch.com/join).

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# Letter From The Editor



*Don't miss out!*

Welcome 2026... pause for a moment of joy and take a breather to make this year better than ever. Find new activities that can help you be more successful. Foremost, improve your own attitude and well-being. Learn some new healthy actions that will improve your ability to accomplish more each day. January always brings a plethora of fitness trends. So, outline a new fitness wellness plan to stay healthy, both mentally and physically.

In her column, Judy makes you aware of some states that will be implementing new labor laws this year. Consider sharing these with your clients making them aware of these changes. January always brings the year end payroll filings so start early using your software to get them done. Don't let procrastination in!

What new trends will be key players in recruiting and staffing? Ask the right questions then listen and learn. What generational differences matter to clients and candidates to achieve the right fit? Is it still all about soft skills? Learn how to use AI on the little stuff to get it done. New companies are offering their services to guide you on the AI path. You can find lists of AI apps that navigate this growing trend. According to experts we've listen to, the progress of AI is still in its infancy. Learn where to start.

Attending educational industry events in 2026 to learn and meet face to face with peers is still the best way to grow your business. Visit EMinfo marketplace and calendar of events often.

We wish you a successful 2026. Happy Recruiting

*Pat Turner*

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