Recruiters reveal their most impressive candidates ever

Standing out in a crowded employment market is a difficult thing to do, particularly when you're working with recruiters who see hundreds, if not thousands of applications and profiles per week. So, how do people actually cut through the noise and make a lasting impression?

We asked three seasoned recruiters to tell us about their most exceptional candidates ever and what it was that made them so memorable.

Peter Acheson, CEO of Peoplebank

- **The high performer.** I saw a candidate for a role as a Chief Information Officer (CIO) who had been referred to Peoplebank by another recruitment company that didn't specialise in this area. The CIO had done an outstanding job working in a small, privately owned business and had overseen many very successful software implementations.

  The person who gave the referral, had also given the candidate the ultimate compliment by saying: 'He's the best IT candidate I've seen, but equally one of the best executive candidates I've seen.'

  When I met the candidate, it was clear that his reputation and track record were accurate. He oozed passion and enthusiasm for his recent achievements. He was humble, well presented, had excellent interpersonal skills and I could see he was an absolute expert in his field.

  He had been a high performer in all his previous roles, had strong track record of career progression and an evident thirst for professional development. What's more, he was also incredibly pleasant to deal with and despite his impressive achievements showed no air of arrogance or hubris.

  The takeout: Strive for excellence in your current role, have passion for what you do, and be pleasant and professional in person.

> In a crowded job market, knowing what differentiates you from similar candidates and how this will benefit employers can help you stand out from your competition.

Nathalie Lynton, Director at Shared and Halved Consulting

- **The active listener**. I interviewed a candidate for a helpdesk role, and what made him

stand out for me was that he answered the questions with a beginning, middle and end. He took care to answer the questions that I asked, not a version of what I asked, not information that he felt was important for me to know, but exactly what I asked. Being able to demonstrate that is itself a skill. It spoke to his ability to actively listen to a question, comprehend it, retain it, and then respond accordingly.

The takeout: Resist the urge to flip the script to suit what you want to say. Take time to practice your active listening skills with a willing accomplice and practice until you can answer all parts of a question (and respond to what was actually asked!)

Simon Bennett, Principal Consultant, Glide Outplacement

- **The analyst.** I interviewed a candidate for a role which was pitched at recent graduates. One candidate particularly impressed me with her in-depth research on the role and the company. But crucially, as well as knowing why she wanted the job, she also understood the value she offered as a candidate. She had even identified her shortcomings and could explain how she was overcoming them.

  I have since shared with other candidates how important it is to identify your strengths - and weaknesses - when preparing for a job interview. In a crowded job market, knowing what differentiates you from similar candidates and how this will benefit employers can help you stand out from your competition.

  The takeout: Be honest with yourself about your shortcomings and strengths. Practice talking with confidence about your skills, and take steps to address any areas for opportunity. If you're working to build skills, being able to share what you're doing shows an ongoing commitment and willingness to grow. And as always, research a company before the interview and find alignment with your skill set.