



## Monitoring “Days in Phase” - Time Metrics in Recruiting

By Doug Fuehne

Measuring success is critical in recruiting. There are four general types of metrics on which to concentrate - cost, quality, quantity and time. The focus of this article focuses on TIME.

Of course, we’ve all heard of the “time to fill” a requisition as one time metric. This metric is very useful in evaluating the overall success of the process. However, a finer breakdown of time in various stages of the recruiting process is often required, especially in situations where a recruiting vendor is providing services and service level agreement (SLA) tracking is required. This also helps establish where problems lie in the process.

By splitting the process into four phases and monitoring the “days in phase,” we can gauge the effectiveness of the process. The suggested phases are nicely demarcated by who is performing most of the work in each phase.

At Q4B, we use the following phases in requisition management. We call this our “S4” methodology:

- **Staging** a requisition, where both hiring managers and recruiters strategize on the requisition
- **Sourcing** candidates, where recruiters find the people
- **Screening** candidates, where hiring managers interview
- **Selecting** the person to hire, where recruiters and hiring managers “hire!”

We’ll discuss more about these stages and their usefulness in demarcating the recruiting process in the future. For now, recognize that they also provide an excellent framework in which to measure time via the concept of “days in phase.”



Another dimension that affects the time or “days in phase” is the type of candidate you are seeking. Finding an executive to run your company will probably take significantly longer than finding a CNC machine operator (although it depends on the machine). When calculating “days in phase” we use three tiers of position types (executive / director, professional, and labor) to estimate the time it should take in each phase.

You and your recruiting team should establish the number of target days a requisition should be in each phase by the type of requisition, and then monitor each requisition against these times. At Q4B, we use a “green-yellow-red” system to monitor the time in each phase. Initially, the requisition is green. As the time a requisition is in a particular phase approaches the limit, we turn it “yellow” to indicate we need to closely monitor the situation, and when it exceeds the limit, it turns “red” to indicate a major problem.

For example, one recruiting team established that it should be able to complete the sourcing phase for engineering positions in three weeks (21 days). Each engineering requisition was monitored. After the hiring manager and recruiter met to understand and strategize about the requisition, the recruiter started the clock for “days in sourcing.” On day 14, if sufficient candidates had not been submitted, the requisition turned “yellow” on the daily requisition status report, and recruiting management paid particular attention, even assigning additional resources to help out, if needed.

Although the “right” time to complete each phase will vary by organizational culture, position type, and many other factors, some guidelines do exist. Here are some by phase:

- The hiring manager and recruiter should be able to meet to discuss a requisition within 3-5 days of requisition opening for all requisition types.
- For most professional positions, recruiters should be able to source a slate of “interviewable” candidates within three weeks at the outside.



- A motivated hiring manager should be able to complete interviews within two to three weeks of having candidates.
- Finally, hiring managers should be able to decide on a candidate, negotiate, and get the offer out and accepted within two weeks.

As an example of how the times in each phase can vary, one of our clients has a consensus-driven culture that requires extended time in the interview process for all team members to meet candidates and decide to whom the offer goes, so the time in the “screening” phase is extended.

Another client has a corporate edict to pay at market median, but hiring managers require top skills. This makes for a longer sourcing phase (and great recruiters) to find highly qualified candidates who are willing to consider lower offers. Also, this requires extended time in the selection phase (and often many trips back to the sourcing phase), as highly-qualified candidates (who may have thought “I’ll get more”) continually withdraw from the process after receiving median offers. (This problem also can manifest itself as a poor “acceptance efficiency” metric, as described in a previous blog.)

As a recruiter, you should be wary of signing up to an SLA for “time to fill” under these types of circumstances. This is why the “days in phase” concept works well - you can feel comfortable signing up for SLAs around the time to present candidates, but should avoid up-front commitments on the overall “time to fill” until you are certain about a client’s culture.

Similarly, as a director of recruiting or HR lead, you should be aware of the time in each phase, which helps you identify problems that may or may not be recruiting based. One of the first steps in problem solving is identifying who has the problem, right? In the example of our median-paying client, it does no good for their hiring managers to blame recruiting for not providing good candidates.

Other time metrics that are currently being used by members of the Recruiting Process Outsourcing Association (RPOA) include “time to slate” and “time to



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present hired candidate.” These or other variations on the “days in phase” concept could work equally well for your organization.

Next time, I’ll discuss Q4B’s cost metrics, specifically our sophisticated evaluation of cost-per-hire. For now, have a quick day in whatever phase you are in!